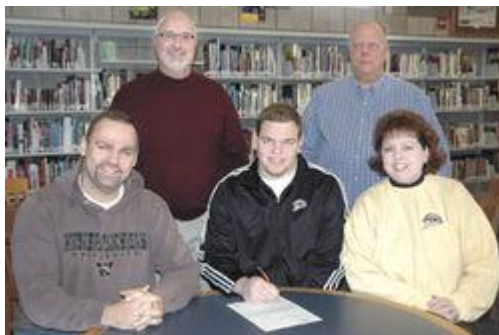


Hadel Officially Joins WMU



Josh Hadel, center, of Gladstone, prepares to sign his national football letter of intent to Western Michigan University. With him are his parents, Jerry and Michelle. In back are Gladstone athletic director Matt Houle, left, and football coach John Mileski.

GLADSTONE - Josh Hadel officially became a member of the Western Michigan University football program today.

The Gladstone High School senior signed his national letter of intent this morning and faxed a copy to school officials. He made a verbal commitment to join the Broncos in July.

"It's finally over. It's all done. I'm actually going there," the 6-foot-6, 285-pound guard said. "No one can take it away."

Hadel earned All-U.P. Dream Team honors at guard last season after making the Dream Team at tackle in 2006.

Mick McCabe of the Detroit Free Press ranked Hadel No. 29 among the state's top 50 recruits. Jacob Pedersen of Menominee, who signed a letter of intent today to play tight end for the University of Wisconsin, is No. 20.

Three other area players were also expected to sign national letters today, to Division 2 schools. Bruce Anderson of Gladstone and Jace Daniels of Escanaba will sign with Northern Michigan University and Justin Plimpton of Rapid River is signing with Michigan Tech.

Hadel will begin summer conditioning with the Broncos June 1. "I'm starting something bigger. Now high school is done and over with and I'm taking another step," he said.

WMU line coach Bob Stanley visited with Hadel and his parents, Jerry and Michelle, last week. Stanley said WMU will send a workout schedule next week along with a DVD and paperwork of the plays, giving Hadel a chance to learn assignments before reporting.

Hadel will likely be red-shirted as a freshman, but WMU coaches have indicated he will be considered the top backup even though he will not be playing this fall.

"He has worked so hard for this for so many years," said his father. "To see this opportunity for him is so gratifying as a parent. It has been a fun journey."

Michelle Hadel said the family likes the WMU coaching staff and is confident they will bring out the best in their son. "They look for kids who are athletes and academics. They want football players with character and they have to give back (to the community)."

Hadel has already done that. He earned his Eagle Scout by building a pavilion and barbecue grill at a park in Rapid River.

Michigan State and Central Michigan were in Hadel's final three. He also visited Penn State and the University of Michigan, and was in contact with 43 schools, including the University of Wisconsin.