

# sports

## AU baseball looks to build on 2018 season

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It may be cold outside, but the Ashland University baseball team is certainly keeping warm inside with indoor practices, workouts and exercises to prepare for the upcoming 2019 season.

AU was recently selected to win the GLIAC championship in the preseason coaches poll prior to the start of the 2019 season and was projected to finish fourth in the Midwest Region.

The Eagles are looking again to be included in the postseason, where last year the team made it all the way to the NCAA II Midwest Regionals, only to be defeated by

Ohio Dominican. The Eagles, who had a record of 33-22 in 2018, are looking to go further than last season as they have a solid group of returning veterans.

“We have seven of our nine position starters returning, as well as more confident starting pitchers and relief pitchers,” AU head coach John Schaly said.

Schaly is in his 22nd year coaching the Eagles and has four college world series appearances as well as 15 postseason appearances. Schaly has nothing but confidence in his 2019 team as they continue to work hard and remain a top team in the region.

“The main thing is to take one

day at a time, don’t worry about tomorrow’s game or the next game after that, think about what is happening today and focus on the now rather than the later,” Schaly said.

With the Eagles first game just a week away on Feb. 23, Schaly is eager to begin play as well as the rest of the team.

“Our guys have had a good fall season and are working hard in the weight room and at practice,” Schaly said. “We have been practicing indoors due to the weather, but once the weather begins to warm up we’ll be out on the field.”

Not only does Schaly have a lot of confidence in his team, but the players with a strong returning roster are confident in themselves.

Two of those Eagles include junior first baseman Carson Mittermaier who was named to the Preseason All-Midwest Region first team and senior starting pitcher Devin Peters who was named to the second team.

The right-hander Peters finished the 2018 season with an 8-5 record and a 4.32 ERA along with four complete games. Peters led the GLIAC in innings pitched (89 ⅔) and strikeouts (98).

Peters said that the team as a whole is capable of accomplishing much more when everyone pushes each other to be the best they can be.

“We have a lot of returning players, which is huge since we had some clicks with each other last year but this year it’s one big brotherhood, which will help us push through a lot of the harder innings throughout the year as our brotherhood will help get through a lot more,” Peters said.



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An AU pitcher throws a pitch during the 2018 season.

Sam Rice, a senior right-handed pitcher, had little time to throw the ball since he had to undergo Tommy John surgery last year, which resulted with him having a short season. However, he said that he is ready to go for the 2019 season.

“I think we had a good year last year, I think a lot of the guys on the team were younger, and making it to the postseason definitely helped us get a lot of good experience, so that will definitely help us this year,” Rice said.

Rice is ready to play this season since his time was limited due to his surgery, and now that he is healthy again, he is ready to step up to the mound and play some ball.

“This year I will be a relief pitch-

er, and I will throw around two to three times a week,” Rice said.

Every player on this team wants the same goal as last year, and that is to make it to the postseason.

“Hopefully we can make it farther in the tournament than we did last year,” Rice said.

The Eagles are scheduled to face Rockhurst University, followed by Trevecca Nazarene University on Feb. 23 for their first two games of the season.

The season for baseball is a long and rugged journey, but the AU Eagles are taking that challenge head on as they are prepared to play every game at full throttle as they try to make their way to the postseason once again.



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AU sophomore Micah Allen connects with a pitch during a game in the 2018 season.

## Head coach retainment an issue for AU golf

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The impact of a great coach can be everlasting. They take their own love of the game and instill it in their players. They watch the dedication and hard work of their team be put into their practices to be the best they can be. Without a good coach, the success, tears, frustration and skill is useless.

The juniors and seniors of the Ashland University women’s golf team have had to experience not one great coach but four coaches in their time playing for the purple and gold.

The inability to maintain one coach affects the way in which the athletes perform on the links because the teacher watching from the sidelines is always changing.

“Having different coaches means inconsistency and learning and adapting to new coaches and their styles and advice can be tricky,” junior women’s golfer Claire Coughenour said.

As a junior, Coughenour has experienced four different coaches in her collegiate career which includes the current interim head coach Dennis North, who is the main coach for the men’s team.

Although golf is largely an individual sport, these collegiate athletes are still trying to learn through the game of golf and improve in their skills.

“Each coach has a certain way to teach what they know and how to help players on the course,” Coughenour said. “Getting advice from different people who do play the game differently can get confusing and frustrating when you’re trying to score.”

Both the AU men’s and women’s golf teams had consistency in coaches for the larger part of the century. Pam Leonard was a long time coach for the women’s team from 2005-2013 while Darrin Jones coached the men for 13 seasons from 2004-2017.

For AU athletic director Al King, it is all about finding the right peo-

ple for the job that are willing to take on the part-time position that both of the coaching jobs offer.

“It’s demanding in that we are asking people to do a part time job and there is a lot of work there,” King said. “I’m not surprised the retention rate is low because of what we are asking. We are asking somebody to come in here and recruit, instruct, travel and those are hard things to do.”

Since the position is technically

and then can’t do it anymore.”

While it is not easy for a coach to commit to this part-time job, having multiple coaches not only shows inconsistency with learning, but it also shows inconsistency within the program, players confidence and recruiting.

Even though the team has made it to the NCAA playoffs for the past 10 years, expecting that success every season is hard when you are constantly adapting to a



AU ATHLETICS

2018 women’s golf head coach Andrew Bolinger.

a part-time job, most of the previous coaches have had full-time jobs and have been unsuccessful with getting both of their schedules to line up and work.

“I think a lot of it is they can’t make the schedule work. You have to remember, in golf, that a lot of times they practice on a Saturday and then they play on Sunday and Monday, and that’s hard,” King said. “If you are working another job that is hard. This job almost is tailored if you are a golf pro because with the schedules, it can work out and you can do it but if you are not in that business it’s hard. So a lot of people will take it and try it, do it one or two years

new teaching style. Golf, unlike most sports, is more complex and detailed when it comes to the fine tuning of the basics such as swinging, putting, chipping and stances.

Different coaches have different tendencies and abilities which creates an inconsistency in the coaching methods from year to year. For example, one coach can be confident in their ability to help a player perfect their swing while the next coach may have more of a focus in chipping and putting. In that situation, the players mental ability to absorb and improve on their skills is hindered.

“I’m sure it’s probably more mentally fatiguing for them to go

through all of these changes because obviously when you come to play any sport in college I am sure you are looking for some stability of someone to go to all of the time,” North said. “The distraction of it is probably the biggest challenge for them.”

King also recognizes the challenge in not having the stability of a consistent coach and said that it is a big issue that bothers him. It is a situation he would prefer not to be in due to the players having to learn a different style of coaching so often.

While having multiple coaches poses a challenge on current players, it also affects possible players as well in the recruiting process.

During the time that a coach leaves and a new one needs to be hired, potential recruits for the Eagles are being lost as these players are visiting and signing with different schools.

“This past season, we were unable to have any recruits [visit] because our prior coach did not reach out to the coach before her for recruits that he had in mind,” Coughenour said. “This lead the potential recruits to sign to different schools because of the lack of communication during the time we were lacking a coach.”

King also mentioned the strain of recruiting with multiple coaches and said that there have been instances where student athletes would be recruited by one coach and then never have the opportunity to learn from them.

“Can they relate to student athletes, can they run a program, can they budget, can they recruit; no matter how good of a coach you are, you have to get good players,” King said.

For the time being, the athletes for both men’s and women’s golf at AU are turning towards North for guidance and leadership throughout the spring championship season.

North’s experience as the head golf professional at Ashland Golf Club (AGC) made the positions an

easy fit for him.

“I’ve had the ability to manage and balance my job at the club with this job so it is a really good fit for me,” North said. “I’ve watched the teams play at the club before I took this on and made relationships with them so I knew them already coming into this.”

With AGC being the home course for both teams, North has the best of both worlds when it comes to handling the demands of the job. King took this and the opinions of the players into consideration when offering the job to North.

“I got feedback from some of the women’s players in that they really liked Dennis. Dennis had worked with them at the golf course along with the men,” King said. “I thought Dennis was a good instructor so I thought ‘If Dennis goes into this position they’re going to get good instruction’, and I didn’t worry about that.”

The question that King knows everyone is asking is, when is this going to be fixed?

This type of situation is one that King has solved before but within the tennis programs. The part-time positions were made full time and gave head coach Lexi Bolesky the title of Director of Tennis Operations and allows her to oversee both the men’s and women’s teams.

This is a possible plan that could be in the works in the near future for the golf program but King is not sure when this will happen. He said that both him and AU President Carlos Campo know it is a pressing matter that needs to be fixed. King said that in time, it will be fixed.

“We are determined, and I don’t think people believe me, I know the kids have looked at me sideways when I say it, but we are determined at some point to get this straightened out,” King said. “The president knows and I know. We did it in tennis and we will eventually get there in golf. We will get this straightened out.”