



sports



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AU ATHLETICS

Travis Tarnowski prepares for the season opener against Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Tarnowski is entering his fourth year under center for the Eagles as their starting quarterback.

Travis Tarnowski begins final chapter at AU

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On Sept. 6, 2014 Travis Tarnowski walked out onto the turf at Jack Miller Stadium for the first time to start a collegiate football game. His opponent: The Lake Erie Storm.

After a successful high school career at North Royalton, the undersized 5-11, 208 pound redshirt freshman quarterback would get the nod for the Eagles and his task was to turn around a 5-5 football team and return the Ashland University Eagles to glory on the gridiron.

It did not take long for Tarnowski to take the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference by storm as he exploded for an AU stadium record 374 passing yards and three touchdowns on 18 completions as he put his name in the history books and the story begins on the most successful Eagles quarterback of all time.

Tarnowski's journey began back in 2013 when he signed with AU as a quarterback from Broadview Heights, OH. The 5-11 185 pound freshman decided to redshirt in his first year at AU while he became accustomed to the college game and in the process was able to put on 24 pounds and entered the 2014 season as the projected starter.

Tarnowski took the starting job

and ran with it amassing 2,167 passing yards in his first season while increasing the offensive output from 394 yards per game in 2013 to 461 ypg in 2014.

He solidified the quarterback position for the 2014 season for Lee Owens and the Eagles, but little did Owens know that he had found something special in Tarnowski. After being named the GLIAC freshmen of the year, Tarnowski was named one of the captains on the offensive side of the ball.

"He's the kind of man you want as the face of your program, representing your program, and leading your program," Owens said.

Tarnowski followed up his freshman campaign with an even more impressive sophomore year as he threw for 3,121 yards with 30 touchdown passes and was named as a finalist for the Harlem Hill Trophy which is given to the Division II player of the year. The legend of Travis Tarnowski grew even larger as he continued to pick apart opponents secondary's one throw at a time and as the sun began to set on his junior year in 2016 Tarnowski cemented himself at the top of the Ashland quarterback lists.

With 12:06 left to play in the final quarter of the 2016 season, Tarnowski let one fly to Matthew Wilcox who hauled in a 57-yard touchdown pass to give Tarnowski his 80th touchdown pass of his ca-

reer and break Billy Cundiff's program record of 79.

With the win on the final day of the 2016 season, Tarnowski upped his record to 27-5 in his career as a starting quarterback.

"I never really thought that I would be as successful as I have been here," Tarnowski said before the season opener. "You know I knew the type of program this was, the type of program we had and I knew everyone was going to work hard to win a lot of football games but I never really thought that I'd be 27-5 as a starter."

On Aug. 31, Tarnowski opened the 2017 season against Indiana University of Pennsylvania and began the final chapter of his illustrious career. It did not take very long for Tarnowski to find his groove in the season opener as he came out and threw for 203 yards and three touchdowns.

The Eagles ultimately fell 26-23 on a last second field goal from IUP, but Tarnowski continued to soar up the record books for AU.

He entered the season just 866 yards behind Cundiff for the program record in passing yards and after the first game of the year he now has 8,480 passing yards and is within 663 yards of passing Cundiff for the top spot.

Tarnowski entered the 2017 season with a chance to become just the second player to lead the Eagles in passing yards for four

straight seasons and he is the first to do so since Duane Brown did so in 1959-62.

"Records are meant to be broken," Tarnowski said. "So hopefully you know I'll break them and then maybe the next guy after me will break those, so I think its just one of those things that it sets the bar and coming in here I always wanted to be the best quarterback to come through [Ashland]."

The 2017 Eagles look much different than they did last season but one thing that remains the same is that they will have their field general under center for one last ride.

"He's probably in the best shape he has ever been in," Owens said. "You know I think his arm strength is probably a little better than it has been, but that's not his greatest strength. His greatest strength as far as a physical attribute at the quarterback position is accuracy."

Owens said that one of Tarnowski's main personal goals for the season is to not throw an interception on the season.

This has been one of his main goals for the past two seasons and last year he threw just six interceptions compared to 34 touchdowns.

Tarnowski has some lofty goals for this season as he wants to not only break more AU records but he also wants to become first team ALL-GLIAC and be named an All-American and Owens thinks

that he is ready for the challenge.

"I think we've had a chip on our shoulder since the season ended last year and that's driven us to really prepare for this year and this is [Tarnowski's] last shot, and I think we will get his best shot."

Tarnowski entered the football program at AU after the Eagles lost in the first round of the playoffs after going undefeated in the regular season.

Taylor Housewright was the quarterback at the time and he was in his final season with the Eagles. Housewright was a fantastic quarterback for the Eagles in his four years at AU and Tarnowski said that he made a promise to himself that he would be better.

"When I came in here Taylor Housewright was the starting quarterback and I told myself that I wanted to fill his shoes but I wanted to be better, do more than he did, Tarnowski said. "When Taylor was a senior they went to the playoffs and they lost so hopefully my senior year we can go to the playoffs and win a game and hopefully just snowball from there and keep on rolling."

Tarnowski has been and will continue to be one of the leaders both on an off the field for the Eagles as they will look to get back into the playoffs for the first time in two seasons.

"This is the start of something special," Tarnowski said.

WRDL partners with Crestview High

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Ashland University's Journalism and Digital Media (JDM) program has expanded its engagement with the surrounding communities through a partnership with Crestview high school.

Beginning this fall, Ashland's student-run radio station, 88.9 WRDL, will broadcast a live coverage of every home football game for Crestview high school.

This partnership began last winter when WRDL covered a few of Crestview's basketball games. This year, WRDL wanted to expand their coverage to have more interaction with Crestview athletics.

Through this partnership, Ashland students will be calling the game on the radio, which will allow a lot of people who are not able to attend the games, to still be a part of them.

"It gives people an opportunity to be away from the campus, but still be a part of the game, which is a huge benefit for past alumni, staff members, and other community members." Crestview Athletic Director Tim Kuhn said. "It's just a win-win for us."

Kuhn is using his power of social

media to spread the word to the community so that the Crestview community can take full advantage of this partnership.

This partnership not only allows coverage for high school football, but will allow both Ashland University students and Crestview high school students to gain experience in the profession. Crestview high school students who are interested in production and radio will have the opportunity to shadow and interact with Ashland students working for WRDL.

"Everything that education speaks about the idea of cooperation and collaboration, I think it's a great model for their students and it's a great model for our students to see this collaborative/collegial relationship," Dr. Dave McCoy, the head of the Journalism and Digital Media program said.

Along with 88.9 WRDL, AUTV-20, Ashland's television station, will also be featuring Crestview high school football.

During the football games, Crestview students will be filming highlights that they edit and use for their morning announcements on school days. Crestview will then send those highlight videos to AUTV-20's sports producers to



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The Crestview Cougars prepare for their game against Hillsdale.

be featured on a new AUTV-20 sports show.

Crestview High School's video production teacher Cameron Estep, was a graduate of Ashland University and one of the first graduates of the JDM program.

For this reason, Estep is all for the interaction between his students and Ashland University.

This new sports show will feature not only Ashland University, but will expand AUTV-20's market to cover surrounding high school athletics.

"I think that's what this relationship is," McCoy said. "It's great programming for our radio station, it's tremendous opportunity for high school students that might want to do this, and it's a great opportunity for our department to create a new pool of recruitable students to come to our program and do the things we want to do moving forward."

Working with production in high school gives the students an opportunity to discover their career early on, and will also give them an op-

portunity to build experience early on. Being able to shadow and talk to college students will make an easier transition from high school to college for the students.

This partnership benefits all parties and hopefully only continues to grow and build from this point on.

"I'm just really looking forward to the partnership and hopefully from here we can continue to build the relationship between Crestview athletics and WRDL," Kuhn said.