



The 2016-2017 men's track team reclaimed a GLIAC outdoor team championship for the first time since 2013.

AU ATHLETICS

# Ashland athletics to stay in the GLIAC

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The Ashland University Athletic Department has decided to remain in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference after discussing the possibility of switching their conference affiliation.

In 2015, a number of the Ohio private schools, such as Ohio Dominican and Findlay, left the GLIAC and headed into the Great Midwest Athletic Conference.

This prompted the same conversation within the Ashland administration as they began to weigh in on whether or not Ashland would follow suit.

"This is a conversation that really goes back to 2015 when a number of our Ohio private schools moved from the GLIAC to the GMAC," AU President Carlos Campo said. "That's what really initiated the conversation and we promised then when we decided not to move back in 2015 that we would continue to review our conference affiliation on a regular basis."

Then in 2017, Tiffin University, the other Ohio school remaining in the GLIAC, announced that they too would be moving to the GMAC starting in the fall of 2018.

The GLIAC also announced last year that Wisconsin-Parkside

would be transitioning into the conference as well. This decision began to pull Ashland further and further away from Ohio and was a major factor in why the university reviewed their status.

Dr. Campo said that this review was nothing out of the ordinary and that Ashland will routinely review its standing in the conference to ensure that they are doing what is best for the student athletes involved.

The main things that the athletic department was looking for where how much travel cost would be involved if they were to stay in the conference and how the long travel days would affect students missing class.

The athletic department put together a task force whose main goal was to collect factual information and then present the information to President Campo.

Dr. Campo said that conferences are pieced together based on the schools location, their mission and their competitiveness.

Ashland has some differences compared to other schools in the GLIAC in their location and sometimes their mission because of being one of three private schools in the conference, but the competitiveness is in perfect alignment.

"We realize that competition is one

of the main drivers that led to this decision," Campo said. "We do feel like the GLIAC keeps us in a more competitive, probably the most competitive conference within our region, so that was the main driver. We did not want to take a step back competition wise."

Athletic Director, Al King agreed with this sentiment saying that Ashland remaining in the GLIAC is not a consolation prize but rather a benefit because AU can continue to compete in one of the top conferences in the country.

As a part of the decision making process, every coach at AU received a survey to fill out to make note of their opinion on the issue and the athletic department also reached out to the Student Athlete Advisory Committee that represents athletes on campus to seek their opinion.

King went on to say that the GLIAC has been a major factor in the recent success of Eagle athletics.

"Our success in athletics, some of it is tied to the GLIAC, there is no question," King said. "We got better years ago when we joined the GLIAC. It made us be better on the field, in the classroom all the ideas we have brought, community service everything, we got better because of that association."

The GLIAC has also greatly ben-

efited from Ashland being a part of their conference and they did their part to convince Ashland to stay.

"We were very pleased to see the way the conference really reached out to us," Campo said. "The Commissioner came to campus a couple of time and the chairman came with a couple of representatives from other schools and they just said we know Ashland is a great asset to the GLIAC and we want you to stay."

The GLIAC has also amended the conference scheduling to help limit the travel cost Ashland will have to cover.

The conference basketball schedule has been moved from 24 games to 20 games. This will allow Ashland to schedule more non-conference games that are in closer proximity than some of the Michigan schools in the GLIAC.

The football schedule will also be amended so that Ashland only has to go to the Upper Peninsula once every three seasons.

King also mentioned that the benefits of staying in the GLIAC go beyond the competition on the field.

"In the GLIAC you're in a league where the other things off the court or off the field are done so well," King said. "The medical services, the gameday environment, the

gameday services, I mean I go somewhere and the team is gonna get on and off the floor without any problems. Everything is going to be handled in a high class way."

King said that this is a reason that often goes unnoticed when talking about the possibility of switching conferences.

After researching the issue and talking the opinions of coaches, athletes and many others, the university concluded that they simply did not have enough information to make an informed decision.

"One of the things that we concluded was we just don't have enough hard data," Campo said. "We can project some of these things but two years from now we will really have hard data really take a look at the cost and see what missed class time is really all about."

Ashland is planning to revisit the issue of realignment in 2020 and by that time they hope to have hard numbers on what the travel cost is and what affect the travel has on students.

"One of the things that we pledged is that we are not going to be intransigent during this process," Campo said. "We'll continue to be open continue to do the assessment that we need to do to ensure that athletics plays the right role in our overall mission."

# Miami transfer to join Eagles football team

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The 2017-2018 Ashland University football team will forever be etched in Eagles history. From winning their first outright GLIAC title in five years to advancing to the Super Region semifinal, the team has many accomplishments to their name.

While it was a historic season, it was also the end of an era for AU as quarterback Travis Tarnowski played his final game as a senior.

He was the leader of the 2017-2018 Eagles team and the many seasons prior. He finished the season with 3,044 passing yards and 31 touchdowns, setting many records along the way.

Tarnowski also finished his career with many accolades to his name as he was the 2017 GLIAC player of the year, an All-American, and finalist for male collegiate athlete of the year. With Tarnowski graduating, the Eagles knew they would be having a competition for the signal calling position next season.

What the team didn't account for, however, was a former division I player reaching out to head coach Lee Payer about being added to

the mix for the 2018 season. That player was Miami Ohio Red-Hawks quarterback, Billy Bahl.

"He contacted us looking for a school to go where he could play right away," Owens said. "As a division I to II transfer, you have immediate eligibility and I think he knew we were in transition at the QB position."

Owens initially had mixed feelings about the prospect wanting to join the team due to the already abundant depth at the quarterback slot competing for the job.

"Initially, it was tough because we have some guys here already," Owens said. "With John Davies, a two-year backup, Jacob Heath a junior college transfer, David Murray a scholarship player and Austin Brenner, we all felt good about our QB room and the players that we had here competing for the job."

Even though the Eagles had many talented quarterbacks already on the roster, Owens knew he just couldn't turn down a player of Bahl's caliber.

"I don't think you ever turn down a good player," Owens said. "I think that competition makes everyone better."

Owens said he made sure to tell the other quarterbacks competing

for the starting job that no promises were made to Bahl.

"I visited with the QB's prior to Billy getting here and wanted to make sure we had some discussion about it," Owens said. "I made them aware there were no promises made and that we were going to play the best player. They weren't surprised by it."

As a RedHawk, Bahl had many ups and downs throughout his collegiate football career at Miami. Even though he was always under constant pressure and scrutiny, he tried not to ever let that to him.

"Any quarterback is under a lot of pressure, but you just try not to think about it too much," Bahl said. "You just have to do your job and the things you can do well while working on your weaknesses to help the team and be a leader."

Bahl started out his career playing in eleven games as a true freshman. He started in seven of those during the 2015 season. For the season, he put up 1,409 passing yards and eight touchdowns.

"I started my career as a freshman and that was kind of a little bit of a shock," Bahl said. "I probably wasn't mentally mature enough to play yet, but just getting thrown

into the fire taught me a lot of experiences."

In the next year, he started the first five games of the season before succumbing to injury with a separated shoulder. While the injury was devastating to Bahl, he knew it was a part of the game and that he had to come back stronger than before.

"Injuries are a part of the game," Bahl said. "Everyone gets hurt playing football but its just being able to come back after where you are stronger, better and stronger mentally."

Bahl put up 820 yards and five touchdowns in his final year with Miami, starting for three games and playing in four. It was at this point in his career that he decided he wanted to transfer to a different college to play out his senior year.

Bahl made his decision on where he wanted to transfer to after being in contact with Taylor Housewright, a former quarterback that played for the Eagles and is a current assistant coach to the team. Housewright was already somewhat familiar with Bahl during his last official visit to Miami in 2014. During this time, Housewright was an assistant coach for the Red-Hawks.

"Coach Housewright got into contact with me after I had decided to leave Miami," Bahl said. "We had known each other from before when he was a GA at Miami during my last official visit there, so I had already met him back then."

The exchange between Housewright and Bahl eventually got the ball rolling for the quarterback to decide to transfer to Ashland.

"We kind of just started talking and probably a week later, I was talking to coach Stacy," Bahl said. "Coach Owens came down for a visit after that and I just really liked the school and how the offense seemed to fit me very well."

From the moment Bahl set foot on the AU campus, it was comforting and familiar to the quarterback.

"It's a beautiful school that I really liked" Bahl said. "It kind of reminded me of Miami a little with all the brick buildings and campus being so close together."

Bahl has a 6'4 and 233-pound frame, a pro-style body. He said his coaches at Miami told him his abilities matched the Eagles style of play and offense for his skillset, convincing him to join.

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