

sports

Peters looks to finish senior season strong

NATE POWALIE &
JUSTIN DAVIS
@AUCollegian

It is a chilly March 23 at Donges Field, and a senior right-hander takes the mound wearing a purple jersey with white pants.

On a chilly but sunny 41-degree day, Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference baseball officially began for the Ashland Eagles against the Rangers from the University of Wisconsin-Parkside.

This game marked the first of a doubleheader and taking the mound for the Eagles was senior right-hander, Devin Peters.

Since joining the Eagles' staff in the 2017-18 school year, Peters has started 21 of the 23 games he has appeared in, obtaining a career a record of 13-5 with 6 complete games.

In his first two starts during the month of April, Peters gave up five earned runs in thirteen innings, lowering his current earned run average (ERA) to 2.91.

"He's a phenomenal pitcher, he is unreal," sophomore catcher Logan Stoldt said of Peters. "He spots up no matter what he throws, low-90's, mid-90's and he just gets hitters out constantly."

For Stoldt, it is all about that pitcher-catcher relationship that he has been able to form with Peters.

"Just from me working with him constantly I know what pitches he wants to go to and he likes to work quick so I try to work quick with him so we get hitters off balance constantly," Stoldt said.

Over his junior season in 2018, Peters averaged 9.84 strikeouts per nine innings, finishing with 98 strikeouts over the course of 89.2 innings.

Peters transferred from Kankakee Community College in Illinois to AU before the 2017-2018 school year and hails from his hometown of Churubusco, Ind.

"He transferred over from a junior college," AU assistant coach Aaron Hilt said. "He knows his



AU senior pitcher Devin Peters.

role, we recruited him to be a number one, within this year."

Hilt said that while Peters did win a national championship in junior college, the transition into Division II baseball was still hard for him.

"He won a national championship in junior college, and he thought, there's still a transition period going on from junior college to NCAA Division II," Hilt said. "I thought he had a little bit of an adjustment just from going through what we went through last year and seeing hitters and taking that step higher."

Hilt also said that when someone makes that move up, they have to adapt to the changes in the pressure situations.

"He made that step higher and he developed in maturity," Hilt said. "He really adjusted to that, and we worked on stuff with his arsenal of pitches to help improve upon it. He got better in the weight room, and people critiqued about his size and strength, but he worked on that over the offseason."

To go along with throwing right-handed, Peters bats right-handed, but he has yet to record any plate appearances in his college career.

However, Peters has been under high expectations and pressure from his coaching staff.

"He's been doing his job," AU as-

sistant coach Aaron Hilt said. "I've been pretty hard on him this year, and we keep pushing him, but it's still not good enough."

This year, Peters has taken the role of the main ace in the Ashland rotation.

"We set the bar high for him this year," Hilt said. "It's kind of tough being a number one, but he is living up to what is expected of him."

Peters also comes into every game he starts with a hard-nosed mentality.

"Great team guy, he's a bulldog. When he gets the ball, you feel like we have a fighting chance to win no matter who we're playing," Hilt said.

Hilt also said that Devin knows when deadlines come up and are ready to meet them.

"He gets things done in a timely matter," he said. "He's just a great guy, we have a lot of trust in each other, getting that athlete-coach relationship, it's just something special."

Peters led the staff last year in innings pitched with 89 and 2/3, strikeouts with 98, complete games with four, and also had the second-lowest earned run average, or ERA for short, on the starting pitching staff at 4.32.

At this point in the regular season with 18 games left to play, Peters

owns the third-lowest ERA out of any Ashland starting pitcher at 2.91. He also leads the squad with 46 and 1/3 innings pitched, 62 strikeouts and is in a tie with junior pitcher Chance Hitchcock for most complete games pitched with two.

Peters is one of seven seniors who will graduate at the end of the school year, but that does not mean that his baseball career will be over at AU.

The GLIAC tournament this year will be held May 9-12 at Wuerfel Park in Traverse City, Michigan.

This year's team holds a current record of 27 wins and four losses and is a game and a half ahead of the Purdue Northwest Pride for first place in GLIAC standings. The last time Ashland won the GLIAC baseball championship was when they split with Grand Valley State, while the Eagles' last tournament championship win was back in 2013.

Ashland is currently in the midst of a nine-game road trip, which started off with taking three out of four games at Saginaw Valley State (the one loss snapped a 17-game winning streak on Sunday).

"This last series we played he was like low-90's all game and he was in the seventh inning and we were up 3-1 and we knew it was going to be a tight game," Stoldt said.

"He spots one at the belt at 94 in the seventh inning after throwing close to 80-85 pitches and hitting 94 at that point in time is just incredible."

Most recently, the Eagles defeated Walsh on Tuesday (April 9) afternoon by a final score of 12-7, and the Eagles will conclude the road trip with a four-game series this Friday through Sunday in Detroit, Mich. against Wayne State.

Hilt also mentioned that Devin was the focal point during the team's recent 17-game win streak.

"He really helped to set the tone," Hilt said. "He's really a true team leader and without him, we may not have had that run of success."

But with the success obtained comes higher expectations down the road, as Hilt said.

"I sat Devin down before the game," Hilt said. "I'm setting the bar high with him, just focused on winning. That's kind of my expectations."

Peter's main goal is to keep on winning and keep his success up to what carried him through junior college.

He also serves as a mentor to younger pitchers on the staff.

"He leads by example," Hilt said. "He's just a guy that younger pitchers can look at and see him throw and learn from."



Devin Peters throwing a pitch in a game at Donges Field earlier this season.

Eagles prepare for annual spring game

MASON JONES
@AUCollegian

The school year may be winding down, but preparations for the 2019 football season is just getting started. While the season doesn't start until August, there is still a lot of work to be done, including the annual spring game that will take place on Saturday, April 13 at 1 p.m.

The spring game is a scrimmage game where the athletes go full throttle, meaning that instead of light contact, there is full contact where tackling is not limited.

The players have been training and working out since their season ended, all in preparation for next season. As the saying goes, "there is no offseason".

"There really is no offseason for us as we went through a winter cycle for about six weeks, so we are trying to get real strong in the winter and apply it to the spring ball," Ashland University middle linebacker Clay Shreve said. "In the summer we'll try to get into shape and get ready for the football aspect of it."

With the spring game just around the corner, the team has trained diligently for months on both sides as the offense and defense are constantly working to improve their talents.

"We run a pro-style offense, so some plays will be lined up with three tight ends and two running backs in the game who are just trying to run it down the field, and other times we'll have three receivers and one running back out on

the field and try to spread it out a little bit," redshirt-freshman quarterback Austin Brenner said.

The spring game is meant for players to test out their skills and have fun with it, as this is all a part of training and improving the team's overall skill set.

The AU football team has changed a bit regarding the number of players since some of the players have graduated, transferred, quit, etc. Overall, there are still 7 of the 11 starters returning to the field next season on the defensive side of the ball.

"We are lower than what we usually have this year due to the graduating seniors, and there are yearly attractions where kids quit and it happens every year so it's not that surprising that is happened

again this year," Shreve said. "We still got a good core coming back on defense, with some players stepping up and filling in the spots that were held by the previous players who left."

The team has lost some players, but there is confidence with the team that some players will step up and fill in the spaces. One key piece that will need to be filled is the running back position for the Eagles.

"We graduated two key running backs who were both a huge contribution to the team, so there are some things up in the air about that, but I am confident that someone will step up and fill in that spot," Brenner said.

"You always have things to work on since no one is perfect, but it's

important to keep working on the little things like the chemistry of the team so we can keep everything in order on the field."

Shreve and Brenner said that although the Eagles lost a number of guys after last season, they are still confident that there will be players who will step up and take command on the field.

"The guys did a tremendous job throughout the six week winter cycle," AU wide receivers coach Dominic Orsini said. "You could tell that these guys made significant progress from where they were in the regular season to where they are now."

Orsini also said that he is confident in his team and is excited for next season as he believes their efforts to become better have not

gone to waste as they continue to improve on their skills.

Orsini said that the team is switching up their game plan this year and is eliminating two-a-days when the players return back to school in early August.

"What we will do is have extended practices, which is a little longer practice than normal that includes more meeting time with the team and watch videos which to me is just as good since it will save some legs and a little bit more injury prevention," Orsini said.

Regardless of this new concept, Orsini is still confident with his team's skills and he believes they can achieve something great.

"I think we got great leaders on this team like Clay Shreve and Austin Brenner that are going to be big vocal leaders on this team on both sides of the ball that are going to lead this team to what we need to do. But it's not just those two as the whole senior class and all the upperclassmen contribute to the leadership roles of the team," Orsini said.

The Eagles offense and defense will get a chance to showcase their skills in the annual spring game. The spring game is the last part of spring training before the players go on break for a few weeks and then return for summer workouts and practice.

The spring game will take place on Saturday, April 13 at 1 p.m. at Jack Miller Stadium and is free and open to the public.



AU football in a fall scrimmage prior to the 2018 season.

ZACH READ