

**SPORTS**[Print](#) [← Back](#) [← Home](#)**Midland's Bowers chooses WVU**

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ONA -- Cabell Midland offensive lineman Cole Bowers is the type of football player every coach loves to have, according to Knights' head coach Chip McMillian.

He leads by example in the weight room and on the field while always putting the team ahead of himself.

It is that team-first attitude that made the recruiting process excruciating for Bowers, who verbally committed to West Virginia University at the Gold-White spring game. He even sounded apologetic about making a decision that thought of himself first instead of the team.

"I just had to make my decision and worry about what's best for me," Bowers said. "Not to be greedy or anything, but like my parents say, it's going to be where I spend five years of my life."

Even for the weight-room dwelling Bowers, who squats 465 pounds and benches 350 pounds, committing to the Mountaineer program was a huge weight off his shoulders.

In fact, Bowers has even added to the Marshall-West Virginia rivalry, a fight that the Mountaineers appear to have won in this instance. Former Marshall coach Bob Pruett also tried to recruit Bowers to the University of Virginia, offering him a scholarship following the UVA Camp. Purdue and Tennessee also phoned McMillian, but for the most part, it was a two-horse recruiting race in the Mountain State.

Being an in-state student, WVU and Marshall jumped on the chance to recruit Bowers early. Bowers said Marshall offered him a scholarship on the first day he was eligible to receive offers and that he has a close relationship with Thundering Herd tackles and tight ends coach Phil Ratliff.

The connection with the Herd program does not stop there. Bowers' uncle, Rob, played at Marshall and his cousin Chris, a fellow Knight, will join the Marshall football program this fall.

Meanwhile, Bowers' parents are avid WVU supporters and assistant coach Doc Holliday recruited the tackle, but Bowers said the program really sold itself.

"It is West Virginia's pro football team," Bowers said. "Everyone comes to watch WVU football except for around here because it is near Marshall. Almost all of the state is into the football program."

Bowers said his emotions throughout the process took many twists and turns. He had friends and family pulling from all angles and it took its toll on him.

Whenever he finalized his decision to attend WVU -- a verbal that he said is very solid -- it marked a bittersweet end to the recruiting process.

He was excited to be convinced of where he wanted to continue his career, but said the hardest thing he had to do was to let the other coaches recruiting him know of his decision.

"The relationship with me and Phil Ratliff, it was a close one," Bowers said. "He offered me a scholarship my sophomore year and we were really close up until I committed. It was really hard to tell him 'Hey, I'm headed elsewhere, to your rival.' It was really a hard thing to do."

Bowers said coaches from other schools told him they would continue to recruit him until his decision was in ink. That day cannot come until February 2009.

Until then, Bowers said his commitment is toward making a memorable senior season with the Knights, something that brought a smile to McMillian's face.

McMillian said Bowers' experience against the tough competition throughout the state has gotten him ready for the next level. In practice, he faced off against his cousin Chris at times and Purdue-bound lineman Andrew Brewer while also going head-to-head in games with future WVU teammate Josh Jenkins from Parkersburg.

"We play in a tough league. He's not going up against lightweights on Friday nights," McMillian said. "He's gone up against Jenkins from Parkersburg for the last two years, so he's ready to move to that next level."

"He's still growing, he's yet to fill out completely, he's just a true blue-chip athlete. He really doesn't know how good he can be yet. I wouldn't be surprised if he went up there and made some things happen, then moved on to the next level."

Bowers is also one of the top track and field athletes in the state.

His discus throw of 159-feet, 3 inches is the best in Class AAA this spring. His best shot put performance of 50-6 is third-best in the state.

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