



# 2007 Bearcat Football



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## Football Signs 26 in 2007 Recruiting Class Eleven From Missouri Join National Runner-up Program

MARYVILLE, Mo. -- Northwest Missouri State University head football coach Mel Tjeerdsma announced the signing of 26 high school senior student-athletes to NCAA and Northwest National Letters of Intent today. The list includes players from seven different states including 11 from the home state of Missouri. These student-athletes join a program to make the National Championship the past two seasons and win the 2006 MIAA title.

"Numbers-wise, we probably got more than we thought we were going to get," said Tjeerdsma. "Our response was great this year. We started out behind in recruiting but we caught up in a hurry. I think the exposure that we got again this year through the playoffs with being on ESPN a couple of times really helped us.

"We got some kids out of the Iowa City area that we hadn't gotten in two to three years, so that was good to keep that coming. Maybe not as many kids from Nebraska as we've had in the past, but we got some Texas kids again and we're excited about that. We had a number of kids out of the Kansas City area, and that to me is the most important thing because that's our home area. We're real excited about that class."

Following is a look at each individual:

• **JOE BEDARD** (Cedar Rapids, Iowa) - Linebacker, 6-2, 200 lb.  
High School: Xavier                      Head Coach: Duane Schulte                      Parents: Tony & Marsha Bedard  
Major: Business

**Notes:** Helped lead team to a Class 4A state title and a 13-0 record his final season... First team all-state at linebacker and punter... 2006 Iowa Sports Connection First Team Class 4A Defense... Iowa Newspapers Association Class 4A All-State linebacker... Des Moines Register First Team Class 4A punter... As the designated hitter on the baseball team, part of a 3A state champion program in 2006 and 2005 runner-up.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** We think Joe really has a great upside. He's been a guy who's been a three-sport guy in high school - a great baseball player as well as a basketball player. He's also a punter, so he's got a lot of upside. We think he's really going to develop into an outstanding linebacker.

• **BLAKE CHRISTOPHER** (Kearney, Mo.) - Quarterback, 6-2, 190 lb.  
High School: Kearney                      Head Coach: Greg Jones                      Parents: Robert & Maureen Christopher  
Major: Graphic Design

**Notes:** Member of Class 4 state championship team ... 2006 KMZU and KKWK Dream Teams ... 2006 Class 4 Missouri Football Coaches Association All-State Second Team ... 2005 Suburban Small 6 All-Conference Second Team ... 2005 honorable mention all-state.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** Another young man who has a lot of ability and can play a lot of different positions. We're bringing him in as a quarterback. That's where he'll start. We'll see what happens from there. He had a very good senior year for Greg Jones, who is one of our alums.

• **THOMAS DEVEREUX** (Eugene, Ore.) - Linebacker, 6-0, 215 lb.  
High School: Marist Catholic                      Head Coach: Rory Rosenbach                      Parents: Micheal & Sue Devereux                      Major: Business

**Notes:** 2006 conference co-defensive player of the year... 2006 honorable mention all-state linebacker... Led team in tackles for three seasons... Member of state champions in 2005.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He is a nephew of Steve Coppinger, who was an All-America center for us back in 1998. That's how we really got onto Thomas. He's a very good player. A little bit limited size-wise, but we think he has a great motor and could really develop.

• **JOHN DOOLEY** (Omaha, Neb.) - Linebacker, 6-1, 215 lb.  
High School: Skutt Catholic                      Head Coach: Matt Turman                      Parent: Mike & Roxanne Dooley                      Major: Business

**Notes:** 2006 AP All-State in Class B... All-River City Conference First Team as a senior... 2006 All-Omaha Area Defense... Team captain... All-district first team... Part of a state title winner in 2005.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He is a very solid football player. He's a little bigger linebacker, more of an inside-type guy. We think he'll fit in real well.

• **BEN EHRET** (Stilwell, Kan.) - Offensive Lineman, 6-3, 295 lb.  
High School: Blue Valley                      Head Coach: Steve Rampy                      Parents: Jim & Kathy Ehret                      Major: Engineering

**Notes:** Helped team to an undefeated season (13-0) and a 2006 state championship... 2005 state runner-up... Announced to the all-metro team by the KC Star, Metro Sports and 810 Sports... Topeka Capital Journal & Wichita Eagle First Team All-5A... All-Johnson County First Team... All-Eastern Kansas League First Team pick... Integral part of team to break school record for scoring and fewest points allowed.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He comes out of a great program. He has a big body and a nice frame on him, very well developed. We think he was one of the top offensive linemen we saw this year. We're excited to get him.

BREAKDOWN	
<b>States:</b>	
Missouri: .....	11
Iowa: .....	5
Texas: .....	3
Kansas: .....	3
Nebraska: .....	2
Illinois: .....	1
Oregon: .....	1
<b>Position:*</b>	
Defensive Back .....	5
Linebacker.....	5
Offensive Lineman.....	4
Defensive Lineman .....	3
Wide Receiver.....	3
Quarterback.....	2
Running Back.....	2
Tight End.....	2
Punter .....	1
* Includes 1 player listed with dual positions	



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- **CAMERON EPPLE** (Grandbury, Texas) - Defensive Tackle, 6-3, 275 lb.  
 High School: Grandbury      Head Coach: Mark Wright      Parents: Gary & Peggy Epple      Major: Criminal Justice  
**Notes:** 2006 5A All-District Second Team linebacker... Team leader in tackles as a senior... Pre-season all-state linebacker... 2004 & 2005 5A All-District First Team tight end... High school coach is the cousin of current Bearcat assistant Rich Wright.  
**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** We just thought he was a very good high school player. He has some growth potential yet. He's a guy, in another sense, is quite a ways along. He looks like he could step in and play after a year.
- **DAVID GRAY** (Tremont, Ill.) - Punter, 6-1, 190 lb.  
 High School: Tremont      Head Coach: Lou Wicks      Parents: Joe & Laura Gray      Major: Criminal Justice  
**Notes:** Participated in 2007 U.S. Army Combine where he averaged 44.7 yards per punt... 2006 All-Heart of Illinois Conference First Team... Pre-season PrepStar Magazine All-American... 2005 Mid-State All Conference Honorable Mention... Booted school record 70-yarder... Helped program make the Class 1A playoffs.  
**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** One of the missing pieces for us. We put a real effort into recruiting a punter this year. David kind of found us, and we got a tape on him, and we really liked what we saw. Had very good success in high school, but he's also performed extremely well in some of the training camps and kicking camps, and we really think he could help us right away.
- **TYLER HERL** (Topeka, Kan.) - Quarterback, 6-2, 210 lb.  
 High School: Shawnee Heights      Head Coach: Jason Swift      Parents: Tim & Susan Herl      Major: Criminal Justice  
**Notes:** 2006 Class 5A Topeka Capital Journal Honorable Mention... 2006 KFCA Class 5A Offense... Wichita Eagle Class 5A Honorable Mention Offense... Helped team to a Class 5A runner-up finish in baseball as a junior... 2005 all-city pick as an outfielder... Selected to the Honor Roll.  
**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** A very competitive quarterback with a strong arm. He has the ability to run. We had him in our camps the last couple of years. He has a very good feeling on what we do and about our coaching. He's gotten to know Josh Lamberson some. He came to several of our games this year. He was our top quarterback and we were really excited we get him to commit early.
- **DERRICK HIGHTOWER** (Belton, Mo.) - Free Safety, 6-0, 180 lb.  
 High School: Belton      Head Coach: Jeff Gourley      Parents: Willie & Leola Hightower      Major: Computer Science  
**Notes:** 2006 All-Suburban Mid-6 Second Team running back... Missouri Football Coaches' Association Class 5 First Team Defense... All-conference defensive back twice... All-state first team kick/punt returner... Team captain... Member of 2005 district championship team.  
**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He's a very solid football player who can play a couple different positions. He can be a free safety, he could possibly be a strong safety, but he can be a corner. He's also a kick and punt return guy. He's just a real solid football player.
- **ANDREW HOBBS** (Mesquite, Texas) - Cornerback, 5-11, 160 lb.  
 High School: West Mesquite      Head Coach: Mike Overton      Parents: James Jackson and Teresa Hobbs      Major: Business  
**Notes:** 2006 District 10-4A unanimous defensive back ... 2005 all-district cornerback ... District champion in the 110-meter hurdles in sophomore and junior seasons  
**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** Andrew is a guy we got on late. He is an outstanding track guy. He's also going to run track. We think he's going to be an outstanding corner for us.
- **CODY JOHNSON** (Jasper, Mo.) - Offensive Lineman, 6-3, 270 lb.  
 High School: Webb City      Head Coach: John Rodrigue      Parents: John & Karen Johnson      Major: Criminal Justice  
**Notes:** 2006 Missouri Football Coaches' Association First Team All-State on defensive line... All-area, all-district and all-conference as a senior... 2005 All-Southwest Conference First Team offensive lineman and Second Team defensive lineman... Missouri Sportswriters and Sportscasters Class 4 Second Team Offense... His team lost only two games in his three years of varsity play... 2004 state runner-up and 2003 semifinalist.  
**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** We're excited about getting him because we think he's a very good football player and Webb City is a great high school program in Missouri. We've never had anybody from Webb City since we've been here. He's a great kid with a tremendous work ethic.
- **KYLE KILGORE** (Orrick, Mo.) - Tight End, 6-5, 210 lb.  
 High School: Excelsior Springs      Head Coach: Sam Brown      Parents: Mark & Brenda Kilgore      Major: Undecided  
**Notes:** 2006 Kansas City Area Class 4 All-District Defense... 2005 All-Suburban Small 6 Conference First Team Defense; Second Team Offense... Wendy's High School Heisman nominee.  
**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** Another young man who is still growing and developing. He's going to grow into being a very good football player. His coach, Sam Brown, is a guy we've known for a long time, and he recommends him very highly.
- **BEN LANGSTON** (Overland Park, Kan.) - Strong Safety, 6-0, 185 lb.  
 High School: Blue Valley NW      Head Coach: Mike Zegunis      Parents: Marc & Nicki Langston      Major: Business  
**Notes:** All-Eastern Kansas League selection... Team captain... Honor Roll member.  
**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** We recruited Ben's brother last year, but he ended up going to Pittsburg State and played as a freshman in the secondary. We're excited about getting Ben. He's a very good hitter and a very solid player. He is very mature already and we think is going to be a guy who plays here pretty quick.



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• **JOSH LORENSON** (Cedar Rapids, Iowa) - Defensive Lineman, 6-3, 240 lb.  
High School: Xavier                      Head Coach: Duane Schulte                      Parents: John Lorensen & Anne Plotz                      Major: Education/Crim. Justice  
**Notes:** 2006 Iowa Newspapers Association Class 4A First Team defensive lineman... Des Moines Sunday Register Second Team offensive lineman... Two-time all-conference selection...First team all-state elite defensive lineman... Helped team to a 2006 Class 4A state championship and a 13-0 record.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He was an outstanding player in high school. He's lost some weight right now because he's wrestling, but we're excited about that because he's very successful at wrestling as well. We think he'll fill back out and be very good.

• **ADAM MARTENSEN** (North Liberty, Iowa) - Linebacker, 6-1, 190 lb.  
High School: City Regina                      Head Coach: Chuck Evans                      Parents: Van & Kathy Martensen                      Major: Business  
**Notes:** 2006 all-state first team... Team captain... Voted as the Defensive MVP by his teammates... Member of 2005 state championship in Class 1A... 2005 Wendy's High School Heisman nominee... Finished in third place at state wrestling meet as a junior at 189 pounds.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He's another guy who lost some weight to wrestle. He finished third in the state this last year. He's had an outstanding year in football and another guy who will fill out and grow when he just does one sport.

• **ADAM MCELDERRY** (West Des Moines, Iowa) - Offensive Lineman, 6-3, 275 lb.  
High School: Valley                      Head Coach: Gary Swenson                      Parents: Robert & Trish McElderry                      Major: Undecided  
**Notes:** 2006 first team elite all-state and first team all-metro... Two-time all-conference pick... 2005 All-CIML Second Team Offense... Iowa Sports Connection All-State Offensive Line for all classes... Member of 2005 Class 4A Championship.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He's another heavyweight wrestler and outstanding offensive lineman. He's comes out of a great program – West Des Moines, Iowa -- one of the great programs in Iowa. He's been a solid offensive lineman for them. I think he's a two-year starter. He's another guy who is pretty well developed and can come in here and play pretty quick.

• **KYLE NIXDORF** (Odessa, Mo.) – Fullback, 6-1, 230 lb.  
High School: Wellington/Napoleon                      Head Coach: James Perry                      Parents: Vic and Marilyn Nixdorf                      Major: Business  
**Notes:** 2006 Missouri Sportswriters and Sportscasters Association Second Team Defense ... 2006 Missouri Football Coaches Association Class 2 Third Team Running Back ... 2006 All I-70 Conference ... 2006 Kansas City All-Metro .... 2006 and 2005 KMZU Dream Team ... Led team to district championships in 2005.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He's one of the guys who is really going to be one of our outstanding recruits. He may play right away. He's a solid fullback. He's got great strength. We think we've got a need there and he may be a freshman who will come in a play.

• **KEVIN OKONTA** (Liberty, Mo.) – Safety, 5-10, 180 lb.  
High School: Liberty                      Head Coach: Pat Hanson                      Parents: Emmanuel & Regina Okonta                      Major: Business  
**Notes:** 2006 all-conference in football ... 2005 All-Suburban Big-7 Honorable Mention linebacker ... State qualifier in the 200-meter dash in track and field.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He's a two-sport guy who will also compete in track here. He has great speed and a very solid player. We're excited about having him.

• **CHRIS OWENS** (Florissant, Mo.) – Tight End, 6-4, 250 lb.  
High School: Hazelwood Central                      Head Coach: Jim Pukula                      Parents: William & Ava Owens                      Major: Business  
**Notes:** 2006 Missouri Football Coaches Association First Team ... First team all-conference honors in senior and junior years ... First team all-metro selection in senior season ... Member of 2006 district championship team and 2005 and 2003 state runner-up teams in Class 6.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He was a Division I recruit and things didn't pan out for him, so he became available. He's going to be a big-time tight end. He just has a lot of upside.

• **BOBBY PAULK** (Plano, Texas) - Linebacker, 6-4, 200 lb.  
High School: Prestonwood Christian                      Head Coach: Mike Hall                      Parents: Robert & Linda Paulk                      Major: Business  
**Notes:** 2006 All-District Class 2A First Team defensive back... All-District Class 2A wide receiver...District MVP... First team all-state as a defensive back.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He is a project – he's a big body and a big frame. He could really develop. He's runs extremely well for a guy who's 6-4. He's a little guy where as time moves on, could develop into a very good player for us as an outside linebacker.

• **PREVIN PERRY** (St. Louis, Mo.) - Running Back, 5-10, 197 lb.  
High School: Lutheran North                      Head Coach: Jim Manion                      Parents: Previn Sr. & LaRhonda Perry                      Major: Marketing  
**Notes:** 2006 All-ABC Conference selection... All-state and all-metro... Leading rusher in school history... 2006 Missouri Sportswriters and Sportscasters Association All-State Class 3 Second Team Offense... 2004 St. Louis All-Metro Honorable Mention running back.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He is a really solid football player. We felt we needed to get one good tailback. He was one of the guys we really were after, so we're excited to get him. He's got a little bit of time to develop. It's good to have one solid running back in each class, and he's our guy there.



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• **TAYLOR PIERCE** (Wentzville, Mo.) - Wide Receiver, 6-2, 185 lb.

High School: Wentzville Holt      Head Coach: Chris Shields      Parents: Jeff & Laurel Pierce      Major: Undecided

**Notes:** 2005 All-State Class 4 First Team... All-metro second team as a junior... All-Gateway Athletic Conference two-time selection... As a junior, ranked third in the GAC with 1,010 all-purpose yards and seventh in scoring with 30 points.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He had a very good junior and senior year. His brother Jesse is a freshman quarterback here. Taylor's a guy who we think will develop into a very good receiver.

• **MATT RACKERS** (Jefferson City, Mo.) - Offensive Lineman, 6-3, 240 lb.

High School: Helias      Head Coach: Chris Hentges      Parents: Mark & Chris Rackers      Major: Business

**Notes:** 2006 all-district selection.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He is a guy who we look at as maybe a little bit of a project. He's a guy who will develop. He has a great work ethic and great attitude.

• **JAKE SOY** (Durant, Iowa) - Wide Receiver, 6-3, 200 lb.

High School: Durant      Head Coach: Tom McCleery      Parents: Chris Soy & Holly Cherveney      Major: Business Management

**Notes:** 2006 Des Moines Sunday Register Class 2A First Team Defense... Two-time all-district first team and all-state first team... Iowa Newspaper Association All-State Third Team running back... Third player in school history to rush over 1,000 yards in a season (1,032) and he averaged 10+ yards per carry... Posted over 2,000 all-purpose yards... Helped team advance to first-ever playoff appearance as a senior... 2005 Quad City Times All-Eastern Player at defensive back... 2006 Class 2A All-Southwest District Second Team in baseball (outfielder) ... 2006 Eastern Iowa Hawkeye Basketball All-Conference First Team ... Participant in the 100-meter & 200-meter events.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He's an outstanding athlete. He's a very good basketball player as well as a football player. He's got a great vertical and runs very well. We need another big receiver, so we're excited about getting him.

• **TONY TAYLOR** (Blue Springs, Mo.) - Defensive Lineman, 6-1, 193 lb.

High School: Blue Springs South      Head Coach: Greg Oder      Parents: Edward & Tammy Buckner      Major: Accounting

**Notes:** 2006 Kansas City Area Defensive Player of the Year... First team all-state... All-810 First Team Defense... All-Big 7 Suburban Conference First Team Defense... Missouri Football Coaches' Association Class 6 Defense... Part of Class 6 champions as a senior.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** One of the real outstanding defensive players in Kansas City. He's a little bit undersized right now, and we don't know where he'll end up. We hate to say he's too small to play defensive end because he wasn't in high school. We'll find out, but we know he's a real solid football player. He's going to really help us. He was a teammate of Willie Horn, who was one of our outstanding freshman this year.

• **TOMMY WARREN** (Omaha, Neb.) - Cornerback/Wide Receiver, 5-11, 180 lb.

High School: North      Head Coach: Larry Martin      Parents: Tom & Aileen Warren      Major: Business

**Notes:** Member of the all-state second team... All-metro pick at defensive back by the Omaha World Herald... AP All-State Honorable Mention selected by the Associated Press... Named Super State Honorable Mention by the Lincoln Star Journal... Won first place at state competition in the 4x100-meter and 4x400-meter relay teams.

**Comments from Tjeerdsma:** He has great speed and is a great athlete who plays all three sports. He was a state champ in the 400-meter and 4x100-meter and 4x400-meter relays last year in Nebraska. He will run track. He's also an outstanding basketball player. Could play corner or receiver, but right now we think he's going to be a receiver.

**PRONUNCIATION GUIDE:**

- Joe Be - DARD
- Thomas DEV - er - oh
- Ben AIR - et
- Josh Lohr - REN - zen
- Adam MAC - ahl - derry
- Kevin Oh - KON - ta

**MEDIA NOTE:** Head coach Mel Tjeerdsma will be in his office (660-562-1311) from 3:00-5:00 p.m. on Wednesday to field any calls from the media. If you need any more help, please contact Athletic Media Relations Director Chad Waller at (660) 562-1118.