

# Gators, Vols rank as country's best

Most experts rank Steve Spurrier's class as number one in the nation while some say Vols reaped best crop of high school talent.

As Steve Spurrier likes to say, it's great to be a Gator!

Some of the nation's most promising prospects agreed with the Florida coach on Wednesday, becoming baby Gators on the first day high school stars can sign letters of intent.

"We did get most all the guys we went after this year," Spurrier said. "A few weeks ago, I didn't think we were recruiting enough players to sign 21 or 22. But it seemed like they all wanted to come play for the Gators this year."

With an incoming class led by quarterback Brock Berlin, USA Today's offensive player of the year, All-American linebacker Darrell Lee and a flurry of impressive last-minute signees, Florida came out the winner in Recruiting Wars 2000.

"A landslide for the Gators, an easy win," said Allen Wallace, publisher of Laguna Beach, Calif.-based SuperPrep magazine. "What an incredible day they had."

Bobby Burton, of Austin, Texas-based The National Recruiting Adviser, agreed. "Florida was amazing — lots of big names on signing day," he said.

Tom Lemming of Schaumburg, Ill.-based Prep Football Report also gave the nod to Florida, while Max Emfinger of Covington, La.-based National Blue Chips had Tennessee first with the Gators a close second. Alabama, Florida State, Penn State and Texas showed up in at least one of the four recruiting gurus' top-5 lists.

"Tennessee signed some of the most dominant players in the country," Emfinger said. "They have two top quarterbacks already getting ready for spring training, and they signed two top wide receivers today in Tony Brown and Rashad Baker."

Quarterbacks Casey Clausen and John Rattay, brother of Louisiana Tech's Tim Rattay, made early commitments to the Vols and are set to take part in spring practice.

The 6-1, 190-pound Berlin is also ready. Berlin, the Gators' prize recruit from Shreveport, La., threw for 4,219 yards and 36 TDs in his senior year at Evangel Christian. In four years, his team was 60-0 with four state titles.

While Florida made a huge move Wednesday in signing 29 players, it paled by comparison to Florida State's surge. The Seminoles, despite a perfect season and national championship, weren't on many top 10 lists — until wacky Wednesday.

By the time the day ended, Florida State was third on Emfinger's and Wallace's top 10 list, fourth on Lemming's and seventh on Burton's. Burton said the Seminoles began the day rated 24th on his list.

Coach Bobby Bowden, that crafty recruiter who shows up at a prospect's doorstep for one last-minute pitch, came through again. He convinced Parade and USA Today All-American Travis Johnson, a 6-5, 240-pounder from Sherman Oaks, Calif., to head to the Sunshine State.

The Seminoles also grabbed two other All-Americans on Wednesday — defensive back Bryant McFadden from Hollywood, Fla. and linebacker Eric Moore from Pahokee, Fla. All-American defensive back Yohance Buchanan from Atlanta made good on an earlier verbal commitment.

Michael Boulware, brother of former Florida State All-American Peter Boulware, also signed with the Seminoles.

Linebacker D.J. Williams, the consensus defensive player of the year from Concord, Calif., was undecided

late Wednesday. He was said to be considering Florida State, Michigan and California, but was unlikely to make a decision until later in the week.

Florida soared to the top when it landed highly regarded defensive backs Cory Bailey from Hialeah, Fla. and Trey Orr from Lake City, Fla.

The Gators also got offensive linemen Jonathan Colon (6-6, 285) from Miami, Max Starks (6-8, 340) from Orlando and Kevin Deaton (6-4, 290) from Merritt Island, Fla.

Defensive tackle Kenny Parker (6-4, 300) from Warner-Robins, Ga. and wide receiver Kelvin Kight from Lithonia, Ga. also signed with the Gators.

"I hope these guys will all stick together and last four to five years," said Spurrier, whose Gators finished 9-3 in '99. "If they can do that, we're going to have a chance for some very good teams in future years."

The four recruiting experts agreed it was a big year for Southern teams, specifically the Southeastern Conference. Alabama joined Florida and Tennessee with an impressive signing class.

"The South is cleaning up," Lemming, who had Florida, Tennessee and Alabama 1-2-3 on his top 10 list. "In Florida's case, they were No. 1 going in and got a bunch of stars today."

Lemming also cited the Gators' poor finish last season as a reason for their recruiting success.

"When powerhouses falter a little, kids get the idea they can come right in and play," Lemming said.

Michigan and Notre Dame, usually in the top 10, didn't fare so well. The Wolverines lost out on American wide receiver Charles Rogers from Detroit, who chose Michigan State, and All-American offensive lineman Kwame Harris, who signed with Stanford.

The Irish didn't have a star player in their incoming class, says Emfinger. They didn't even sign Starks, the son of former Notre Dame star Ross Browner, who chose the Gators instead.

"They were about 15th — the problem is they don't have a difference maker, a 7 in my ratings," Emfinger said. "They have some 6s and 5s, and they also signed four quarterbacks. What are they going to do with all of them?"

Until Wednesday, Penn State coach Joe Paterno had himself the top class, no one spectacular, but a solid all-around group.

"Penn State dictated the process for seven months," Wallace said, "and Florida took over on signing day."

Among the Nittany Lions signees were quarterbacks Zac Wasserman of Westlake Village, Calif., and Zack Mills of Ijamsville, Md. and linemen Jeremiah Davis of Annandale, Va., Scott Davis of Parkersburg, W.Va., Sam Ruhe of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, Erik Noll of Gaithersburg, Md., Dan Acri of Harrisburg, Pa. and Jason Robinson of Swedesboro, N.J.

Texas, the winner of last year's recruiting fight, had another strong year. The Longhorns grabbed home-grown receivers B.J. Johnson (South Grand Prairie), Roy Williams (Odessa), Sloan Thomas (Klein) and Brock Edwards (Fort Worth).

# Six Nebraskans choose Huskers

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anyone within this year's recruiting class, according to Coach Frank Solich.

Cooper, out of Omaha Westside High School, was one of four linebackers the Huskers signed to fill the void of the four they lost.

At Westside, Cooper was a four-year starter. His older brother Michael played linebacker at Iowa State while his father, Harley, is a former Olympic boxer. Cooper is the youngest of 15 children.

With ties to the Cyclones, Cooper said he felt no pressure to go elsewhere than NU.

"I always knew I wanted to go to Nebraska," Cooper said. "It's the place for me."

Cooper was rated the 16th best linebacker in the country according to Rivals' 100 recruiting service.

McPherson, a 5-foot-9, 175-pound cornerback out of Omaha Central High School, is just one of many players that NU and other

"I always knew I wanted to go to Nebraska. It's the place for me."

Ira Cooper  
NU football recruit

Division I schools got from the strong eagle program.

The tradition of the Central program goes back all the way to former NFL Hall-of-Fame running back Gale Sayers. The Eagles have also produced such greats as Ahman Green, Calvin Jones and Leodis Flowers.

According to Rivals' 100 recruiting service, McPherson is ranked ninth overall in the country at cornerback.

Erickson, out of Papillion-LaVista High School, is one of four linemen to sign with NU. He is Nebraska's only in-state lineman recruit this year.

As a Monarch, Erickson was a three-year starter under Coach

Gene Suhr, the father of Husker softball player Leigh Suhr.

During his sophomore season, Erickson started alongside current NU player Jeremy Slechta. Erickson said seeing Slechta go to Nebraska made him really want to get there.

"When he first signed, I thought I could probably get there just because of the reputation of the program," Erickson said. "Coach Suhr's work goes a long way down there. He's real credible, and I just had a real good feeling it would happen."

Erickson is currently recovering from shoulder surgery and won't be able to go through contact for six months, he said.

# Experts say non-commits hurt Huskers

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Septak and Terrell Butler.

Butler, a defensive back from Austell, Georgia, made the SuperPrep top 50. SuperPrep also chose him as its fifth-best defensive back. The High School All-American runs a 4.4 second, 40-yard dash.

Septak, the Millard West tight end, was picked as the 34th-best recruit by The Sporting News.

Overall, 13 of the Huskers received some sort of regional or national recognition as an outstanding recruit. Solich even got into the act. The coach was selected by ESPN as one of the top 15 recruiters in the country.

Not that he particularly cared. At the press conference on Wednesday, the coach cautioned against overemphasis on the rankings.

He said those ratings had little bearing on who the Huskers recruited.

"I don't know how much (being ranked high) means," the coach said. "We set out to get some guys that are not necessarily on those lists. We might talk about it (their ranking) a little bit when we are watching film. If we feel good about a guy, it doesn't really matter if he's ranked high or not."

# 2000 Husker Recruits

NAME	POS.	HT.	WT.	HOMETOWN	HIGH SCHOOL
Willie Amos	DB	6-2	185	Sweetwater, TX	Sweetwater
Jake Andersen	OL	6-2	300	Littleton, CO	J.K. Mullen
Marcell Brown	RE	6-4	280	Salt Lake City, UT	Granger
Terrell Butler	DB	5-11	195	Austell, GA	Pebblebrook
Thunder Collins	RB	6-2	200	Los Angeles, CA	East L.A. College, Manual Arts High School
Ira Cooper	LB	6-2	220	Omaha, NE	Westside
Sandro DeAngelo	PK/P	5-9	200	St. Joseph's	Ontario, Canada Collegiate (N.Y.)
Mike Erickson	OL	6-4	275	Omaha, NE	Papillion-La Vista
M.J. Flamm	OL	6-4	295	Westminster, CO	Northglenn
T.J. Hollowell	LB	6-1	215	Copperas Cove, TX	Copperas
Lannie Hopkins	LB	6-1	195	Rowlett, TX	Rowlett
Steve Kriewald	FB	5-11	250	Scotia, NE	North Loup-Scotia
DeWayne Long	WR	6-0	200	West Des Moines, IA	Dowling
Alvin Marshall	WR	5-11	180	Los Angeles, CA	Locke
Lorrell McPherson	DB	5-10	175	Omaha, NE	Central
Ross Pilkington	WR	6-1	185	Fort Collins, CO	Loveland
Nick Povendo	OL	6-5	305	Keller, TX	Keller
Jason Richenberger	LB	6-1	200	Liberty, MO	Liberty
Chris Septak	TE	6-4	245	Omaha, NE	Millard West
Benard Thomas	RE	6-4	235	East Palo Alto, CA	St. Francis
Ben Zaitsek	WR	6-0	200	Beatrice, NE	Beatrice

\*Junior college transfer, will enter as a sophomore

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# Daily Nebraskan Editor

The 2000-01 editor in chief will formulate editorial policies, determine guidelines for the daily operation of the newsroom, hire the senior editorial staff, help determine the content of the newspaper and prepare the editorial wage budget. Applicants must have one year of newspaper experience, preferably at the Daily Nebraskan. The position begins Aug. 1, 2000 and lasts until May 4, 2001.

The editor earns \$1000/month (except in December, March and May) and reports to the UNL Publications Board. The editor must be enrolled in at least six credit hours during each of the two 2000-01 semesters, maintain a 2.0 minimum G.P.A., and not be on academic probation. Applications are available at the Daily Nebraskan office, basement of the Nebraska Union, and must be returned with up to five clips by noon Feb. 8.

