

sports

Krispinsky steps down for season

JUSTIN DAVIS
@jus_davis2

A house built on sand would not withstand a violent storm. The foundation is not stable enough. The house and all that is in it would collapse.

For the past five seasons, former Ashland University women's soccer head coach Danny Krispinsky has been rebuilding a once decrepit soccer program.

He has garnered over 58 wins and has brought the Eagles to five straight GLIAC tournament appearances, four of those led to a berth in the semifinals.

In March he would be scheduled to play an opponent he has met once before: cancer.

Krispinsky had a previous test against cancer in 2015 and he was able to beat it temporarily. This time it has come back and spread to his brain causing a greater toll on his body.

"It's not the actual treatment that is too bad, but the effects and the symptoms, those are tough," Krispinsky said.

Krispinsky underwent 15 straight days of radiation and is still recovering from the symptoms. In the past, he was able to continue

coaching but limited himself throughout the season.

However, this past July Krispinsky found himself unable to withstand the force of the storm, it lead to him stepping down as head coach on July 20.

"The main thing was that this time around, when it went to the brain, I started to really experience the effects physically," Krispinsky said.

Krispinsky said that the symptoms involve burn marks on the skin, face, and head. As a way to make the treatment easier Krispinsky cut off all of his hair and getting used to that was difficult for him.

He has remained in good spirits throughout his recovery because like the soccer program he built from the ground, he has faith built on bedrock.

"Thankfully, we have strong faiths and news like this has come frequently but we still trust and believe that God has a plan for us," Krispinsky said. "We're staying strong in our faith and that's really been the thing that has held us together and been able to get us through this point in the journey."

Krispinsky is a native of Ashland and his family's close proximity

has been a huge support system for him since he has received the news.

"I've been really fortunate that they're nearby and I can rely on them at any time," Krispinsky said.

He has also received support from the Ashland community as a whole. Krispinsky said that he has had phone calls, text messages, emails, visits and meals from supporters hoping to provide alleviation and comfort.

The Ashland University Athletic Department has also shown support to him through this process, Krispinsky said.

Upon stepping down, Athletic Director Al King sought out his recommendation for candidates to run the program this season and his first recommendation was Taylor Clarke. Clarke's coaching career began at Ashland University in 2014 when he served as a graduate assistant.

He spent the 2016 season as the assistant men's soccer coach for the University of North Carolina Wilmington, a Division I program. He helped the Seahawks reach the top 20 of nationally ranked teams while managing recruiting and assisting in all aspects of the program.

Last season, he served as an as-



Krispinsky and Clarke coaching together when Clarke was a graduate assistant with AU women's soccer.

sistant coach for the Calvin (Mich.) college men's soccer team. While there he helped orchestrate a 21-1-1 win season for the Knights that included a berth into the NCAA Division III Sweet Sixteen.

Clarke was on vacation overseas with friends when he was contacted about the opportunity to step in as the interim head coach for Ashland, but he did not hesitate to assume the role.

"It was a bit of a whirlwind because I was away from everything, but it was something that I didn't

Clarke was asked to step in on four occasions while Krispinsky received treatment for his initial bout against cancer.

Clarke also was asked to step in as head coach at Calvin University for a couple of games when head coach Ryan Souders briefly stepped away from the team to attend his brother's wedding and the birth of his first child.

"It's kind of weird, but it's kind of an experience I've had before so being able to step in here I felt comfortable. Even though I've never

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- Danny Krispinsky

really have to think twice about," Clarke said.

Clarke said Ashland University is special to him because it is where he started his coaching career and there are players on the current roster he coached and helped recruit during his initial stint for the Eagles.

As a graduate assistant in his second year under Krispinsky,

er been a full-time head coach before this, I've been in a head coaching role at times," Clarke said.

As an assistant in the past Clarke has aimed to be as involved and hands on as possible so that if an opportunity would present itself, he would be ready.

"Something that I've always tried



AU ATHLETICS

Krispinsky coaching one of his players last season before his second battle with cancer.

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Men's tennis launches at AU

High hopes for the inaugural season of AU men's tennis program

PAUL MURRAY
@AUCollegian

On Sept. 8 of 2017, the Ashland University Athletic department announced that it would add women's lacrosse and men's tennis as varsity sports in the upcoming 2018-2019 school year.

Nearly a year later, men's tennis held their first official team practice at 6:30 a.m.— fall conditioning.

"This morning was our first team practice of the year. We had the team out there running sprints, it was a good start." Director of Tennis Operations Lexi Bolesky said.

Coach Bolesky has been the women's tennis coach for the last two seasons. The women's team won 8 matches last year and clinched a spot in the GLIAC tournament, the team's first postseason berth in four years. This year she will assume the role of Director of Tennis Operations, and will be coaching both the men's and women's teams.

"It's exciting, the competitive part of me loves having two opportunities to go out there and win matches, but two programs means dedicating a lot more time and effort and maintaining good time

management," said Bolesky

The addition of a men's tennis team is something that has been talked about for awhile. The athletic department spoke with Bolesky about the potential of adding the team, which she welcomed with open arms.

"Athletics approached me and asked what was needed in order to make men's tennis happen, but honestly we were ready," Bolesky said, "We have great opportunities here because of the new complex, and it really came down to the logistics and getting players."

The recruiting process began early last year, with the coaching staff looking for eight players to fill the empty roster that had been laid before them and to toe the newly renovated tennis surface. Stuart Brdicka, Colten Clark, and Jordan Phelps all committed early on Nov.16 to become Ashland's inaugural men's tennis class.

New assistant Christian Hamilton was hired on July 10 to assist Bolesky in the everyday operations of both teams, and has nothing but excitement for this years program and recruiting class.

"I am very excited to join the

Ashland tennis program," Hamilton said, "What Lexi has done with recruiting new players to the men's program, as well as key players to the women's side, I think we will have a chance to make an impact in the GLIAC."

Bolesky has shown that she has what it takes to start a program from the ground up. Her first year coaching, the women's team went

0-17 before finishing the year with a 9-0 home victory over Mount Vernon Nazarene. The following season the team increased that win total by seven.

The men's team will have its first preseason test on Oct. 12 when Ashland University hosts the first annual Hidden Duel Invitational, with local teams such as Findlay and Walsh coming to compete.



Ashland University tennis courts await action from the newly formed men's tennis team.

ZACH READ