

# THE UNION

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## Seeking Scholarships

Nevada Union coach leads charge for his players to get college scholarships.

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Thousands of the nation's most highly-touted high school football players signed a national letter of intent to play Division I college football Wednesday.

Nevada Union's Brennan McFadden, a 6-foot, 3-inch, 265-pound offensive lineman, was among those signing on the dotted line, accepting a full-ride scholarship to play football at Utah State University next fall.

But what about the athletes who didn't draw the attention of D-I programs? At Nevada Union, they're certainly not forgotten.

For as long as he can remember, NU head football coach Dave Humphers has dedicated this time of the school year to the same perennial purpose:

"The prize here is the college degree," said Humphers. "As much as those young men may love football, their future is in what they do in the classroom. Academics is everything. And the prize is the degree."

Each year, once the Miners have stored away the equipment at season's end — some, as 2004's City Championship campaign, last longer than others — Humphers heads into his home office, plastered with newspaper-clipping coverage of his 16 years at Nevada Union, and looks at the prospects.

The file folders in front of him, though, are not future NU football players. They are sometime soon-to-be former Miners, looking for a chance to play ball — or other sports — in college. They know college tuition, books and boarding is quite a financial investment these days, one some find to be too much to shoulder.

But, they also know, Humphers has a way of helping them.

### Emphasis on Education

Humphers said when he played high school football, there wasn't as much of an emphasis on academics for those competing in athletics as there is today.

"But it was emphasized by my parents," he said.

Because of that, Humphers had the grades necessary to compete in college. What he didn't have, he said, was a substantial amount of money to foot the bill. He said he worked at a grocery store and coached high school football from the time he was 17 to help fund his education.

Kids today in similar situations, though, have Humphers to help them find another way.

"I was frustrated for years, with Nevada Union being a rural school, that college coaches and recruiters can see kids at 15 schools in half a day in a metro area. But to drive up here, you'll see one school in a whole day.

"So after watching our kids get very little attention from college recruiters, we decided to be more aggressive about promoting our student athletes," he said.

Aggressive?

How's this for understated?

Eleven Nevada Union athletes will have their resumes land on a desk at every college in the country that fields a football team, in every division, at every level.

"There are 699 four-year schools, alone, that have



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football," Humphers said. "Our recruiting packet goes to all of them, and others, too. We mailed out almost 1,000 pieces of mail (this week)."

Each of those schools will receive a bright yellow envelope containing the academic and athletic accomplishments of those 11 NU students who sought Humphers' help. Nine of the 11 are football players, one is a soccer player and another the football team's manager.

But no matter the sport, no matter the role played, each of the resumes are handled with the same care in providing an ample amount of information on each student-athlete.

Take Vince Ghiringelli's for example:

The resume is headed by "Starting Offensive Tackle — 3.33 GPA." In addition to his contact information, his height, weight and age, along with his football statistics, are summaries of his academic and athletic achievements.

Beneath a head shot of Vince — in dark tie no less — is a statement from the prospect himself: "I consider myself to be a very strong leader as a stu-



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dent athlete, and I find myself driven by my desire to succeed in anything I set out to do. I believe any team I am a part of is made better by my superb work ethic and my desire to never settle for second best. My work ethic carries over to the classroom as well, where at the collegiate level I will earn a top education."

A comment from each athlete's head coach follows, offering insight on the athlete's character as well as his or her talent.

On the opposite side, recruiters will find the student's academic record, a comprehensive transcript of how he or she fared in the classroom. With half of this year's group of athletes being juniors, Humphers said it's good for them to see that their academic achievements will accompany their athletic accomplishments on the resume.

"The resume is kind of the end result of what the students have done on the field, as well as in the classroom," he said. "And if they've done their job, then they deserve the help in trying to get their education paid for."

#### Reaping the Results

Linda Marcus wanted her Matthew to go to college.

But, at the time, the single mother was working three jobs to simply make sure her son had a roof over his head and food on the table.

College? How?

"There's no way," she said. "There's no way we could have done this. Without Dave's support behind Matthew? I don't know.

"Dave not only put out the letters, but also put himself out there."

Not only do college coaches across the country get

paperwork on Humphers' players, but also may request a highlight video, which NU assistant coach Brad Dal Bon produces alongside the athlete.

"On our football software, you can mark a folder for each player and then you just pull them all together with the player," Dal Bon said. "It's amazing what this stuff does. I wasn't around when Humphers was doing the old dinosaur way of taping from VCR to VCR."

Humphers recalled that when coaches began calling about Marcus, requesting a tape of his play, he realized they had a problem. There was no film, because Marcus hadn't played much in his high school days.

Owen Jarrette, another former Miner who participated in Humphers' mass mailing, said the opportunities to play are out there, as he discovered, you just have to be willing to go get them. He also remembers Marcus, a teammate, making the most of such a chance.

"I took part in putting a packet together, but I ended up going to (Principia College in Elsah, Ill.), which is a Division III school so there wasn't a scholarship available, but they did compensate through financial aid," said Jarrette, who graduated in November with a degree in mass communications and is currently living in Seattle. "I think my coach did get a packet of all the NU athletes, though.

"Matt Marcus, though, he got a full ride out of state. He was like 6-6, but he just hadn't developed in high school. He had the size. For guys like that, the packets really seemed to help, along with Dave Humphers getting on the phone with the other coaches. He really sets their future in motion.

According to Linda, Matt received six scholarship offers and eventually chose to play football at McPherson College in Kansas, which he did for four years. After graduating, he decided to join another team, the U.S. Army, for which he is now serving in Iraq.

"He's doing fine. He's going to be OK," Linda said. "He's engaged to be married when he gets back home.

"I'm very proud of him, but I can honestly say that I don't know what would have happened with Matthew without Dave's support. He's not just a coach, but also a dad and friend to all of his boys."

#### Massive Mailing

It's like an assembly line, Humphers said, describing the process of actually putting together thou-

sands of documents into thousands of envelopes, labeled with thousands of addresses while the threat of thousands of potential problems popping up along the way.

To participate in the program, each student-athlete is asked to contribute \$180 to the cause, which Humphers said pays for the type-setting, printing and postage for the packets. Though the investment may seem steep to some, several scholarship-seeking companies charge families thousands of dollars for such help.

And, as a current or former Miner, you're always eligible for help.

Just ask Rich Wilson.

After wrapping up his high school career as an outside linebacker for the Miners, Wilson wanted to play ball in college, so he turned to his head coach.

"He actually got me a full ride at Jamestown College in North Dakota, but I turned it down and decided to stay home for two years," Wilson said.

During that time "at home," Wilson played as a Wolverine for Sierra College in Rocklin and helped lead the team to back-to-back bowl appearances. Then, though, came time to look into a four-year school again.

"I wasn't getting that many phone calls so I gave (Humphers) a phone call. He said he'd send my name out with the (high school) seniors and juniors. And he did.

"So, he got me two full rides if you want to look at it that way."

Wilson will be preparing for his final college football season this spring, as a member of the Rocky Mountain College team in Billings, Mont.

"You know, I just saw the movie 'Coach Carter,'" Wilson said. "And it's kind of like that with (Humphers). All he's trying to do is help you reach your dreams."

And if he's helped any one of the 11 athletes who have asked for his help, Humphers considers his staff's efforts as time well spent.

"I really feel like the credit goes to the kids and I really appreciate the opportunity to do something to help them," he said. "This is all about opportunity.

"Whether on the field or in the classroom, it's my job as an educator to put them in the best position to succeed that I can."