

sports

New faces, experienced athletes make their way to AU

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According to a study done by The Sports Journal in 2016, 40 percent of college student athletes that receive scholarship money either transfer, leave school, or don't graduate within six years.

The reasons for an athlete transferring schools are many: wanting a change in scenery, wanting to be closer to home, a chance to star at a different school. None of these reasons are mutually exclusive because there are many other reasons why an athlete will transfer schools.

As another school year begins at Ashland University, the Eagles athletic teams welcomed in a flood of transfers in many sports from all divisions of collegiate athletics.

Swimmer Brenda Neves wanted a different experience after two tumultuous years at Iowa Lakes Community College in Estherville, Iowa, where she was only one of two swimmers left in her class last year.

"It wasn't too good of a situation," Neves said. "The coach and I didn't get along too well and I was ready to make a change."

When it came time to decide which school to transfer to, Neves looked for a school that had a good biology program and would allow her to continue swimming at the same time. That is when she found Ashland.

"I liked the campus and I think that everyone is very nice, which I think is hard to find on a big campus," Neves said.

Neves' roots are reflected in her



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY DEREK KOCH
Ashland men's basketball forward Derek Koch going up for a shot last season when playing for Bowling Green State University.

Brazilian accent, hailing from Sao Paulo, Brazil, the largest city in the Western Hemisphere. She started swimming when she was eight and hasn't looked back since.

Her specialties in swimming include mid-distance freestyle and breaststroke, where she hopes to contribute to the Eagles swimming and diving team's success.

Neves is not the only transfer looking for a change of scenery.

Derek Koch saw himself as a small fish in a big pond. At first glance, it seems like an oxymoron because his 6-foot-9 frame with big, broad shoulders sets him apart from many of his peers, but at Bowling Green State University he felt like just one of many students in the classroom.

"I do better with smaller class sizes," Koch said. "The class sizes at Bowling Green had a large number in each class, so I felt like I needed to find somewhere that was smaller."

Koch, a forward for the AU men's basketball team, is the all-time leader in rebounds in Ohio high school basketball history.

He graduated from Northwestern High School in West Salem, Oh. in 2017 and went on to play for the Falcons, where he averaged 6.7 points and 5.4 rebounds in his one year with them.

It wasn't just the smaller classes that drew Koch to AU, but also the culture of the Eagles men's basketball team.

"They're definitely like family,

and that was what I was missing last year," Koch said. "It's a lot easier to come to practice when you know that your teammates have your back no matter what."

Since he is transferring from a Division I school, Koch does not have to sit out one year before playing for his new team. With that in mind, he is ready to make a big splash with the Eagles this season.

While Koch was looking for smaller classes and a better team culture, there are other athletes that follow a coach from their previous school to their new school.

Volleyball players Brooke Peiffer and Lexi Lombardo couldn't believe it when they heard the news. Their beloved coach, Kevin Foeman, was leaving Lake Erie College for AU after coaching there for three seasons.

"It was definitely a hard thing to take because he is such a great coach," Peiffer said. "Lexi and I's

first instinct was 'we have to go.'"

"We were sad, obviously, that he was leaving. It was a big shock to the team," Lombardo said. "But we realized that this was an opportunity to do great things and follow a coach that we really love, so we took advantage of it."

So far, the switch has proven to work for both sides as the Lady Eagles have gotten off to a 7-1 start on the year. Both Peiffer and Lombardo knew that AU was the place for them after visiting the campus.

"It's bigger than Lake Erie College, and the people here are awesome," said Lombardo. "The cafeteria is great as well."

Peiffer came around to the idea a little longer, but eventually she came to the same conclusion: AU was the place for her.

"Coach Foeman was the reason I came initially, but after seeing the campus, I fell in love with the place."

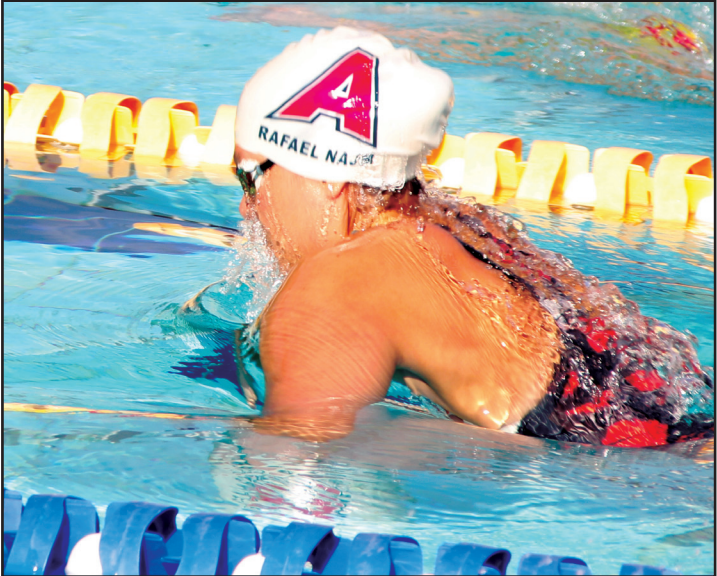


PHOTO SUBMITTED BY BRENDA NEVES
Brenda Neves swimming in a meet for Iowa Lakes Community College last year.

Athletes find success both on and off the field

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Traditionally, Ashland University has been known for their athletic performance on the playing surface, placing in the Top 15 in the Division II Learfield Directors' Cup rankings for ten straight years from 2007-2016.

However, excellence in athletics is not the only thing that teams strive for at AU; they also strive for academic excellence. Administrators, coaches and athletes themselves have always wanted their teams to make academics a top priority and succeed in the classroom while winning championships on the field.

The athletes have proven that to be true at Ashland.

"All of our coaches emphasize it and the student athletes do seem to realize the importance of it," Ashland University athletic director Al King said. "I'm pleased but I'm always looking to do better"

King said that in the spring semester of 2018 all of the athletic teams did finish with a grade point average of 3.0 or higher which he said is really rare.

The student athletes are only required to maintain a grade point average of 2.0 but each athletic team's goal is to have a team grade point average of 3.0.

The Division II Athletics Direc-



AU ATHLETICS
Elizabeth Freund, Director of Academic Support Services.

tors Association (D2 ADA) recently released a list for the 2017-2018 Division II Academic Achievement Awards. Of the 10,116 names on the list from 162 different institutions AU had 82 athletes who earned the award. The average number of athletes per institution is 63.

"Our coaches have always done a nice job finding kids who are serious about their academics," King said.

King said that he is always looking for improvement and ways to get better academically. That is why the athletic department recently created a new position and hired Elizabeth Freund, the Director of Academic Support Services for AU athletics on Aug. 16.

"It's cutting edge for us because we are one of the few Division II schools who have this position," King said. "That's what I said to President Campo, this is a big step for us."

The hire of Freund was made possible by an NCAA Division II Strategic Alliance Matching Grant which King had requested for this position. King said the idea of having this position has been in the works for three years because he wanted someone who could not only work with athletes but with other academic support services around campus.

Freund is a 2005 graduate from the University of Akron with a degree in Political Science and earned her Masters of Science in College Student Personnel from Miami (Ohio) University in 2007.

Freund was most recently the Academic Adviser II for The College of Business Administration at Akron for seven years, beginning in 2011. Before that she was Assistant Director of Retention and Student Success and Area Director of Residence Life at The College of Wooster from 2007-11.

"I worked at the College of Wooster a bit ago and I liked the smaller campus feel, and the stron-

ger community presence where students seem to support each other a little more," Freund said. "I wasn't challenged as much anymore and I was just looking for a change and a fresh start."

In her position Freund will be implementing a number of systems that will be present to help student athletes in their academic and career fields. These systems include mentoring programs, career plan services, international and transfer student services and long-term retention plans.

The system that Freund is most excited about is a mentoring program that will involve students who are academically successful help their teammates who are struggling or who need a little push.

"Since I have more of an academic mindset I can bring in more of an outsider view to the athletic department and propose ideas that people may not have thought of yet," Freund said.

One area that King and Freund both believe needs work in is helping student athletes with their plans for after college athletics.

"I think a lot of times students get very wrapped up in their world and they forget about life after graduation," Freund said. "And sometimes athletes are thinking only about the here and now and the season and not necessarily beyond."

With this program and so many others to help athletes, Freund is excited to hit the ground running but knows she has a lot of work to do. She is excited to learn about the culture at AU and is looking forward to the opportunity to work directly with student athletes and learn the balance that they have to keep in their lives.

"We needed one person who is dedicated to this cause, and that is what Elizabeth is here to do," King said. "Make sure student athletes have the resources they need to be successful."

The Week Ahead

Women's Volleyball

Sept. 7 vs. Davenport (7 p.m.)

Sept. 8 vs. Grand Valley State (2 p.m.)

Listen live on 88.9 WRDL

Sept. 11 @ Wayne State (6 p.m.)

Sept. 15 vs. Lake Superior State (2 p.m.)

Listen live on 88.9 WRDL

Football

Sept. 8 @ Ohio Dominican (7 p.m.)

Sept. 15 @ Wayne State (6 p.m.)

Women's Soccer

Sept. 7 vs. Bridgeport @ Allendale, Mich. (1 p.m.)

Sept. 12 vs. Charleston (WV) (1 p.m.)

Sept. 14 vs. Davenport (7 p.m.)

Sept. 16 vs. Grand Valley State (12 p.m.)

Listen live on 88.9 WRDL

Men's Soccer

Sept. 8 vs. Slippery Rock (3 p.m.)

Sept. 12 vs. Cedarville (7 p.m.)

Sept. 16 vs. Parkside (3 p.m.)

Listen live on 88.9 WRDL

Women's Tennis

Sept. 7-8 @ Oberlin College Invitational

Sept. 9 vs. Fairmont St. (1 p.m.)

Sept. 12 @ Walsh (3:30 p.m.)

Sept. 14-15 @ Bowling Green State University Invitational

Men's Golf

Sept. 8 @ Ohio Cup (Findlay, Oh.)

Women's Golf

Sept. 9-10 @ Michael Corbett Fall Classic (Erie, Pa.)

High School Football

Sept. 7 Crestview vs. Carey (7 p.m.)

Listen live on 88.9 WRDL

Sept. 14 Crestview vs. Western Reserve (7 p.m.)

Listen live on 88.9 WRDL