Lights add quality transfers

Chinook's Josh Jones among first part of 2013 Northern football recruiting class

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It's that time of year, when college football teams around the country start announcing the next crop of stars who will hopefully add to future successes on the gridiron.

And the Montana State University-Northern football team has had plenty of firepower to its 2013 recruiting class. Northern head coach Mark Samson recently announced the addition of 12 new Lights, including nine transfers, two high school players and a former Chinook standout.

Headlining the list of new recruits are several immediate impact players, including 6-2, 190-pound wide receiver Lavorick Williams. A transfer from NCAA Division I the University of Texas-El Paso, Williams will have one year of eligibility for the Lights, but he fills a big need as Northern lost all-conference standout Brandon O'Brien, as well as speedster Kyle Johnston and the lengthy Mick Miller.

MSU-N also has a void to fill at running back, and the Lights have added Jai Johnson, a 5-8, 205-pound back from Mesa Community College. Johnson, originally from Chandler, Ariz., will have two years with the Lights. Joining Johnson in the backfield will be 5-9, 235-pound fullback Chance Navarez. He hails from Madera, Calif., and comes to MSU-N from Merced Community College. On the offensive line, MSU-N is looking to beef up, and the addition of center Leo Rubi (6-0, 295) will certainly help. Rubi comes to Northern from Bakersfield, Calif., and American River Junior College.

On the defensive side of the ball, the Lights have also brought in some size, including a pair of large tackles. Greg Price (6-3, 315) comes to Northern from Glendale Community College in Arizona, and will have two years as of eligibility, while Weston Mudge (6-2, 280) comes to MSU-N from Bakersfield College, and will have four years of eligibility. C.J. Martin (6-1, 215) will also be joining the Lights this spring at safety. Martin comes to MSU-N from Tabor College in California.

Northern also added linebacker Jordan McFadden (6-3, 230) from Glendale, where he was all-conference at middle linebacker. McFadden is originally from Boise, Idaho and will have two years with the Lights.

Joining the Lights from the high school ranks are Choteau quarterback Austin Walker and California running back Alex Ybarra. Ybarra (5-10, 208) is an all-conference standout from La Habra, Calif. Meanwhile, Walker (6-2, 215) had an outstanding senior season for the Bulldogs, where he earned Northern B All-Conference honors. Eric Rayone (5-11, 210), a linebacker from Townsend, will also join the Lights this spring.

Finally, the Lights have also inked former Chinook all-stater Josh Jones (5-10, 225). Jones was earned Class C All-State honors on the offensive and defensive lines for the Sugarbeeters in both 2009 and 2010, and he helped the Beeters to the 2010 Class C 8-man state championship.

"We are very excited to announce the signings of these 12 student-athletes. Most of these young men have all transferred in to Northern this semester and are enrolled in classes here this spring," Samson said. "We have signed some very talented kids that not only are great athletes but good people as well. We have addressed some immediate needs with these young men and a lot of them will have the ability to
come in and compete right away for playing time. We are extremely excited about the caliber of players that we have brought in.

"These players will definitely fill some holes that we have in certain positions and provide some great experience for our team," he continued. "We feel our recruiting has gone very well so far and look forward to signing a lot of our high school recruits these next couple weeks. We are very eager to get back to work this offseason and rebound from a disappointing season this fall. We have a lot of work to do and we know that these next six months are crucial to get to where we want to be in the fall. I think we have taken a big step with these guys we have brought in and now we just need to get them acclimated to our offensive and defensive systems and get them a lot of reps in the spring."