

# sports

## Former AU star continues career in Spain

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On Tuesday, Sept. 25, Wendell Davis scored 15 points and dished out six assists. It was a good game for Davis, the 15 points were big for his team but the assist numbers were what he was most proud about. He loves getting his teammates involved.

But this game was different for Davis.

Davis was not playing in Kates Gymnasium, a place where he thrived, a place where he averaged over 18 points per game. He was not playing against a neighboring GLIAC school like he had done for the last four years of his career. He was not even playing in the United States.

Davis was playing overseas professional basketball, in the town of Lleida, located in central Spain.

Upon graduation from Ashland University, Wendell Davis knew he wanted to play professional basketball. He knew he wanted to continue his career. He knew he could do more. But how?

He hired an agent and awaited calls from teams. His agent had close connections in Spain, and for months Davis had talks with teams about the potential of him coming to play for their organization. All of them fell through.

As the summer was coming to a close, Davis finally got the call. Pardinyes, a team in the EBA league of Spain, wanted the 6-foot-6-inch forward from Ashland University to fly out and play basketball for their team.

“I had a lot of calls, a lot of talks over the summer with spanish leagues, but I didn’t get any offers,” Davis said. “Then I got the call and within a couple days I was packing to fly out. At the end of the

day, no matter how good you are you will always have something to prove.”

Davis was ready to prove himself as soon as he got that call. He was ready to get on the court and show the European world what kind of player he was. But first he had to get there.



Former AU men’s basketball player Wendell Davis drives on a defender in his first game with Pardinyes.

On the flights over to Spain, Davis was delayed for an entire day due to hurricane Florence. He joked how he was late to his first day of practice.

“On the way over to Spain, I had three flights. My first flight was delayed here in the states, so when I landed in the UK I had already missed my connecting flight to Spain,” Davis said. “Luckily the team was able to put me up in a hotel for the night until I could get on another plane. I had just joined the team and I’m already late.”

Once Davis arrived, the team brought him in and had him go through physical examinations. Once Davis was cleared to play, the real physical test began; his first practice, just two days after getting off the plane.

“I’m not going to lie, I was gassed after that first practice,” Davis

line him for the rest of the season. Davis took an injury redshirt that would allow him to come back for one more year.

John Ellenwood, head coach of AU’s men’s basketball program, had told Davis upon return to the team his role would change. His first three seasons at AU, Davis

Davis such a dangerous player and an asset to his new team.

“Basketball is evolving to a positionless game, and Wendell has become just that,” Ellenwood said. “He will do whatever needs to be done in order to help his team. He is a total team player who can make any pass to get his teammates involved or make the shot when the team needs it most.”

The Pardinyes team is expecting big things from Wendell Davis, some of which he displayed in his first game of professional basketball. Just five days after getting off the plane.

“Coach was satisfied with my first game, he knew I was going to be able to produce for the team,” Davis said. “The 15 points were good and I had six assist. But he expects more, he wants me to be the leader of the team and be the guy people can count on.”

Being the leader of the team is something that Davis did at Ashland and something he is comfortable with. But being a leader without speaking the same language is just another challenge he is willing to accept.

“The coach speaks some english. Oftentimes he will be talking to the team about practice and it will all be in Spanish,” Davis said. “Some of the players will have to come over and translate what he said just so I can get some sort of understanding.”

The language barrier and the cultural difference is like playing a zone defense for Davis. Once you make a couple of passes, get your teammates involved, you are able to break that zone.

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## Women’s soccer makes push for postseason

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It is the summer of 2018 and Ashland University women’s soccer head coach Danny Krispinsky announces to his players that he will be stepping down for the season because cancer has returned to his body.

After the hire of interim head coach Taylor Clarke, a former graduate assistant for the Eagles in 2014 and 2015, the women rallied around the fact that they are playing for something bigger this season.

Now, through more than half of the 2018 campaign, the Eagles currently have a record of 7-0-4 with six games left to play in the regular season. The Eagles currently have an unbeaten streak of 11 games, the longest unbeaten streak for the program since 2004 when the Eagles won 15 games in a row.

“An overall buy-in from all 31 players; it’s a big group but they have done an awesome job of putting the team first before anything else and understanding that we are all in this as a group,” Clarke said. “That has been a huge part of our success as well.”

The big dividend for the Eagles throughout the first half of the season has been their defense and the ability to keep their opponents out of the net. The Eagles put together four consecutive shutouts totaling 405 minutes before an opponent would score on the Eagles.

Overall, the Eagles have only given up six goals on the season posting six shutouts and scoring 26 goals offensively.

The Eagles cannot only credit goalkeepers, sophomores Hannah Lee and Abby Lampe, for the defensive performance this season, but rather the collective effort throughout the defense and all 11 women on the field.

“Our mentality as a back line is

that shutouts are so important and how many goals you give up in a season are very important as well,” captain and redshirt-junior Sydney Wright said.

In the 2017 season, Lampe was the starter for the Eagles, but after going through preseason camp prior to the 2018 season, Lee was named the starter and has stepped up big for the Eagles since then.

Lee is the winner of two GLIAC Defensive Player of the Week honors by recording 32 saves and a goals-against-average of 0.63 on the season through 8 ½ games.

“It’s exciting to be able to come in and perform the best that I can and be able to get the results that we have as a team,” Lee said.

On Sept. 16 the Eagles hosted their toughest opponent of the season in the then ranked No. 3 Grand Valley State Lakers which ended in a 0-0 double-overtime draw. In the second half of the contest Lee had to be pulled due to an injury putting Lampe in a tight spot.

Lampe went in and did her job as she would start at goaltender for the next two games while Lee was recovering from injury against Wisconsin Parkside and Purdue Northwest. Lampe led the Eagles with two wins by scores of 1-0 and 5-0 respectively.

“Abby did a phenomenal job of stepping in and filling the role when we really needed her,” Clarke said. “I think that’s another aspect of this group that has been really important to us is depth and girls being able to step in when they’re called upon.”

In Lee’s first game back from injury the Eagles traveled to No. 14 ranked Ferris State (8-1-2) on Sept. 28 to play their second toughest game of the season to date.

The GLIAC battle resulted in another tie for the Eagles, 2-2, but was a moral victory for them as they were down two goals to none until the 80th minute of the game.

Sophomore forward Hannah Simard registered her fourth goal of the season by chipping the ball over the head of the Bulldogs goalkeeper to put AU on the board.

With minutes remaining in the contest and the Eagles still down 2-1, sophomore Rylie Howman found the back of the net in the 85th minute to knot the game at two which gave the Eagles 20 additional minutes of playing time but



AU sophomore midfielder/defender Abby Grzetic.

no further goals were scored in the contest.

“Our girls showed awesome fight and spirit as a group to be able to come back and get two late goals,” Clarke said.

Wright says that it all starts from the offense and their ability to thwart the attacks of their opponents and get the ball up to their strikers.

“Their work rate of pressing the ball and their work rate to get the ball back when we lose it and to just be hungry for a goal has put them in a better place to score a goal,” Wright said.

While the defense has been the backbone for AU this season, goals have to be scored to win games, and the Eagles have been doing just that.

Leading the charge for the Eagles offensively has been senior Deijah Swihart with six goals on 24 shots and Simard with four goals on 13 shots. Nine other Eagles have goals on the season that brings the team total to 26 goals on 177 shots with a

percentage of .147 with an average of 2.36 goals per game. Although the Eagles are young with 15 underclassman making large contributions to their success, Clarke has been impressed with their ability to step up and make large contributions for the Eagles down the stretch.

“The biggest challenge for us is being young and having to ask a lot of people to step up into important roles right away,” Clarke said. “It’s also something that has created our success because they have done such an awesome job of stepping up and filling those roles.”

One aspect of the game Clarke said that his team needs to work on is finishing the chances that the team has to maybe break the tie that they have become all too familiar with.

“For us it comes down to finishing our chances,” Clarke said. “It’s putting the ball in the back of the net when it is our opportunity to do it.”

Traditionally, AU’s women’s soccer program has been extremely successful the past five years but have not had an appearance in the NCAA Division II playoffs since the 2004 season.

The Eagles have made it to the GLIAC postseason every year since 2013 but have not been able to get over that hump as they only made it to the GLIAC championship in 2015 when Grand Valley State ended the Eagles season by a score of 5-0.

As much as Clarke wants to keep the big picture of the entire season in mind and what his team needs to do to reach the NCAA playoffs, he is reminding his team that it is still a day by day process.

“If we’re able to have a good second half of the season and win those big games it’s going to lead to a greater chance for a berth in the NCAA tournament,” Clarke said. “It’s day by day for us right now and taking each day and week looking into the next game and making sure that we’re focusing on each specific game.”

With six games left to play in the regular season, the Eagles will travel to Saginaw Valley State on Saturday (Oct. 6), will stay on the road as they face Davenport and Grand Valley State (Oct. 12 and 14, respectively) and will end their regular season on a three-game home stand in late October.