

Sioux look for big contributions from Garman

Written by Mike Koolbeck

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Jer Garman set 12 school records running the football at Linn-Mar. He holds the school record for career, single season and single game rushing yards. He also broke two Mississippi Valley Conference records set by Tim Dwight.

Not only that, but Garman three times was named to the MVC all-conference first team and twice was first team all-state.

Garman has a long list of accomplishments on the gridiron, but his short stature – he's generously listed at 5-foot-9, 170 pounds -- may have scared away some colleges when it came time to recruit him.

"I feel like I do get bagged because of my size," Garman said Thursday at a ceremony at Linn-Mar that included six other athletes that signed national letters of intent. "I get criticized a lot more than someone else who is a little bit bigger. But I'm proud of what I've done and I'm glad that I got a scholarship."

Garman was one of three Linn-Mar football players signing letters. Center Mac Mahmens signed with reigning NCAA Division II champion Minnesota-Duluth and tight end/defensive end Brandon Allen with Iowa Western Community College in Council Bluffs.

Other athletes signing letters of intent were women's soccer players Madisen Garman and Kali Hubler, who are both going to Northern Iowa, and track and field athletes Kyle Dunn and Amanda Piche. Dunn is a two-time state champ in the 400 hurdles and he signed with national powerhouse Arkansas. Piche was champion in the discus at last year's Drake Relays. She signed with DePaul.

Garman signed with the University of North Dakota and it sounds like the Sioux are glad to have him.

"He's not a very big guy, but he looks like a kid that could step in and return kicks and get some

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reps in offensively right away,” North Dakota Coach Chris Mussman said of Garman during his Wednesday news conference. “I told him last night to be ready to come in and compete for a position.”

Mussman said that “anybody that can make a difference (will play). The reality is we were a 3-8 football team and we need to be better. Anybody that makes us better is going to play and play early.”

Garman said he is contemplating dropping track this spring to work on building himself up for the rigors of Division I football. North Dakota is a Football Championship Series (FCS) competitor, the same as Northern Iowa.

“Hopefully, I’ll be playing a pretty big role as a young gun,” he said. “I hope to go up and prove to them that I’m a good football player.”

Allen played his junior and senior seasons at Linn-Mar after his family moved from Chicago. He said he liked what he saw of Iowa Western on his visit to the Council Bluffs/Omaha area.

“They got a good football community there and I’m looking forward to playing with them,” Allen said.

Allen said he was recruited by some Division II schools and junior colleges. He said he is going to Iowa Western because he thinks that will give him the best chance to play at the Division I level. The Reivers had nine players from this year’s 9-2 team sign with NCAA Division I schools such as Iowa, Oregon, West Virginia, Baylor and Mississippi.

“I got two goals,” Allen said. “One is to graduate and two is to play some Division I football.”

Madisen Garman is Jer Garman’s second cousin. She said once she decided to play at the Division I level, UNI was her only choice.

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"I met the coach (James Price) at a soccer camp and told him I was interested and he started coming to some of my games," said Garman, whose dad was a football player for the Panthers. "After awhile, (Price) offered me a scholarship."

Garman and Hubler played together for the EIU soccer club in Cedar Rapids, where they gained most of their exposure to college coaches. Garman also played in the Olympic Development Program (ODP), the same as many of her new teammates.

"I already know half the team," she said. "A lot of them were on ODP with me. I love them. I also love the campus and how their team is really close. And I like how it's so close to home, too."

Three other EIU team members also signed with UNI: Kennedy's Shauna Happel, Washington's Morgan Bjornsen and Nicole Rondo of Iowa City West.

Three Linn-Mar athletes signed letters of intent during the November early signing period. Women's basketball player Kiah Stokes signed with Connecticut, and men's basketball players Matt Bohannon and Shane Benton signed with Northern Iowa and North Dakota, respectively.

Athletics Director Scott Mahmens said he expected more Linn-Mar athletes to sign national letters-of-intent during the April signing period.

"This class is very gifted," he said.