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## Highlight DVD lands Highland's Daniels in Iowa

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GLOUCESTER TWP.

The magic of technology can take a person anywhere.

For Highland High School football standout Mike Daniels, it's taking him to the University of Iowa.

The Hawkeyes' football staff was impressed enough with a highlight DVD of Daniels' senior season that the 6-foot-1, 240-pound All-Group 3 defensive lineman suddenly became a cherished recruit.

He made an official visit to the Iowa City campus two weeks ago and signed his national letter of intent Wednesday morning.

"When I heard from Iowa, it just threw me off the wall," Daniels said.

"I'm ready to go out there and fight for a spot, and help take them to a national championship. It's so exciting. Sometimes, when people ask me about it, I'm at a loss for words. I just can't wait to get there."

"We had a talk before the season even started," Highland coach Frank Piefka said. "I told Mike that he had Division I potential and size, but he really needed to stand out on film on the defensive side of the ball. Defense was his ticket to getting into a D-I school."

Penn State, Villanova, Rutgers, Temple and Pittsburgh were the finalists before Iowa entered the picture. Daniels said the DVD started circulating about three weeks ago -- just a week before his official visit.

"It didn't take them long to see that they really liked me," he said. "I'm grateful that I had the tape made. It feels great. I never expected it to happen the way it did."

"There is a gentleman there who really likes watching tapes of the kids from New Jersey. He came across mine and was blown away by it. He just had to show somebody."

That somebody was outside linebackers coach Darrell Wilson, a South Jersey native and former coach at Woodrow Wilson. From there, it made its way through the Iowa football staff.

Said Wilson: "If we have an opportunity to see a kid play in person, that's great. It's usually tough, so 99 percent of our athletic evaluation really comes from film. That's just what we have to do."

The DVD was produced by Pro-Dynamix, a Sicklerville-based company owned by 1988 Triton graduate Matt Roberts.

"With lesser-known schools, athletes don't get the exposure and don't know how to market themselves," said Roberts, who played football for two years at West Point. "Mike is a very talented athlete, but not a lot knew of him because he went to Highland. It's not a popular, big program like a Shawnee or Holy Cross."

"The athlete's ability gets the deal, we showcase the ability."

For an investment of around \$1,000, Roberts produced a 13-minute DVD for Daniels that was distributed to 100 schools. The list was customized to Daniels' taste, Div. I and I-AA schools that normally recruit in this part of the country.

"Hit them hard, hit them fast. It's like looking at a resume for a job," said Roberts, who boasts nearly a 100 percent success rate. "What information can you get out there fast. You don't want to bore a recruiter with anything longer. The recruiting process is rigorous and they know what they want."

"He is so impressive on film," Plefka said. "Mike made the film what it was. His highlights were awesome."

Daniels was one of two South Jersey players to sign with Iowa Wednesday.

He joins Dezman Moses of Willingboro, a second-team All-South Jersey linebacker. It gives the Big Ten school eight players from the region on its roster.

"New Jersey by itself is a hotbed," Wilson said. "But South Jersey, it's always fruitful."

Highland finished the 2006 season 4-6 overall. Daniels was one of only seven seniors.

"Through eight games, his numbers were incredibly impressive," Plefka said.

"All he needed was an interception, and in that ninth game he got the interception and returned it for a touchdown.

"He really is special. He gets to the ball and hits like a truck."

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