Wednesday was national signing day for college football programs all across America. And it was a good day for the Montana State University-Northern football program as well.

Northern head coach Mark Samson inked 23 new Lights Wednesday, including 15 high school prospects from Montana. The Lights also added seven players from the state of Washington, as well as one from California.

“We are very excited to announce the signings of these student athletes,” Samson said. “All of them are great competitors and will represent our program very well on and off the field. These are the types of student athletes that we want in our program. We have signed some very talented high school kids from the state of Montana as well as six from Washington and one from California. They will all be great additions to our team next fall.

“Some of them will have the ability to see the field early in their careers and others will definitely be guys that we will count on in a couple years from now,” he added. “We feel that four or five of these young men will have an immediate impact on our team next fall and will come in as freshman with an opportunity to compete for playing time.”

The Lights addressed several areas of need with the new class of high school seniors, including quarterback. Northern graduated two-time All-Conference performer Derek Lear, while Travis Dean has just one season left. So, the Lights added Jess Krahn, a 6-4, 215-pound signal caller out of Bush Prairie, Wash. At Hockinson High School, Krahn was a four-year starter and a four-time All-Conference selection, and he threw for 3,700 yards and 30 touchdowns over the past two seasons.

And Krahn isn’t the only Washington prep standout joining the Lights. A pair of Skyline High School stars in Sammamish, Wash., have also signed to play with MSU-N. Skyline is a Seattle area 4A Washington powerhouse that has won two state championships in the last four seasons. Defensive end Josh Wright (6-2, 225) was the King County Defensive Player of the Year for Skyline this past season. He was also a First-Team All-Stater and a Seattle Times All-Area selection. He had 18 sacks and 73 tackles this past season, and is the Skyline career leader with 31 sacks. Teammate Sam Mix (6-2, 195) will join the Lights as a wide receiver as well. Even though Mix missed five games due to a broken wrist, he led the team in receptions. Another Washington WR, Bryan Moon (5-11, 180) is also headed to Northern. At W.F. West High in Chehalis, Wash., Moon earned All-State honors while grabbing 48 balls for 889 yards and 13 touchdowns this past season. West High teammate Bowe Mckay (6-4, 200) will join Moon at Northern. He can play either WR or OLB. Andrew Moser (6-2, 215) from Pullman, Wash., will also join the Lights as a linebacker. Moser is a two-time All-Conference linebacker who was selected to play in the Washington East-West Shrine Game this summer. Also on the defensive side of the ball out of Washington, Northern added 6-2, 280-pound defensive tackle Sam Harris. He hails from Longview, Wash., where he was a First-Team All-State lineman for Mark Morris High.

Northern landed another big linebacker prospect in Michael Mckeen (6-1, 215) out of Oakley, California’s Freedom High. Mckeen was an All-Conference selection this past fall and his brother Matt is a junior offensive lineman for the Lights.
The Lights also stocked up on Montana high school products, including Malta defensive tackle Kelin King (6-3, 255). He’s a two-time Class B All-State selection at DT and will play in the Shrine Game in July. Another Shrine Game standout in Helena High’s Kyle Cochran will also join the Lights. Cochran (5-11, 170) was a Class AA All-State selection as a cornerback and punt returner, and he snagged five interceptions for the Bengals this past season. Bengal teammate Matt Bachmeir will join him in Havre. The 5-11, 235-pound defensive end earned All-State honors and is also headed to the Shrine Game. MSU-N grabbed two Missoula preps as well. Kagen Khamaneh (6-3, 225, TE) and Jeremy Eisenman (6-3, 255, OL) come to Northern after a strong season with the Missoula Sentinel Spartans.

From the Class A ranks, MSU-N signed Belgrade linebacker Garrett Fowler (5-11, 200). Fowler is a three-time All Central A selection, and he earned Class A All-State honors as a senior, while helping the Panthers to the Central A championship and a Class A semifinal berth.

Along with Malta’s King, Northern signed Ronan’s Connor Benn from the Class B ranks. Benn was a Class B All-State selection at quarterback, and is headed to the Shrine Game this summer. Benn (5-9, 165) will play wide receiver for MSU-N.

Samson also hit the central Montana area of Class C football hard on the recruiting trail. Running back Wyatt McKinley (6-0, 205) comes to the Lights from Six-Man state champion Geraldine-Highwood. McKinley, from Geraldine, was a Six-Man All-State selection and is headed to the Shrine Game. MSU-N picked up two players from Northern C eight-man power Belt, three from Centerville and one from Power. From the Huskies, coached by former Light Jeff Graham, Hunter Croff (5-10, 190) was an All-State running back, while Holden Maki (5-11, 165) was an All-State standout at defensive back. From the Miners, Northern added defensive back Jesse Mayernik (5-10, 170), wide receiver Chad Mayernik (5-9, 165) and Kole Chartier (6-0, 165). Chartier was an All-Conference defensive back for the Miners. Moore linebacker Russell Haynie (6-1, 185) and Power-Dutton-Brady defensive tackle Braxton Hasner round out the list. Hasner (6-2, 275) is a two-time Class C All-State selection.

“With these 22 recruits and our six transfers that are already here on campus, we have the makings of a very good recruiting class and are excited about the potential that these young men have,” Samson said. “We are close to wrapping up our recruiting for the year, and we expect to sign between 7 to 10 more recruits in the next couple weeks. Our offseason workouts have gone very well up to this point and our kids that are here this spring are working extremely hard in order to accomplish our goals for next fall.”