

Pitt coach recruits hard

By Alan Robinson
AP Sports Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) - New coach Dave Wannstedt apparently wasn't kidding when he promised to refocus Pitt's recruiting on its traditional strength, its western Pennsylvania backyard.

With recruiting effectively over except for the traditional flurry of last-minute activity on national letter of intent day Wednesday, Pitt expects to increase its Pittsburgh-area high school football signings from six a year ago to 10.

The Pittsburgh area no longer turns out the quantity or, for the most part, the quality of player it did in the days of Tony Dorsett, Dan Marino, Joe Montana, Joe Namath or Bill Fralic. But Pitt missed out on so many good local players during coach Walt Harris' eight-year stay that Wannstedt has spent considerable time in local high schools since his Christmas-week hiring.

Wannstedt even visited some schools that lack top recruits this year, if only to prove Pitt's commitment to the area.

"In the NFL, you're recruiting 12 months a year - talking to free agents, selling yourself and your program," said Wannstedt, the former Dolphins and Bears coach. "I know the importance of recruiting. One of my strengths will be communicating with the high school coaches. The coaches around here are outstanding, and they want to feel like they're a part of this."

Wannstedt's desire to rebuild Pitt's local recruiting base paid off last weekend with commitments from Seton-La Salle all-state quarterback Bill Stull and Monessen fullback-linebacker Ernest "Mick" Williams.

The Panthers' basketball win Saturday night over then-No. 4 Syracuse didn't hurt, either. Both players liked the intensity and

atmosphere at the game, and each committed almost immediately afterward.

Stull initially committed to Kentucky, but changed his mind after the assistant recruiting him there, Paul Dunn, joined Wannstedt's staff. Stull did something that even former western Pennsylvania star quarterbacks Namath, Marino, Jim Kelly, Johnny Unitas and Marc Bulger didn't do: throw for 3,000 yards in a high school season.

Stull is considered the nation's 11th best pro-style quarterback by the Rivals.com recruiting service, but wasn't recruited by Harris.

Williams, an all-stater who also

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considered West Virginia and Iowa, is regarded as the No. 8 fullback nationally by Rivals.com, but was recruited by Pitt as a linebacker. He is listed at 245 pounds but may weigh closer to 270, though he said he plans to drop weight.

Since being hired five weeks ago, Wannstedt has landed four other local recruits: West Allegheny defensive lineman C.J. Davis, Duquesne running back Shane Brooks, and quarterback-defensive back Shane Murray and all-state tight end

John Pelusi from Pennsylvania Class AAAA champion Pittsburgh Central Catholic - Marino's alma mater.

Pelusi is the son of John Pelusi, who played on Pitt's 1976 national championship team. Pelusi also considered Stanford, where Harris now coaches; Boston College; Northwestern; and Connecticut.

Not all of Wannstedt's recruiting efforts were focused on Pittsburgh. He also went back to Miami to get commitments from No. 3-rated fullback Conredge Collins of Monsignor Pace High, tight end-defensive lineman Gus Matakas of Chaminade-Madonna High and lineman Tommy Duhart of Glades Central High. The 5-foot-11, 225-pound Collins is the son of former Patriots running back Tony Collins and also had offers from Miami, Florida State and Ohio State.

Before Wannstedt arrived, Pitt missed out on the Pittsburgh area's most-recruited player, Gateway's Jason King - a Penn State signee considered the nation's top cornerback recruit.

With all commitments nonbinding until signing day Wednesday, Pitt also has commitments from:

Offensive lineman John Bachman, Moon High, Coraopolis; running back Irvan Brown, Central Square, N.Y.; wide receiver Tommie Campbell, Aliquippa; defensive lineman Rashad Duncan, Belle Glade, Fla.; linebacker Doug Fulmer, Syracuse, N.Y.; offensive lineman Kevin Hughes, Allendale, N.J.; defensive tackle Derrell Jones, Waldorf, Md.; defensive end Gus Mustakas, Hollywood, Fla.; wide receiver Shawn Simmons, New Brunswick, N.J.; running back LaRod Stephens, Johnstown; defensive tackle Marlon Terry, Akron; wide receiver Oderick Turner, Teaneck, N.J.; and defensive back Bryan Williams, Akron.



Photo courtesy of www.wsvn.com

Dave Wannstedt, former Dolphins and Bears coach, has a desire to rebuild Pitt's local recruiting base to prove Pitt's commitment to the area.

Baseball season winds up

Boston Red Sox open new season as defending champions

By Herb Smith
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Pitchers and catchers are making their way to Florida and Arizona, a sure-fire sign that baseball is just around the corner. The new season is set to begin April 3, and for the first time in 86 years, the Boston Red Sox will open the season as defending champions. Four short months ago, the Red Sox laughed in the face of the Babe and his curse and walked home with the title, leaving the New York Yankees to wonder when exactly hell froze over.

The Yankees, who have become accustomed to winning and won't stand for finishing in second place, spent their off season trying to close holes in their team with high hopes of making another run for their 27th World Series crown. Their big prize during the off season was landing Randy Johnson. The 40-year-old flame-throwing southpaw has shown he can still bring the heat, even in the twilight of his career.

Other new additions joining Johnson in Yankee stripes are Carl Pavano and Jared Wright. Pitching was a weakness of the Yanks last season and they have made strides towards solving that problem. Also, the 'Bronx Bombers' brought back home two familiar faces, Mike Stanton and Tino Martinez, two players who were big parts of the World Series Championship teams in the late 90s.

Of course, no matter how hard they might try, the Yankees cannot sign everyone. The hot commodity teams scrambled to get this time was Carlos Beltran.

Beltran made a big splash during the playoffs last season, and several teams made a play at signing him, including the Yankees. However, Beltran ended up across town from the Bronx in Flushing, Queens and will man centerfield for the New York Mets.

The Mets made the most noise this off season and spent the most money. Beltran almost overshadowed the signing of former Red Sox ace Pedro Martinez. Martinez left Beantown after winning a title for the big money in the Big Apple. Mets' general manager, Omar Minaya, promised a competitive team this year and is backing up his words with dollar signs.

Minaya has his ace in Martinez, has Beltran in the middle of the lineup, and he may not be done yet. The Mets are making a big run at free agent first baseman Carlos Delgado. Delgado brings a .300 average and 40 home

runs a season; adding him to the lineup should make the Mets a contender right away.

Despite threats of another retirement, Roger Clemens will be on the mound for the Astros at least one more season; all it cost Houston was \$18 million. Clemens is now the highest paid pitcher in the history of baseball, but he has more Cy Young awards than any other pitcher; so if any pitcher is worth that much money, it would be the 'Rocket.'

This baseball off season was tame in comparison to some others, but several big names did change uniforms and those 'new faces in new places' should have an impact on the teams that are left standing in October.

Look for more major league baseball coverage in future issues of The Capital Times.

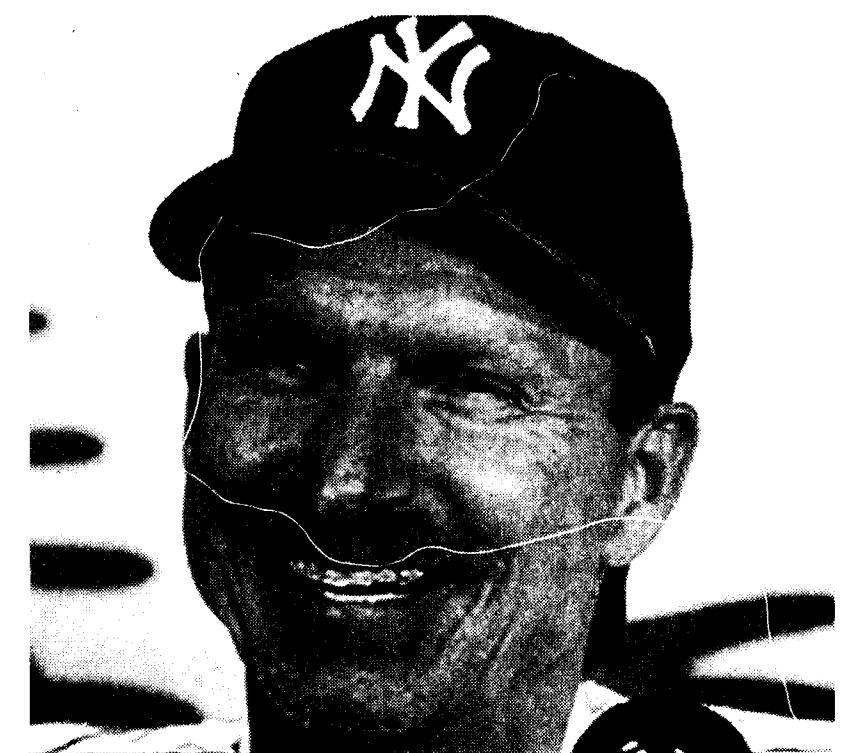



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The Yankees added Randy Johnson as another "stripe." Johnson has shown that he can still bring the heat, as he gears up for the new season.

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