



# First Amendment Fest

Local, Page A3

## Thomas contract

Seahawks make Earl Thomas the highest paid safety in the NFL.

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# DAILY RECORD

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Good afternoon

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## CWU recruiting

# Finding the next Wildcat



Brian Myrick / Daily Record

Point guard Marc Rogers, left, pitcher Maria Gau, center, and quarterback Jake Nelson are three examples of athletic recruiting at Central Washington University.

## Division II recruiting offers challenges to coaches, universities

By **DANNY SCHMIDT**  
sports editor

During Jon Brockman's dominant years playing basketball at Snohomish High School, Central Washington University head coach Greg Sparling trekked over the mountains to witness the phenom's play up close.



Sparling wasn't recruiting Brockman, he was there for his brother, Paul, and one other player on the team. The Brockmans were not able to stick around the gym and chat much after the game, however, because Duke head coach Mike Krzyzewski was flying into Boeing Field that night in the school's private jet to meet with Jon about becoming a Blue Devil.

Jon went on to play four years at the University of Washington before he was selected 38th overall in the 2009 NBA draft. Paul walked on and redshirted at Seattle Pacific University, then transferred to Bellevue Community College. He eventually made his way to Central, but it was solely for academics after suffering several injuries.

As a Division II program, the Wildcats aren't competing with Division I schools like Duke, or local PAC-12, universities. Central typically finds itself battling with other Great Northwest Athletic Conference teams for players, as well as with junior colleges and some smaller D-I schools from conferences like the Big Sky.

With no private jets parked nearby, Central coaches must sell the school to players and parents.

"A lot of kids have been down to the McDonald's and the gas stations," Sparling said. "They don't know we're a city within a city, and how beautiful our campus is."

The on-field and on-court product is important as well. Volleyball coach Mario Andaya makes it clear to prospective high schoolers that Central has a much better chance of winning a regional or national championship than a smaller D-I school



Brian Myrick / Daily Record

Central volleyball head coach Mario Andaya talks to the team after a practice last season.

like Eastern Washington University, which would play the Stanfords and Notre Dames of the country in the NCAA tournament.

"There's no Division I-AA in volleyball. Those schools play other D-I programs," Andaya said. "Do you want four years of NCAA volleyball at one of those schools, or do you want four years as an All-American at an NCAA school?"

One problem the football and basketball teams face is junior colleges promising high school students the opportunity to transfer to a D-I university after two years.

"I understand that you want to play at the highest level, but it might be that they haven't matured enough, or got big enough or strong enough or caught the eyes of somebody," said John Picha, an assistant football coach for the last 19 years.

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## CWU athletic scholarships

- Football 26, max is 36
- Women's basketball 8.5, max is 10
- Men's basketball 8.3, max is 10
- Volleyball 7.1, max is 8
- Women's soccer 5.8, max is 9.9
- Baseball 5 equivalencies, max is 9
- Women's track and field 4.7, max is 12.6
- Softball 4.5, max is 7.2
- Men's track and field and cross country 2.5, max is 12.6

\*One equivalency covers tuition, room and board and books.

## Average wildfire season on the way

### Forecasters: Conditions mostly normal, at least for now

By **ANDY MATARRESE**  
staff writer

The Northwest's fire season this year, at least the earlier months, will be on par with normal ranges for moisture and temperature, but it could pick up a bit earlier as temperatures are predicted to rise toward June and July.

"We're not looking at anything unusual for Washington at this point," said John Saltenberger, fire weather program manager for the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center.

Normal fire activity potential is expected though the month, rising to slightly above normal in June and July.

Statewide, fire season officially started April 15. A handful of wildfires already have been reported across Washington.

Current predictions based on weather patterns, drought models and fuel moisture suggest this season won't be especially different from any other, Saltenberger said.

"We're not anticipating, at this point, anything beyond those typical summertime conditions," he said.

In Central Washington, wildfire activity usually picks up around July 1, said Matt Castle, deputy fire staff for the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

Fire managers are planning and conducting prescribed burns on the forest, and firefighting staff will be up to full capacity around the first of June, he said.

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Local news serving Ellensburg, Cle Elum, Roslyn, Kittitas, Easton, Suncadia and all of Kittitas County.





## RECRUITING

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### The process

Technology has transformed recruiting high school students and junior college athletes over the past decade. Picha has a map of the United States in his Nicholson Pavilion office, but instead of cities inside each state, every university from the D-I to D-III level is listed. He receives up to 20 emails a day from athletes around the country showing interest in Central.

In addition to emails, there are countless recruiting websites and services, which make it easier for players to get recognized by college coaches. Coaches can watch film of athletes without attending games, though it doesn't stop them from doing so.

The recruiting process is different for every sport, but across the board, tracking high school athletes begins early. Coaches are not allowed to contact students until the July after their junior year, but targeting players begins when a player is a freshman.

Another common theme among recruiting at Central is staying in Washington state. The Wildcats' football team announced 26 new high schoolers this season. Only one is from outside of the state.

"Just because of the way our money for soccer works, it's a little trickier to bring in someone from outside of the state," said Michael Farrand, Central's women's soccer coach for the past 15 years. "All of our players are from Washington. Anything in Washington is fair game for us. We've had girls from Arizona, New Mexico, Hawaii, Alaska, Idaho and they worked out, but it takes a lot more planning and funding. That's not necessarily the case for everybody else, but for our budget, that's what we do."

One Central athlete from outside Washington is Marc Rodgers, a freshman point guard on the men's basketball team. Rodgers, a Los Angeles native, played a few seasons of high school ball at Middlebrooks Academy before transferring to Cathedral, a prep school. Rodgers had the option of staying another year in prep school, but decided to make the leap to collegiate basketball.

In high school, Rodgers was recruited by top-notch D-I schools such as Stanford, Xavier, San Diego State, Cal Poly, Idaho, Idaho State and more.

"Everybody thinks your senior year is going to be your best year. I had an injury and some bad games and a lot of the schools wanted me to play my last year at prep school," he said. "I didn't want another year of high school. I wanted to go to college and get started."

Cal Poly head coach Joe Callero, a former Wildcat, talked to Rodgers and told him about Central.

"He said CWU is just as good as some D-Is," Rodgers said. "He told me about how (Mark) McLaughlin was going to be playing pro ball, regardless of being in Division II. That was one of the deciding factors. I put in so much time to this, so I definitely want to get paid for what I do one day. I love basketball to death. I want to take this as far as I can. Meeting Mark and him telling me about his situation really helped."

Rodgers visited Ellensburg and made his decision on the spot, to the displeasure of many of his friends. He could have played D-I had he stayed at prep school and avoided serious injuries, but he said he doesn't regret his decision one bit.

Rodgers said one pleasant surprise was finding out how tough the

competition in the GNAC is. After an exhibition game against the Huskies, several of Rodgers' UW friends on the team told him how impressed they were with Central's squad.

"Some of the schools that were recruiting me, the coaches had a fake smile. It was more their job," Rodgers said. "I had a good relationship with Spar and Drew right away."

### New blueprint

CWU Athletic Director Dennis Francois, who began last summer, has made a concerted effort for coaches to rely on high school students rather than transfers.

Francois wants to make the shift for a few reasons. He believes the earlier an athlete is introduced to the system, the quicker he or she will learn it; he said players out of high school who stick around for four or five years typically take on more leadership roles; and high schoolers receive more of a college experience by living in the residence halls and eating on campus. Not that transfer students don't, he said, but four- or five-year athletes tend to develop a stronger affinity with the university.

With the new plan, the Wildcats' men's basketball team, which has relied heavily on transfers from Tacoma Community College the last few years, signed Rodgers, Terry Dawn and Jalen Peake last spring, and announced the signing of three more high school seniors for next season, who will help replace McLaughlin, JB Pillard III and Kevin Davis, all of whom transferred from four-year universities after being recruited by D-I schools. McLaughlin and Davis came from TCC.

"We know there's always going to be a role for transfers," Francois said. "They play a vital role, especially when you have a hole in your roster that you need to fill. But I think for us to be consistently successful, we've got to make sure that we're investing in developing a four-year program, and that's recruiting the best high school students we can."

Central has always been a home for former Division I athletes, going back to Dean Nicholson, whether they left voluntarily or involuntarily. Nicholson coached CWU's men's basketball team from 1964-1990.

"Second-chance kids is where he made a living. But times have changed," Sparling said. "You have a lot more factors in the equation now. Nich gave a lot of people second chances. And we've done that a lot in my tenure. There's guys who we've taken risks on that have really panned out, and we've also taken risks on guys that didn't pan out."

Sparling said the plan will take three to five years to truly pay off, but he's all in.

Sparling works with assistant coach Drew Harris, Jared Johnson and student team manager Mac Clark. He and Harris take most of the trips to watch players.

About 17 years ago, Sparling and then assistant Mike Burns drove to the Okanogan area to visit with Michael Ward, a 6-foot-9 forward from Wenatchee Community College. Sparling thought he was lost when he pulled up to Ward's home, because there were hunting stands and decoys all around the yard.

The coaches schmoozed with Ward, then the conversation turned toward his interests, which it typically does. Ward began talking about hunting, the only thing he may have loved more than basketball.

Ward was excited talking to

Sparling and Burns about hunting, even though neither coach had much to contribute. Ward asked if they were hungry, to which they politely said yes.

He walked to his freezer and took out rattlesnake, elk and other game.

"Most kids bring out scrapbooks," Sparling said. "I had never eaten rattlesnake before, until that point. We ended up getting him, but it had to do more with our basketball skills than our hunting skills."

### Connections

High school and club coaches are the biggest resource to Central coaches. Picha and the football staff call every high school coach in Washington at some point in the recruiting process. Even though college coaches cannot talk to players until their junior year, their presence is usually noticed.

"Club coaches know we're there," Farrand said. "We'll leave a card with club coaches and tell them who we were watching. We can't contact them, but they can email us telling us their schedule, how they're doing, when they play and things like that."

Farrand said the Wildcats are stuck in between the recruiting worlds. The Wildcats are doing well within the GNAC, but they find themselves looking at the same players as Idaho, Eastern and schools of that size.

"If a girl is going to get more money going to play for a Division I school, that can be a very easy decision for her and mom and dad," Farrand said. "Once we get girls and parents on campus, they walk through the campus and walk through the neighborhoods and they say this is a really great place."

The women's soccer team is one of Central's top athletic programs in terms of graduation rate. As a whole, Central's athletes' graduation rate is more than 10 percent higher than the rest of the student population. Francois believes that number will grow even more with Ricardo Sanon, an academic success coordinator for student-athletes, who was hired this year.

### Visiting

Farrand relies on unofficial visits from prospects, which means a player visits the campus and might contact him asking to meet and chat. An official visit entails taking the recruit on a tour of the campus, facilities, having her meet the coaches and team and even play with them.

Most teams recruit by position, targeting whichever they need. But for the most part, each coach goes after the best athletes possible, regardless of position. The number of recruits depends on how many returners a team will have. The volleyball team had six signees a year ago, and only two this winter.

### Scholarships

Under new head football coach Ian Shoemaker, the athletes with the top 20 grade-point averages on the football team receive a \$500 tuition bonus. The 10 who improved the most also get a bonus.

"It's incentive and it puts your money where your mouth is," Picha said. "We talk about how important academics are, well here it is. And for a school this size, that's a big commitment, but we feel that it's worth it. It's something that the players will gravitate to."

In terms of scholarships, an equivalency is tuition, room and board and books. The football team led the way last year with 26 equivalencies allotted, while the NCAA's maximum number is 36. The basket-

## Recruiting rules

Each Central Washington University coach has a binder full of rules from the NCAA on recruiting and eligibility. John Picha, an assistant football coach said each year coaches must take and pass a 40-question test on the subject and score at least 80 percent.

Some rules are obvious: coaches are not allowed to pick up athletes from their front porch in a helicopter or limousine. Others aren't so easy.

"Can you pay a parent for driving him over?" Picha asked. "What kind of material you can send, when you can call, when you can email, what kind of emails, can it have two colors or does it have to be black and white? Can a player who played here be on a poster that you send to a high school kid or coach? Can you give shoes to a little league team? Can you give them old footballs? The rules change every year because there's always something a school did — usually the bigger schools."

— Danny Schmidt

ball team's max was 10, and the Central men received 8.3, while the women were given 8.5. Volleyball got 7.1 with the max at 8, women's soccer had 5.8 equivalencies with a max of 9.9, the baseball and softball team combined for 9.5 with a max of 16.2, and the track and field and cross country teams combined for 7.2 with a maximum of 25.2.

Scholarships, around the nation, are distributed on a one-year basis. Central, as a D-II school, is able to divide the scholarship money, allowing more athletes to receive money.

Francois said the equivalency numbers have improved this year, and he expects them to rise even more next year. Having Jim Gaudino, Central's president, so interested in sports is a huge help, Sparling said. Some presidents couldn't care less.

With Francois' plans to revamp Tomlinson Stadium and the athletic facilities on campus, he expects more high school students to be attracted to Central.

"The vast majority of these kids are coming from high schools that have beautiful, state-of-the-art facilities," he said. "That is a deficit that we have right now, but we're committed to making sure we're improving those things."

Francois said the department is working to finalize plans for the stadium, which he previously said would include moving the track surrounding the field and allowing rugby and soccer to compete at Tomlinson with football.

Nowhere in Francois' plan is a private plane for coaches to fly in to visit recruits, so in the meantime, Central coaches will go with what's been working for them.

"If you're a kid that needs to be in a mall every day, don't come to Central. A lot of kids from the city want to get out of there and try something a little different. The nice thing about Central is the college atmosphere here is awesome," Picha said. "We're not too big with almost 11,000 students, and classes are in the 35 to 40 range, similar to high school. Right now the downside is the size of the stadium, but I have talked to kids and once you step on the field, there is no difference."

*Kittitas Valley Character is a local feature that runs on Tuesdays in the Daily Record. To recommend a person or topic, email newsroom@kvnews.com.*

## FIRE

Continued from Page A1

"Right now, the long range forecasts might be a bit warmer than average for spring," Castle said.

The National Inter-agency Fire Center's Predictive Services forecasters, looking from April through July, found much of the Western United States dodged the cold weather that slammed the rest of the country early this year, and saw temperatures a few degrees above normal levels.

Several late-season storms moved through the country, bringing rain and snow to the Northwest and northern Rocky Mountains, according to forecasters, with more than 200 percent normal precipitation for March.

"We were really concerned earlier this winter through January, it was so dry and we were so far behind," Castle said.

Rains in February and March were well above normal, and the snowpack in Washington remains nearly normal.

Longer-term outlooks — made earlier this month — through July suggest warmer and drier conditions over Oregon, but less so in Washington.

"Up here, I'm not expecting a huge year, an abnormally large year," said Bob Tobin, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Spokane, but summer might get a bit warmer sooner.

It all really depends on what kind of weather July

and August bring, he said. 2012 was a very wet year, but it dried out quickly.

What rain did come those months brought lightning, sparking many fires, including the Table Mountain Fire.

"It could go that quick," he said. "It all depends on if we get lightning starts or not. ... That's the million dollar question right there, how much lightning are we going to get?"

Lightning, Saltenberger said, is tough to predict.

"That's the wildcard." Going south, to Southern Oregon and beyond, things look much drier, warmer and more promising for a big fire season, Tobin said. Even if firefighters aren't busy working locally, fires elsewhere can stretch personnel and equipment.

Extended drought conditions, poor snowpack and low precipitation in much of the West will mean low moisture in vegetation across the county, leading to higher fire danger.

Fuel moisture in the interior Northwest, however, has been significantly greater than expected, forecasters say.

Still, Tobin said, in dry places such as Central Washington, fires are a given. How active they end up being, forecasters can do only a little better.

"Like I tell everybody, we'll know for sure in September how the fire season went," he said. "That's hindcasting."

## DEATH NOTICES

### ROSEANN HOLDEMAN

RoseAnn Holdeman, age 80, of Cle Elum, died on April 20, 2014. She was born Nov. 25, 1933, in Omak. A Memorial Service will be held at 5 p.m. on Saturday, May 3, 2014, at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Cle Elum, Washington. Condolences may be left at [www.cascadefuneralhome.com](http://www.cascadefuneralhome.com).

CASCADE FUNERAL HOME

### CINDY-LEI ANGELIQUE BURRIS

Cindy-Lei Angelique Burris, age 44, passed away April 23, 2014 in Ellensburg. She was born in Burbank, Calif., on May 30, 1969. Service information will be announced in an obituary to follow. Arrangements by Brookside Funeral Home & Crematory, Ellensburg

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