

sports

“Team One” is underway at AU

CASS TOLLIVER
@CassTolliver

On Sept. 11, 2017 Ashland University’s athletic department declared that women’s lacrosse will be added as a varsity intercollegiate sport for the 2018-2019 school year.

With that in place, an inaugural season is now underway for the AU women’s lacrosse team, also known as Team One.

“I’m grateful to have the opportunity to play here on Team One at Ashland University and am very thankful to the athletic department along with Coach Williamson and Coach Smith for making this experience possible,” junior midfielder Sofia Michael said.

With a newly formed team consisting of 17 girls, only 10 of them have had previous experience before joining the recent team at AU.

“As a team, we have a lot of potential and I am excited to see how the season goes,” junior midfielder Renee Ruppert said.

Michael and Ruppert both bring a tremendous amount of experience to the field. They both started at a very young age with Michael playing since she was five years old and Ruppert since she was seven.

Michael and Ruppert are both transfers from Anne Arundel Community College in Maryland where they led their team to two NJCAA National Tournament semifinal appearances.



An AU women’s lacrosse player tosses the ball around in the first practice.

In two seasons in junior college, Michael scored 107 goals and added 54 assists. Her freshman cam-



AU women’s lacrosse players endure the weather during their first official practice in January.

paign in which she had 51 goals, Michael had a 96 shooting percentage, meaning she missed only two shots on goal.

Another person who contributes

high school and college where he attended Lees-McRae and was a three-year starting attackman and letterwinner.

“Those two players for instance are both juniors in college and All-Americans. Sofia was actually the National Female Athlete of the year for junior college last year,” Williamson said. “We have a mixture of obviously new kids, but we have some talented kids, too. We have a good mixture.”

However, this is not the first season that Williamson has started a women’s lacrosse program from the ground-up. Ashland is his fourth stop in his 15 year head coaching career where each school he has coached has been a program-building project.

With that type of experience, Williamson is familiar with how first years of a program work and

said that they are enjoyable to start.

“I like that the women’s lacrosse team here has created a positive environment where all of it’s athletes are dedicated and want to improve,” Michael said. “Being from Maryland, I’m thankful that this team has created a welcoming environment for both Renee and I.”

Along with many other athletic teams at AU, the women’s lacrosse team is playing a role in life lessons.

“Being on this team has taught me a lot about myself,” Michael said. “I’ve realized I like helping others learn and understand this sport which I’ve come to love over my many years of playing.”

With seven women having no prior experience in lacrosse, the experienced athletes have had to help throughout fall practice to teach the game to some of their teammates.

The Eagles still have a lot to learn but are looking forward to the challenge ahead of them as the spring season is right around the corner.

“I think it’s going to be a year where we’ll win some games, we’ll lose some games,” Williamson said. “It’s going to be kind of an up and down year, but if we can finish somewhere around .500 I think that’s great.”

With Williamson being in this position with a newly formed program for the fourth time now, he realizes that the first season will not be all about wins and losses.

Williamson is worried about developing his team and then forming a recruiting base as the years evolve so that he can build a successful women’s lacrosse program from the ground up.

“I’m not really concerned about our record over all. I’m more concerned about how we develop and if we can continue to develop and do what we are doing right now, then it will be a successful year,” Williamson said.

The women will begin their season at home on Feb. 23 as they host Notre Dame College at Ferguson Field at 1 p.m. The team will then embark on a four game road trip in March that will consist of games in Georgia (Shorter University), North Carolina (Mars Hill University), Illinois (McKendree University) and Missouri (Maryville University).

This first season of women’s lacrosse at AU will be an exciting mark of history for women’s athletics where a combination of experienced and inexperienced athletes will come together to kick off this inaugural season.

“I think this season is very important in defining the future of women’s lacrosse here at Ashland University. As we move forward with our spring season, I’m excited to witness the progress we have made since the fall as we play the teams in our conference,” Michael said. “This season has a lot of potential, and I’m glad that there is such a great group of girls that I am able to experience it with.”

Esports inaugural season looks promising at halfway point

ZACH READ
@zach_read20

The newly formed Ashland University Esports team kicked off their inaugural season in the fall of 2018 and have stayed busy ever since.

E-gamers flooded into AU looking for a chance to earn a spot to play video games competitively and have the opportunity to represent a university.

The athletes spent the first semester of their inaugural season getting to know their teammates on a personal level and on a gaming level. The esports team consists of five different teams in which each team plays and competes towards one game specifically.

Counter-Strike: Global Offensive is a team-based multiplayer first-person shooting game and is one of the games that is featured in AU esports. AU’s CS:GO team’s first half of the season consisted of numerous leagues that they participate in such as the Collegiate Starleague. The CS:GO team held a record of 4-3 in the first season and are currently 1-0 in this season.

“In the first stage we went through we played teams in Ohio but now we are branching out and are playing other college teams around the east coast,” AU freshman CS:GO player Seth Ho said.

This spring season the Eagles CS:GO team will play five matches and will have to try and qualify for the playoffs in which they would have a chance for a first place award of \$30,000.

Although the athletes mainly

compete online in esports, they still have the opportunity to travel to cities such as Columbus to compete.

“We have travelled to a local Columbus event called Game Arena and won that event and played Akron esports and Penn State University

sity along the way,” Ho said.

Another featured esports game at AU is Fortnite, which is the widely known game in esports where there are teams of two that compete head-to-head in each match.

The Eagles Fortnite team competed in eight matches in the fall season and will have six matches in the spring season but also compete in qualifier tournaments every two

weeks in which prize money is involved.

“The qualifier tournament is 128 teams each time, you just sign up a few days before and you play that single elimination, 128 team bracket tournament,” AU junior Fortnite player Alec Mueller said.

Mueller said that you need to place in the top four to qualify for the Collegiate Starleague playoffs and in the first qualifier tournament Mueller and his teammate River Wheeler placed third and fourth.

“It’s awesome so that we don’t have to stress about it anymore,” Mueller said.

AU’s Hearthstone team, a multi-

player collectible card video game, also saw great success in their first inaugural season. After dropping their first two matches, the Eagles won five in a row to qualify for regionals in which they saw a number of familiar foes.

The Hearthstone team consisting

“This semester we are focusing on changing habits, where as last semester we focused on how you sit in position in our chairs and things like that,” Ho said. “This semester we are focusing on more in-game habits.”

The team also has lifting throughout the week as well as study tables that are new as of the spring semester. The athletes are also held to a 2.0 GPA just like regular student-athletes, although they are not officially NCAA athletes.

“I believe that the mentality of going and working out and getting that motivation just clears your mind and makes you way better as a player,” Ho said.

As far as practices go, Ho said that on Sundays the team will come together and review past matches and learn from their mistakes and small details, which is the equivalent to watching film like any other sports team.

After having the opportunity to spend a semester together and begin to know one another, the athletes on the AU esports team are coming together and are beginning to build chemistry with one another.

The focus of course is always to win, but in its first inaugural season, the AU esports team is just getting started in what will hopefully be the strong foundation of a new program.

“Our goals to are of course win but there is also a lot of adjustment period,” Ho said. “However, this season we are really starting to put the pieces together and are having a little bit more structure.”



AU Fortnite player Alec Mueller concentrates during a match earlier this season.

AU ATHLETICS