

sports

AU volleyball continues a season for the books

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The Ashland University volleyball team is having a season to remember under first year head coach Kevin Foeman.

With a record of 20-5 and 11-2 in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, the Eagles are having their best season since the 2013 when they made it to the NCAA Division II Midwest Region Quarterfinals.

The Eagles are playing with the fire and passion that it takes to win this many games and it pleases Foeman when he witnesses the energy coming from all sides of the floor.

“As a coach I feel confident when they’re excited and they’re playing well and they have that type of energy,” Foeman said. “They bring that positive energy and mindset every single time we step on the court.”

This energy and passion that the women have found this season starts with their ability to play so well together, which leads to the success that has highlighted their 2018 campaign.

In the 2018 season, the Eagles won their first seven games of the season to start 7-0 for the first time since 1999 (14-0). After losing two matches back to back in early September, they followed that with an eight game win streak that really started to give the Eagles confidence.

“I think we have found ways to win being so many different teams,” Foeman said. “I think we can win when our offense isn’t working, when our defense isn’t

working, when we’re sloppy and I think we can win when we’re firing on all cylinders.”

The ability to win in so many different ways not only comes from the resilience of the team but the individual play of some standout athletes.

Athletes such as outside hitter

“A lot of these girls are so worried about the team’s success that they don’t even know what they are doing from an individual standpoint,” Foeman said.

To sweep teams and win matches three sets to none can be satisfying, which the Eagles have accomplished ten times already this sea-

son. However, the real test comes into practice and how we deal with adversity and our challenges in practice.”

In their toughest and most prominent fifth set match of the season to date back on Oct. 6, the Eagles

still finish the match in four sets. The difficulty, Foeman says, comes when the Eagles lose two sets but have not able to complete a five set win.

“Going into that fifth set it’s as much about confidence as it is about physical abilities and endurance,” Foeman said. “It all goes faced off against then No. 6 ranked Ferris State. The Eagles fought hard and had a chance to win in the fourth set but were not able to complete the upset as they lost in five sets (3-2).

More recently, this last weekend (Oct. 19-20) the Eagles went on the road and defeated Grand Valley State and Davenport each by a score of 3-0 to clinch a share of the GLIAC South title.

The Eagles then went on the road one last time in the regular season on Tuesday (Oct. 23) to play Salem and West Virginia Wesleyan to complete a nine game road stretch.

To finish their 2018 regular season, the AU volleyball squad returns to Kates Gymnasium for a four game home stand beginning Friday (Oct. 26) against Wisconsin Parkside. The next three games include Purdue Northwest (Oct. 27), Tiffin (Oct. 30) and Wayne State (Nov. 3).

“The fact that we end at home is nice and hopefully we can really get some excitement going on here,” Foeman said. “I think we have a chance to possibly get some good crowds and for our girls to feel kind of at home to finish off the season.”

Foeman said that now is the time for his team to catch that second wind in the long season so that they can start firing on all cylinders heading into postseason play.

“The biggest thing is we want to show up and every single match have a chance to win,” Foeman said. “If we give ourselves a chance to win every single match hopefully we can come away with some trophies.”



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AU volleyball players huddle up before one of their matches earlier this season.

Shelby Woycik and setter Zoey Peck have had standout seasons individually but are backed by the performances of Kaitlin Bean, Renanne Neal and Michaela Ping in their senior seasons.

son. However, the real test comes when you have to face adversity.

The Eagles have done just that in some cases. When losing one set in a match, the Eagles have found a way to bounce back nine times and

into practice and how we deal with adversity and our challenges in practice.”

In their toughest and most prominent fifth set match of the season to date back on Oct. 6, the Eagles

Men’s basketball has high hopes for season

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In the past three seasons, the Ashland University men’s basketball team has made it to the conference semifinals but all three of those appearances have ended in a loss at the hands of Division II basketball juggernaut Ferris State who went on to win the national championship in the 2017-2018 season.

Through ten years, AU head coach John Ellenwood has coached many talented teams, but expectations are sky high for the Eagles this year as off-season roster additions have added a new dynamic to the team.

Those two additions come in the form of a five-foot-ten uber athletic point guard from Wayne Central high school out of Dayton in Rodrick Caldwell, and Ohio’s all-time leading rebounder in high school basketball in Northwestern’s Derek Koch.

“They just bring something that is not typical for any Division II program,” Ellenwood said.

It is atypical for a pair of players who combined for 61 starts during their careers at Bowling Green State University to transfer to a Division II program, but they have added a much-needed dynamic to the team.

“They bring something that we haven’t had in a while,” senior guard Ben Haraway said.

Ellenwood said both players possess elite athleticism that allow them to be multi-tooled players.

Caldwell will enter his junior season as a key contributor on both sides of the court for Ashland. Haraway said Caldwell’s ability to pressure as a defender will help ‘increase the tempo’ for the Eagles. Caldwell averaged slightly under nine point per contest last season for the Falcons along with nearly three assists.

After just one season with the Falcons, Koch enters his sophomore season with a fresh start and an opportunity to compliment junior



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Part of the men’s basketball team huddles around coach Ellenwood before a drill in practice.

All-GLIAC center Drew Noble.

So far, the two have been building their chemistry and working to become a force in the paint on both sides of the ball.

“We play off of each other really well and we know where each other are on the court at all times,” Koch said.

The focal point of the preseason for the Eagles has been developing continuity between the new kids on the block and the key contributors of the past.

“We got a lot of new guys trying to get them acclimated with the guys that are returning and figuring out [kind of] how they jell into our system,” Ellenwood said.

Another new face suiting up in the purple and gold is redshirt-freshman forward Ryan Batte who spent last season learning the system and becoming accustomed to eagle basketball.

Batte, Caldwell, and Koch are all hopeful efforts to replace what the Eagles lost in seniors Wendell Davis, Marsalis Hamilton and Teddy Metzen.

“Losing Wendell and losing Marsalis and Teddy Metzen, those are some guys that were instrumental to a lot of success here,” Ellenwood said.

As a scorer, Davis accounted for

27 percent of Ashland’s points last season averaging 20.3 points per game as the team’s leading scorer, however, he did not do it by excluding his teammates.

So, the question plaguing the preseason has been how do the Eagles replace Wendell Davis?

“You replace him with a team,” Ellenwood said, “and our team is going to be something that is more balanced, and guys are going to have to play unselfish and learn how to move the ball the way Wendell did.”

Last season, the Eagles were anything but balanced as Davis, Noble, and Haraway contributed for more than half of the team’s points, rebounds, and assists.

A lack of depth was a major cause to Ashland’s disproportion throughout the season.

The Eagles had six players averaging over twenty minutes per game and four of those six players registered over 30 minutes per game.

“We had some injuries last year that really affected our depth and we had some guys that stepped up last year that we weren’t expecting to play,” Ellenwood said.

One of those players is redshirt-sophomore guard Aaron Thompson who enters his second season

as a starter for Ellenwood’s eagles.

Thompson caught fire towards the end of last season scoring double digits in three of the last five games including two back-to-back 14-point performances and guarding the opposing team’s best scorer.

Coming off the bench will be senior forward Phil Frentsos whose high-flying athleticism has allowed him to be a consistent contributor throughout his career.

Following Frentsos is redshirt-junior guard Jay Slone who was sidelined last season due to injury and will be most effective as a ‘Three and D’ player.

Ellenwood said the team has eight or nine players that could potentially be in the game-to-game rotation as opposed to last season where only six players accounted for most of the team’s minutes.

However, extra bodies cannot immediately fill the voids in leadership lost from last season. As a result, Ellenwood is looking to his seasoned veterans, who witnessed the leaders of the past, to steer the team.

“We have to develop leaders here and guys like Ben Haraway, Drew Noble, Phil Frentsos and John Brady. Those guys have been through the battles,” Ellenwood said. “They were around those

great leaders that we just lost, so now it’s their team and they have to step up vocally. They have to step up effort wise to make sure everybody on the team understands how we do things here.”

With all the talent for Ashland, expectations within and around the program have been high.

For the head coach, his expectations are not in the form of wins in losses and do not derive from the ability of his players, but in the ‘execution’ of his team on a day to day basis.

“Talent doesn’t win championships, execution does,” Ellenwood said.

Through execution, the Eagles look to stone the GLIAC goliath Ferris State and whoever else stands in their path to get to the promised land.

“We want to go someplace that this program has never been but in order to do that we got to win every day,” Ellenwood said.

In two weeks, the Eagles will tip-off their season at Lake Erie at 7 p.m. on a Friday night (Nov. 9) to begin their journey to a conference title.



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Senior guard Ben Haraway goes up for a layup in practice.