



**Arizona Interscholastic Association**  
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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **CENTENNIAL'S BIG MAN LOOKS FORWARD TO ANOTHER BIG YEAR IN FOOTBALL**

PHOENIX, AZ (June 12, 2009) – A big year lies ahead for one of Arizona high school football's big men. Nick Rowland, a 6-foot-5, 305-pound senior-to-be, will attempt to help Peoria Centennial win its fourth straight Class 5A Division II championship and solidify his standing as one of the nation's top offensive linemen.

Centennial will get a head start on Aug. 22 when it will represent Arizona in the annual Barry Sollenberger Kickoff Classic, sponsored by the Arizona Interscholastic Association.

The AIA and Nevada will co-host the game this year, which will be played at the University of Nevada in Reno with Reno's McQueen High serving as the opponent. Centennial begins practice Aug. 3.

Until then, Rowland will be working out, attending football camps and narrowing his list of potential colleges. Rowland, an *Arizona Republic* All-Arizona player as a junior last season, hopes to have his final five by the end of the summer and then will begin to take official visits.

"When you're a younger player, you don't always realize what it's going to take to get to where you want to be, and then you start to work harder and harder," said Rowland, whose primary spot is at guard but who also can move in and play tackle. "To come this far has been great. I have played on some great teams. But we have a lot more to do. The work we are putting in now and the preparation we are making, has a very good chance of paying off.

"The game in Nevada will be a great opportunity for us to showcase Arizona football. We have come a long way and we play a good, strong style of game."

Football is a violent game, especially among the men up front, who play with countless nagging injuries and perhaps even a few more serious ones. Rowland has started 28 straight games, a testament to his durability.

"Many of the games he played, he was not 100 percent, but he hung in there through all the practices and the games," said Centennial coach Richard Taylor.

"Nick is a great kid, an outstanding football player and a good student (3.7 grade-point average with a 1780 score on his SAT). He is a role model for the other players. He could lead just with his work ethic, but he also can be vocal when he needs to be."

Rowland spent some of his early summer refereeing basketball games for the National Youth Sports organization. While he said he enjoyed that duty very much, he knew it was time to refocus on the upcoming season. He worked out for two hours a day and ran for a third hour.

He is looking forward to the duels in the trenches this fall.

"It is nasty, brutal, combat in there, but it is fun," he said.

Centennial has played in four straight championship games, winning the last three. The Coyotes outscored opponents by a combined 80-14 margin in those three games and posted a 41-1 record.

The team's chances of another repeat appear to be enhanced by the return of nine starters on offense and quite a few on defense, according to Rowland.

The big man is ready to open some big holes and contribute to some big plays.

**Have a Story Idea:**

The AIA is looking for story ideas on member high schools, including its student-athlete, coaches and administrators. Have a story that you think should be shared with the AIA community? Email your idea to Don Ketchum at [dketchum@aiaonline.org](mailto:dketchum@aiaonline.org).