

For Immediate Release

February 1, 2023

## NIU FOOTBALL ADDS NINE FOR 2023

February Signing Day Group includes Six from Illinois

DeKALB, Illinois – Northern Illinois University head coach Thomas Hammock announced the addition of seven freshmen to its 2023 incoming class on Wednesday, the first day of the February signing period.

The latest group join the [18 players](#) who signed National Letters of Intent in December and the [six additions](#), including five transfers, who joined the team in January on the first day of spring semester classes.

“This is a good group of players who all played well during their senior seasons,” Hammock said. “We evaluated them as seniors and feel they can help our football team. We’re happy to have them as Huskies. They help fill some needs as we look to build depth and create competition at every position. We will continue to build our roster throughout the spring and summer as we work to develop our team going into the 2023 season.”

Eight of NIU’s nine February recruits are from Illinois or a neighboring state, including three “locals” in defensive back Ethan Tierney of DeKalb (DeKalb HS), running back Garrett Gensler from Rochelle (Rochelle Township HS) and tight end Tyler Gaines out of Rockford’s Thomas Jefferson High School.

“Adding six guys from Illinois and eight of nine from the Midwest is a big deal,” Hammock said. “We always want to take care of guys from the state, that’s an important part of our roster as is bringing in talent from this region. We’ve also got Kobe [Askew] in this group, who is coming in along with his high school teammate [December signee] Jay’shon [Thomas].”

### NIU Football February 2023 Recruits

Kobe Askew	WR	6-1	192	Fr.	Cataula, Ga. (Harris County HS)
Tyler Gaines	TE	6-3	220	Fr.	Rockford, Ill. (Thomas Jefferson HS)
Garrett Gensler	RB	6-1	200	Fr.	Rochelle, Ill. (Rochelle Township HS)
Tyler Gentile	DB	6-2	187	Fr.	Oak Forest, Ill. (Oak Forest HS)
Landon Hron	OL	6-4	295	Fr.	Hartford, Wis. (Hartford HS)
Chase Hutchinson	LB	6-2	190	Fr.	West Des Moines, Iowa (Valley HS)
James Smith Jr.	WR	6-6	185	Fr.	Calumet Park, Ill. (HL Richards HS)
Ethan Tierney	DB	6-1	185	Fr.	DeKalb, Ill. (DeKalb HS)
Danny Vuckovic	K	6-0	190	Fr.	Kildeer, Ill. (Lake Zurich HS)

The Huskies’ complete 2023 signing class and 2023 roster is just one topic Hammock will address during “A Night with NIU Football” on Friday, February 10 in the Novak Room at Fatty’s Pub & Grille. Fans are invited to join Hammock, members of the NIU coaching staff and special guests at this free event from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

Enjoy appetizers and a cash bar while catching up on all the offseason activities, preparations for the upcoming season and more. Representatives will be on hand to take season ticket and Huskie Athletic Fund renewals and to provide expertise on NIU and the NIL landscape and collectives. While the event is free to attend, pre-registration is required. To RSVP, [click here](#).

For Immediate Release  
December 21, 2022

## HUSKIES ADD 18 FOR 2023 ON DECEMBER SIGNING DAY

Hammock Pleased with Initial Group as Roster Construction Continues

DeKALB, Illinois – The Northern Illinois University Huskies announced the addition of 18 players, including 15 freshmen and three junior college transfers, for 2023 on National Signing Day Wednesday. The signees hail from 10 different states and included at least one player from every position group on the team.

Head coach Thomas Hammock, who completed his fourth season at NIU in 2022, was excited to begin putting together the Huskies' 2023 roster with Wednesday's announcement.

"This was certainly a great start to the recruiting process for us," Hammock said. "There are a lot more ways to construct your roster now than in the past, and this is the first phase for us. The second phase will be when school starts when we'll announce several transfers and then we'll have another group in February, including our preferred walk-ons, who we consider recruited players. We couldn't be more excited about how we've been able to add to our football team today."

The Huskies' class features four players from Georgia, a state already well-represented on the NIU roster, with Illinois and Michigan each sending three student-athletes to DeKalb. NIU added a defensive back and a tight end from Florida. Both coasts are represented by two of the Huskies' three junior college additions with tight end Grayson Barnes from Rocklin, California and American River College and New Jersey product via Butler (Kansas) Community College Azhaun Dingle. The Huskies also signed players from the neighboring states of Indiana, Wisconsin and Missouri as well as a kicker from North Carolina.

Of the 18 players announced Wednesday, 10 played offensive line (4), tight end (3) or defensive line (3), positions – along with quarterback – that Hammock referred to as important to develop for the future.

"With this group, we had a long-term vision of filling some needs, some developmental positions that we need to address including the offensive line, tight end, defensive line and quarterback," Hammock said. "Those are premium positions for us as a program, positions that take time to develop."

Several of the student-athletes signed today – including quarterback Mason Kidd and defensive back Santana Banner - will join the incoming mid-year transfers on campus in January.

“We’ll have approximately 10 guys join us at mid-year as we continue to build our roster for 2023,” Hammock said. “There are a lot of moving parts [to recruiting]. We are certainly happy with a talented group that we added today, we’ve known these kids a long time and this class so far is the culmination of a lot of hard work through this first phase. We have a lot more pieces coming, but today is a good day.”

The 2023 spring semester at NIU begins January 17.

See the roster of the newest Huskies below. Find the roster and bios on the attached PDF, and online [here](#). Watch the Signing Day Press Conference [here](#).

## NIU FOOTBALL DECEMBER 2022 SINGNEES

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown	High School/Previous
Santana Banner	DB	6-3	183	Fr.	Flint, Mich.	Mountain View (Ga.)
Grayson Barnes	TE	6-5	215	Jr.	Rocklin, Calif.	Rocklin/American River (Calif.) CC
Phillip Baynes	LB	6-2	195	Fr.	Social Circle, Ga.	Social Circle
Azhaun Dingle	RB	6-2	226	Jr.	Jersey City, N.J.	Bayonne/Butler (Kan.) CC
Zach Gordon	K	6-0	160	Fr.	Lillington, N.C.	Rosewood
Bryce Harrison	TE	6-5	235	Fr.	Apopka, Fla.	Apopka
Mark Hensley	DL	6-4	265	Fr.	Labadie, Mo.	Washington
Michael Jimmar	OL	6-5	285	Fr.	Plainfield, Ill.	Plainfield East
Mason Kidd	QB	6-3	194	Fr.	Lawrenceville, Ga.	Mountain View
Thomas Paasch	OL	6-5	285	Fr.	Green Bay, Wis.	Green Bay Southwest
Jaylen Poe	RB	5-11	210	Fr.	Dallas, Ga.	North Paulding
RaSean Randall	DL	6-5	218	Fr.	Detroit, Mich.	Cass Tech
Mahki Rolle	DB	6-2	185	Fr.	N. Miami Beach, Fla.	N. Miami Beach Sr.
Nevaeh Sanders	DL	6-4	220	Jr.	Flint, Mich.	Powers Catholic/Iowa Western CC
Luke Skartvedt	OL	6-3	300	Fr.	Indianapolis, Ind.	Roncalli
Jay’shon Thomas	TE	6-4	220	Fr.	Cataula, Ga.	Harris County
Kyle Thomas	WR	6-3	175	Fr.	Richton, Ill.	Marian Catholic
Jacob Welch	OL	6-6	300	Fr.	Johnsburg, Ill.	Johnsburg

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## NIU FOOTBALL DECEMBER 2022 SIGNEES

<b>Name</b>	<b>Pos.</b>	<b>Hgt.</b>	<b>Wgt.</b>	<b>Cl.</b>	<b>Hometown</b>	<b>High School/Previous</b>
Santana Banner	DB	6-3	183	Fr.	Flint, Mich.	Mountain View (Ga.)
Grayson Barnes	TE	6-5	215	Jr.	Rocklin, Calif.	Rocklin/American River (Calif.) CC
Phillip Baynes	LB	6-2	195	Fr.	Social Circle, Ga.	Social Circle
Azhaun Dingle	RB	6-2	226	Jr.	Jersey City, N.J.	Bayonne/Butler (Kans.) CC
Zach Gordon	K	6-0	160	Fr.	Lillington, N.C.	Rosewood
Bryce Harrison	TE	6-5	235	Fr.	Apopka, Fla.	Apopka
Mark Hensley	DL	6-4	265	Fr.	Labadie, Mo.	Washington
Michael Jimmar	OL	6-5	285	Fr.	Plainfield, Ill.	Plainfield East
Mason Kidd	QB	6-3	194	Fr.	Lawrenceville, Ga.	Mountain View
Thomas Paasch	OL	6-5	285	Fr.	Green Bay, Wis.	Green Bay Southwest
Jaylen Poe	RB	5-11	210	Fr.	Dallas, Ga.	North Paulding
RaSean Randall	DL	6-5	218	Fr.	Detroit, Mich.	Cass Tech
Mahki Rolle	DB	6-2	185	Fr.	North Miami Beach, Fla.	North Miami Beach Senior
Nevaeh Sanders	DL	6-4	220	Jr.	Flint, Mich.	Powers Catholic/Iowa Western CC
Luke Skartvedt	OL	6-3	300	Fr.	Indianapolis, Ind.	Roncalli
Jay'shon Thomas	TE	6-4	220	Fr.	Cataula, Ga.	Harris County
Kyle Thomas	WR	6-3	175	Fr.	Richton, Ill.	Marian Catholic
Jacob Welch	OL	6-6	300	Fr.	Johnsburg, Ill.	Johnsburg

### By State:

Georgia – 4

Illinois – 3, Michigan – 3

Florida – 2

Indiana – 1, California – 1, New Jersey – 1, Wisconsin – 1, North Carolina – 1, Missouri – 1.

### By Position:

Offensive Line – 4

Tight End – 3, Defensive Line – 3

Running Back – 2, Defensive Back – 2

Quarterback – 1, Linebacker – 1, Kicker – 1, Wide Receiver – 1

## NIU Football Signing Day Bios December 21, 2022 (Class of 2023)

### **SANTANA BANNER**

**DB, 6-3, 183, Fr.**

**Flint, Michigan [Mountain View (Ga.) HS]**

#### **HIGH SCHOOL**

##### **Honors and Awards**

- Three-year varsity letterwinner (2020, 2021, 2022)
- Team captain (2021, 2022)
- Team MVP (2022)
- Gwinnett Player of the Month

##### **Individual Stats**

- 2022: 74 tackles (43 solo), 5 FF, 3 PBUs, 2 INTs,
- 2021: 1 INT for TD, 39 tackles (19 solo), 2 TFL
- 2020: Two tackles

##### **Team Results/Record**

- 2022: Mountain View posted a 5-6 record in 2022, falling in the first round of the playoffs
- 2021: Bears finished the season 4-7

##### **Academics and Club/Sport Involvement**

- Honor Roll student
- AB Honor Roll student
- Involved with school and team fundraisers

### **GRAYSON BARNES**

**TE, 6-5, 206, Jr.**

**Rocklin, California (Rocklin HS/American River College)**

#### **AMERICAN RIVER COLLEGE**

##### **Honors and Awards**

- Received All-America honors (2022)
- All-Region
- First team all-conference (2021, 2022)

##### **Individual Stats**

- Caught 38 passes for 526 yards and four TDs in 11 games (2022)
- Recorded 23 receptions for 381 yards and a touchdown in 10 games (2021)

##### **Team Record**

- 8-4, 5-0 CCCAA (2022)
- 6-5, 4-1 CCCAA (2021)

#### **HIGH SCHOOL**

##### **Honors and Awards**

- Two-year varsity letterwinner (2018, 2019)
- Team captain (2019)
- Second team all-conference (2019)
- Optimist All-Star Game athlete (2019)

##### **Individual Stats**

- 2019: Caught 19 passes for 285 yards and three TDs
- 2018: Made six catches for 113 yards with a touchdown

##### **Team Record**

- Senior year: 7-4, 4-2 SFL
- Junior year: 2-8, 1-5 SFL

##### **Academics and Club/Sport Involvement**

- Golf student-athlete
- Coached youth football for four years

**PHILLIP BAYNES JR.**  
**LB, 6-2, 195, Fr.**  
**Social Circle, Georgia (Social Circle HS)**

## **HIGH SCHOOL**

### **Honors and Awards**

- All-state (2022)
- All-county and all-region (2020, 2021, 2022)
- First team all-conference (2020, 2021, 2022)
- Second team all-conference (2019)
- Four-year letterwinner (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)
- Team captain (2022)
- FCA All-Star Game athlete
- Beast Elite 7v7 athlete

### **Individual Stats**

- 2022: 51 tackles, 4.5 sacks, 4 FFs, 15 QB hurries, 11 TFL
- 2021: 81 tackles, 4 INT, 5 PDs
- 2020: 67 tackles, 2 INT
- 2019: 30 tackles, 1 INT

### **Academics and Club/Sport Involvement**

- Honor Roll student (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)
- Involved with JROTC parade
- Helped teach children how to read
- Spent his Tuesday morning volunteering for the recycling club

## **AZHAUN DINGLE**

**RB, 6-2, 226, Jr.**  
**Jersey City, New Jersey [Bayonne HS/Butler (Kans.) CC]**

## **BUTLER COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

### **Honors and Awards**

- NJCAA second team All-American (2022)
- First Team All-Jayhawk Conference (2022)
- No. 2 ranked JUCO running back

### **Individual Stats**

- Played in 12 games, rushing for 1,195 yards on 203 carries with 18 touchdowns
- His 18 TDs tied for most in the nation; ranked third nationally in rushing yards
- Averaged 99.6 yards per game
- Rushed for a season-high 245 yards versus Ellsworth (Iowa) on Nov. 12

### **Team Record**

- 2022: 8-4, 4-2 KJCCC
- Butler finished ninth in final NJCAA poll
- Heart of Texas Bowl champion (2022)

## **TYLER JUNIOR COLLEGE**

### **Individual Stats**

- 2021: Carried 128 times for 908 yards to average 7.1 yards per rush in nine games
- 2021: Scored seven rushing touchdowns and caught six passes

### **Team Record**

- 2021: 5-3, 4-2 NJCAA Region XIV

## **HIGH SCHOOL**

### **Honors and Awards**

- Selected third team all-state (2019)
- First team all-conference (2018, 2019)
- All-County honors (2018, 2019)
- North/South Phil Simms Offensive MVP (2019)
- Team MVP (2019)

### **Individual Stats**

- 2018: 96 carries for 1,128 yards and 12 TDs

- 2017: 112 carries for 1,292 yards and 13 TDs

#### Academics and Club/Sport Involvement

- Varsity men's basketball student-athlete

#### **ZACH GORDON**

**K, 6-0, 160, Fr.**

**Lillington, North Carolina (Rosewood HS)**

#### Honors and Awards

- Team captain (2022)
- Three-year varsity letterwinner (2020, 2021, 2022)

#### Individual Stats

- 2022: 23-of-25 on extra points and four-of-six on field goals
- 2022: Kicked off 32 times with 15 touchbacks
- Totaled 35 points in 2022 and 11 in 2020
- 2020: Connected on 11-of-12 PATs as a sophomore

#### Team Record

- 2022: 10-5 and played in the region title game
- 2021: 6-3, advanced to the Round of 8
- 2020: 6-2, qualified for playoffs with first round loss

#### Academics and Club/Sport Involvement

- Intends to major in physical education
- Soccer student-athlete
  - All-conference (2021, 2022)
  - All-region (2021, 2022)
  - Conference champions (2021, 2022)
  - Regional champions (2022)

#### **BRYCE HARRISON**

**TE, 6-5, 235, Fr.**

**Apopka, Florida (Apopka HS)**

#### **HIGH SCHOOL**

#### Honors and Awards

- Second-team All-State as a senior
- Named to All Central Florida first team (2022)
- Earned All-County and All-Region honors (2022)
- First-team all-conference as a senior
- An Orlando Super 60 selection
- Invited to play in Cure Classic and Elite 100 Classic postseason games
- Three-year letterwinner

#### Individual Stats

- 2022: Averaged a team-leading 12.6 yards per catch with three grabs for 63 yards
- 2022: Played in five games
- As a sophomore (Seminole HS): Caught two passes for 40 yards

#### Team Results/Record

- Played his final two seasons at Apopka High School
- Blue Darters played in the 8A state title game both of his seasons (2021, 2022)
- Played at Seminole High School as a freshman and sophomore
- Seminole won the 8A state title his sophomore season

#### Academics & Club/Sport Involvement

- Intends to major in business
- Uncle is Shaquille O'Neal
- Also played basketball

**MARK HENSLEY****DL, 6-4, 265, Fr.****Labadie, Missouri (Washington HS)****HIGH SCHOOL****Honors and Awards**

- Two-time all-county selection (2021, 2022)
- First team All Gateway Conference (2022)
- Second team all-conference as a junior (2021)
- Served as team captain as a senior
- Nominated for Franklin County Athlete of the Week multiple times
- Three-year letterwinner

**Individual Stats**

- 2022: Led St. Louis area schools in sacks

**Team Results/Record**

- 2022: 5-5, qualified for playoffs
- 2021: 6-4, lost in second round of districts
- 2020: 9-2, lost in District Championship

**Academics & Club/Sport Involvement**

- Intends to major in human biology/pre-med with aspiration to become a physician
- Two-year member of the National Honor Society
- Three-year letterwinner in basketball who earned second team All-County honors

**MICHAEL JIMMAR****OL, 6-5, 285, Fr.****Plainfield, Illinois (Plainfield East HS)****HIGH SCHOOL****Honors and Awards**

- Earned All-State honors in 2021
- First team all-conference and all-county his junior year
- Team MVP as a junior
- Served as captain of the freshman team

**Individual Stats**

- 2022: Bengals averaged 122.3 rushing yards per game with eight rushing TDs
- 2022: Plainfield East QBs threw for 18 TDs and 180-plus passing yards/game

**Team Results/Record**

- 2022: Team finished the season 3-6
- 2021: 5-5 season ended in the first round of the playoffs
- 2021: Bengals posted a 4-1 record to place second in the conference

**Academics & Club/Sport Involvement**

- Intends to major in pre-physical therapy
- Also participated in track & field

**MASON KIDD****QB, 6-3, 194, Fr.****Lawrenceville, Georgia (Mountain View HS)****HIGH SCHOOL****Honors and Awards**

- Earned all-conference, all-county and All-Region recognition in 2021 and 2022
- Invited to play in the GACA All-Star Game
- Team MVP each of the last two seasons
- Selected team captain as a junior and senior
- Four-year varsity letterwinner

**Individual Stats**

- 2022: Totaled 750 passing yards and seven TD passes despite missing games due to injury
- 2021: Completed 151-of-267 passes for 1,655 yards and 13 touchdowns
- 2019: Threw for 170 yards and a touchdown in limited action on varsity

### **Team Results/Record**

- 2022: Mountain View posted a 5-6 record in 2022, falling in the first round of the playoffs
- 2021: Bears finished the season 4-7

### **Academics & Club/Sport Involvement**

- Intends to major in business
- Made the A-B Honor Roll as a junior
- Also lettered in basketball

### **THOMAS PAASCH**

**OL, 6-5, 285, Fr.**

**Green Bay, Wisconsin (Green Bay Southwest HS)**

### **HIGH SCHOOL**

#### **Honors and Awards**

- One of three finalists for the Joe Thomas Award, given annually to the state's top senior offensive lineman by wissports.net
- First team all-Fox River Classic Conference-North as a junior
- Rated the No. 1 senior offensive lineman by wissport.net and the No. 5 senior prospect overall
- Named to the Post-Crescent Elite 11 team entering the 2022 season
- Three-year letterwinner
- Invited to 2022 National Combine

#### **Academics & Club/Sport Involvement**

- Lists Huskie, fellow Southwest HS product and current Cincinnati Bengal OL Max Scharding as a player he admires
- Also competed in track and field

### **JAYLEN POE**

**RB, 5-11, 210, Fr.**

**Dallas, Georgia (North Paulding HS)**

#### **Honors and Awards**

- Earned All-State and All-Region honors in 2021 and 2022
- Three-time All-County selection (2020, 2021, 2022)
- Named first team all-conference (2021, 2022)
- Second team all-conference (2020)
- Team MVP served as team captain as a junior and senior (2021, 2022)
- Four-year letterwinner (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)
- GACA All Star

#### **Individual Stats**

- 2022: Ran for 1,122 yards on 167 carries with 18 rushing TDs in 11 games
- 2022: Caught 15 passes for 348 yards and three scores
- 2021: Gained 972 rushing yards on 179 carries in 10 games with 18 TDs
- 2021: Totaled eight catches for 95 yards
- 2020: 404 rushing yards, 7 TDs
- 2019: 2 rushes for 16 yards

#### **Team Record**

- 2022: 7-4, lost in first round of playoffs
- 2021: 4-6
- 2020: 2-8
- 2019: 6-5

#### **Academics and Club/Sport Involvement**

- Intends to major in business
- AB Honor Roll all four years of high school
- Coached middle school football

**RASEAN RANDALL**  
**DL, 6-5, 218, Fr.**  
**Detroit, Michigan (Cass Tech)**

## **HIGH SCHOOL**

### **Honors and Awards**

- Played defensive end and tight end for the Technicians
- Named one of Top 50 recruits in Michigan entering 2022 season
- Participated in Under Armour All-American camp
- Served as team captain as a senior

### **Team Results/Record**

- 2022: Led team to district title, state semifinals and 9-4 record
- 2021: 6-3 season ended in first round of the playoffs
- 2020: After undefeated season, team fell in state semifinals
- 2019: Played on JV team that won championship while varsity lost in regionals

### **Academics & Club/Sport Involvement**

- Interested in a major in engineering or business
- Comes from same high school that produced NIU All-MAC defensive lineman James Ester
- Also participated in track & field

## **MAKHI ROLLE**

**S, 6-2, 185, Fr.**

**North Miami Beach, Florida (North Miami Beach Senior HS)**

## **HIGH SCHOOL**

### **Honors and Awards**

- Two-way player who started at quarterback and got reps at defensive back
- Served as team captain each of his last three years

### **Team Results/Record**

- 2022: Team finished 4-6 on the season
- 2021: Led Chargers to a 4-6 record and a berth in the 5A state playoffs

### **Academics & Club/Sport Involvement**

- Interested in a career in IT/cyber security
- Volunteered with the Special Olympics

## **NEVAEH SANDERS**

**DL, 6-4, 220, So.**

**Flint, Michigan (Flint Powers Catholic/Iowa Western C.C.)**

## **IOWA WESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

### **Honors and Awards**

- President's Honor Roll (Summer and fall 2021, spring 2022)

### **Team Record**

- 10-1, NJCAA runners-up (2021)
- 10-2, NJCAA National Champions (2022)

## **HIGH SCHOOL**

### **Individual Stats**

- 2019: Made 19 receptions for 369 yards (19.4 avg.) with four touchdowns
- 2019: Third on the team in rushing with 222 yards on 16 carries with a score
- 2019: On defense, led the Chargers with seven sacks to go with 15 tackles
- 2019: Returned eight kicks and 2 punts for a total of 236 yards

### **Team Record**

- 2019: Team finished 10-2 and advanced to the D4 state semifinals
- 2018: 7-4 record, advanced to second round of the playoffs
- 2017: Team made the playoffs, finished 4-5
- 2016: Chargers fell in the second round of the playoffs, finished 6-5

### **Academics and Club/Sport Involvement**

- Varsity basketball student-athlete
- Helped the Chargers reach the DII district finals

**LUKE SKARTVEDT**  
**OL, 6-3, 300, Fr.**  
**Indianapolis, Indiana (Roncalli HS)**

## **HIGH SCHOOL**

### **Honors and Awards**

- Named to IFCA All-State Team
- Honorable mention selection to the Indy Star Super Team
- Earned All Circle City Conference honors as a junior and senior
- All-Marion County in 2022
- Played primarily at center for Roncalli
- Three-year letterwinner on varsity
- Team captain as a senior

### **Individual Stats**

- 2022: Blocked for Indiana's leading rusher and Marion County Player of the Year
- 2022: Royals totaled 3,839 rushing yards, an average of 274.2 per game with 45 rushing TDs
- 2022: Offense averaged 361.1 total yards and 32.6 point per game
- 2021: Blocked for offense that gained 225.1 rushing yards per game with 41 TDs
- 2021: Offense gained 397.3 yards per game in state championship season

### **Team Results/Record**

- 2022: Team finished the season 12-2, won sectional and regional championships before falling in semi-state game
- 2021: 12-1 season included sectional and conference titles
- 2021: Royals went 13-1 and won the 4A state championship
- 2019: Posted a 8-2 record

### **Academics & Club/Sport Involvement**

- Intends to major in accountancy at NIU
- Inducted into the National Honor Society as a senior
- Frequent volunteer at a local food pantry
- An all-conference performer in track & field

## **JAY'SHON THOMAS**

**TE, 6-4, 220, Fr.**  
**Cataula, Georgia (Harris County HS)**

### **Honors and Awards**

- Two-way player for the Tigers as a tight end/wide receiver and edge rusher
- All-region selection in 2021 and 2022
- First team all-conference (2022)
- Second team all-conference (2021)
- Two-year varsity letterwinner (2021, 2022)

### **Individual Stats**

- 2022: Caught eight passes for 108 yards with a touchdown
- 2022: Rushed for 163 yards on 26 carries in nine games
- 2022: Made 46 tackles with three sacks on defense
- 2021: Contributed 54 tackles on defense with three sacks
- 2021: Caught two passes for 53 yards

### **Team Record**

- 2022: 2-9
- 2021: Team finished 7-5 and advanced to second round of the playoffs
- 2020: 6-5, fell in the first round of the playoffs
- 2019: 4-7

### **Academics and Club/Sport Involvement**

- Intends to major in marketing
- Played basketball and ran track for the Tigers
- Volunteered with his church

**KYLE THOMAS**  
**WR, 6-3, 175, Fr.**  
**Richton, Illinois (Marian Catholic HS)**

## **HIGH SCHOOL**

### **Honors and Awards**

- Two-time first team all-conference selection (2021, 2022)
- Named Team MVP as a junior
- Team captain as a junior and senior
- Three-year varsity letterwinner
- Played quarterback and wide receiver for the Spartans
- Invited to Rivals camp

### **Individual Stats**

- 2022: Totaled 625 all-purpose yards with 12 touchdowns
- 2022: Caught 14 passes for 196 yards and five receiving TDs
- 2022: Ran for 362 yards on 86 carries with seven scores
- 2022: Made 23 tackles with an interception
- 2021: Gained 1,019 rushing yards on the season including a single game record 317

### **Team Results/Record**

- 2022: Team finished the season 4-6
- 2021: Final record of 3-5

### **Academics & Club/Sport Involvement**

- Intends to major in business
- Worked on building a veteran's wall at Marian Catholic
- Also participated in track & field and basketball

**JACOB WELCH**

**OL, 6-6, 300, Fr.**  
**Johnsburg, Illinois (Johnsburg HS)**

### **Honors and Awards**

- Twice named to 4A All-State team (2021, 2022)
- All-region and all-county selection in 2021 and 2022
- Three-time first team all-conference honoree (2020, 2021, 2022)
- Four-year varsity letterwinner (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)
- Team captain (2021, 2022)
- Played both offensive and defensive line for the Skyhawks
- Two-time Northwest Herald Team of the Week

### **Individual Stats**

- 2022: Credited with 55 pancake blocks, 45 tackles, 3.5 sacks
- 2021: 58 pancake blocks
- 2020: 32 pancake blocks
- 2019: 7 pancake blocks

### **Team Record**

- 2022: 6-5 (first playoff berth in five years)
- 2021: 3-6
- 2020: 1-5
- 2019: 4-5

### **Academics and Club/Sport Involvement**

- Intends to major in education
- Academic all-state team (2020, 2021, 2022)
- National Honor Society member