

Rooney ready to make mark with Central Missouri track



Louisburg senior J.R. Rooney signed to join the University of Central Missouri track and field team next season.

Louisburg senior J.R. Rooney had a big decision to make.

While deciding what school he wanted to attend was always the No. 1 decision, figuring out which sport was a close second.

After mulling over options to play college football after earning all-league and all-state honors, Rooney was given another option – track.

“In all honesty it took a while for me to realize track was even an option for me in college,” Rooney said. “My parents and I had a lot of talks about me playing at the next level in either sport. I’ve always known I wanted to play sports in college, no matter what the collegiate level. Over the summer I took a lot of visits to colleges for football, and for a while I thought I was going to college for football.

As much as he loved football, Rooney decided to go with the best fit – track and his favorite school.

Rooney recently signed his letter of intent to join the University of Central Missouri track and field program next season as a thrower for the Division II Mules.

“As the end of the football season drew closer, I received some interest for track and field from numerous colleges, and

this helped open my eyes to see that I could compete at the next level,” Rooney said. “I was presented with the opportunity to take a visit to UCM and from the moment I stepped on campus, I loved it.”

It was tough for Rooney to leave football in the rearview mirror, but it has allowed him to focus more on track – specifically the shot put.

“It was very tough decision for me and my family,” Rooney said. “I remember talking with almost all of my coaches, from both football and track, asking for advice. The decision wasn’t easy, but UCM gives me the best opportunity to get a very good education, and compete in the sport that I love at the next level. I do not regret my decision, and I think it will pay off for me in the long run.”



Louisburg senior J.R. Rooney signed his letter of intent to join the University of Central Missouri track and field team. Sitting next to J.R. are his parents Nancy and Kendall, along with his sister Mackenzie. Standing (from left) is Louisburg track coaches John Reece and Andy Wright.

Rooney, who was the Wildcats’ top shot putter a year ago, missed the state meet by just inches. That only added more

fuel to the track fire.

He has spent all offseason working on his craft and hopes to not only qualify for state, but leave with a state medal in his final season with the Wildcat program.

“I have set my goals very high for this track season,” Rooney said. “I hope to win regionals in shot put, and get on the podium at state. I am also hoping to break the school shot put record. I’ve put in a ton of work in the offseason, and I hope it pays off.”

Once that is all done, Rooney is ready to focus on his time at Central Missouri. Not only to improve in the shot put, but some other new events as well. He will also join a former Louisburg alum on the team in Michael Waldron, who throws the javelin for the Mules.

“UCM has had a very successful track and field program,” Rooney said. “Their throws program has seen success the past few years, and I hope that I am able to add to that. I was able to see a couple of their indoor track meets and I had the opportunity to talk with some of their athletes.

“A big thing that I looked for on all my visits was team culture. Every athlete I talked with at UCM spoke about the culture and how close all the athletes are to one another. This really gave UCM the upper hand on other schools. I will be competing in the heavy throws at UCM, shot put, hammer throw, and weight throw. I am very excited to learn and compete in these events.”

Throw in the fact that he is able to attend a school that fits for his future, is icing on the cake.

“UCM was the first college I truly loved,” Rooney said. “I remember telling my mom halfway through the campus tour that I loved it, and I could see myself attending UCM even if I didn’t play sports.”