

sports

AU wrestling begins quest for another successful season

PAUL MURRAY
@AUCollegian

The Ashland University wrestling team has started their season off strong with a dual meet win and a couple of strong performances in tournaments.

Most recently, the Eagles competed in the Ohio Intercollegiate tournament on Sunday, Nov. 11. The program had five wrestlers that recorded top five finishes at the tournament.

A few of those top performances came by the way of redshirt-junior Bret Romanzak, placing third overall in the 165-pound weight division, and redshirt-sophomore Tristen Weirich, placing fourth in the 285-pound weight division. Both of these wrestlers competed in the gold division which was the toughest division at the tournament.

Nine days before that, the Eagles opened the season with a victory on Nov. 2 at the Kent State Duals. The Eagles outscored the Golden Flashes by a score of 21-14, thanks to six straight individual victories from Eagle wrestlers.

"This first dual allowed our young guys to get punched in the mouth, get tested early, and show what they got," AU head coach Josh Hutchens said.

Freshman Luke Wymer (133), junior Chandler Minnard (141), sophomore Carson Speelman (149), sophomore Chance Esmont (157), Romanzak (165) and junior Christian Price (174) all won their matches.

This start is exactly what Hutchens was looking for.

"Last year was great, we had a great season and had a lot of success," Hutchens said. "But a lot of talented seniors from last season



AU ATHLETICS

AU redshirt-junior Bret Romanzak holds down an opponent at home in an early dual meet against Lourdes University on Nov. 8.

have moved on, and we have a couple of big holes to fill."

Last season, the Eagles finished fifth as a team at the Division II National Championships and they currently come into this season ranked 13th in the NCAA Division II Wrestling Coaches Association Top 25 preseason poll.

Although the team has had great success under Hutchens, the team still feels they have much more to prove.

The AU wrestling program added 10 new freshman in this year's recruiting class but they lost two wrestlers who had a huge impact on the program in their time as Eagles.

Graduating as seniors last sea-

son were Jordan Murphy (184) who finished third at nationals last year and Luke Cramer who won the national championship in the 197-pound weight class.

"We try not to think about last season, although we did great, we knew we could have done better," Hutchens said. "Just like most programs want to be at the top, the same can be said for ours. We want to win a team national championship, that is the ultimate goal."

The Eagles already have one national champion on their current roster in Romanzak who won the national championship with his teammate Cramer in 2018 in his weight class of 165 pounds.

He comes into this season ranked

No. 1 in his weight class and is looking to repeat the same success he had in the 2017-2018 season.

"The main focus for this year, both for myself and the team, is taking advantage of every opportunity we're given," Romanzak said. "We are a young, inexperienced team overall and will look to grow each and every day. My goal is to keep that focus on improvement and repeat as a national champion."

Romanzak and Hutchens don't plan on altering their game plan at all. Their mantra of working hard and focusing on getting better is all they are concerned about.

"Bret comes into this season with the same mentality that he had in

the last seasons that you have to "earn it" Hutchens said. "He has a great mental attitude, always focused on improvement, and willing to battle everyday."

The Eagles next match will come on Saturday (Nov. 17) at the Findlay Open in Findlay, OH. This match will start a six match road stretch that will carry on through December and into the new year.

The Eagles will not be back home at Kates Gymnasium until Jan. 12 against Notre Dame College. They will have their last two home dual meets of the 2018-2019 season in January as well as they host Urbana on Jan. 23 and Findlay on Jan. 26.

AU throwers: Pinnacle of NCAA Division II

DAVID AMSDEN
@daveamsden

Being the top-ranked team in NCAA Division II is an impressive feat to accomplish. To be ranked in the Top 10 for over the past decade is even more impressive.

For the Ashland University track and field team winning is something they excel at. The Eagles have something that you would not expect from a small Division II school that is located in the middle of Ohio.

Most teams have a few solid athletes in each event group: sprints, distance, jumps, and throws. With the occasional star from time to time.

What if there was a Division II school where nearly every athlete in the event group was a star?

The throwers of AU have proven to be just that, being responsible for the nation's best throwing program in all divisions of collegiate track and field.

Many would question how a small

division II school has this much talent, get this much attention and reach such high national standards year in and year out?

Look no further than head coach Jud Logan.

Logan has been coaching at Ashland since 1994, and only planned on coaching for one year but quickly fell in love with the atmosphere and the community.

Sounds normal, right? A coach has been with a program for awhile, and over time they slowly mold a program into a national contender every year?

However, similar to the throwers at AU, Logan is far from average.

Logan competed in the Olympic games. Not once. Not twice. Not even three times, but four.

Most dominant throws program in the nation and the head coach is a four time Olympian? Now that sounds about right.

So why would a man with such huge accomplishments settle for a small school like Ashland?

"I only planned on coaching here



AU ATHLETICS

AU women's senior thrower Mackenzie Leigh winds up for a throw in a meet in the spring of 2018.

for a year, as an assistant coach," Logan said. "But I soon fell in love with the atmosphere and the community, and realized I found my niche."

Not only is he a successful coach, but Logan is notorious for making athletes feel welcomed and takes great care of his players.

"I chose Ashland because of the family-like environment Jud creates and the drive towards excellence that the team demonstrates," AU junior men's thrower Alex Hill said.

Hill, a four time All-American, is one of the top returners for the Eagles on the men's side. Last season, Hill earned three All-American honors when he placed second in the weight throw, third in the hammer, and fourth in the discus at the NCAA Division II Championships.

On the women's side, redshirt-

freshman Lindsay Baker reflects on Logan.

"He's not only my coach, but he is a role model and father figure for most of us," Baker said. "He's been there for me more in this past year than most people. His commitment to this team is the same as how committed his athletes are and I think that is what brings us together as a family. I couldn't imagine my life without Ashland University and the endless possibilities it has given me."

On the throwers side alone last year, there were 11 All-American honors distributed between six athletes. Four of those athletes are back again for this season and are ready for another year of excellence.

The men will be led this year by a strong group of upperclassmen led by Hill and fellow junior Nick Zak. Zak, a two time All-American, had

a big outdoor season in 2018 and placed 4th in the hammer throw and is looking to add to his awards this year.

Sophomores Brent Fairbanks and David Amstutz are paving the way for the youth of the program.

Fairbanks competed at nationals in both indoor and outdoor as a true freshman in 2018. Fairbanks placed 10th overall in the weight throw (indoors) and 18th in the hammer (outdoors).

Logan says that Amstutz is a promising athlete and has shown a lot of improvement since last season.

Along with Amstutz and Fairbanks, Logan looks for promising seasons from juniors Jake Glass and Alex Seme and seniors Stephen Pop and Jim Toth.

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Senior thrower Alex Hill winds up for a discus throw in a meet in the spring of 2018 with head coach Jud Logan looking on.