



Womens basketball: A run for the ages

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The Ashland University women’s basketball team has another milestone to add to their long list of accomplishments since the start of the 2016 season.

The Eagles won their 52nd game in a row on Jan. 6 against Northern Michigan and the streak continues to grow and is now at 54 games.

The streak has had a little bit of everything, from blowouts to buzzer beaters to a National Championship. The one thing it has not included is a loss.

“When we had our home game for the 50th win fans were coming in as we were in the hallway and they were like ‘50,50,50’ and I had no idea what they were talking about,” sophomore guard Jodi Johnson said. “Once we hit that point I knew that we had to win the next game to tie and then beat Northern [Michigan] to break it.”

This remarkable journey started back on Nov. 11, 2016 with a 91-45 win over Cedarville and since then, the Eagles have put together the greatest stretch of basketball in Ashland’s history.

Ashland broke Washburn University’s record of 51 consecutive wins that ran from Jan. 26, 2005-March 11, 2006.

“I honestly had no idea that that was something until a few days before we had the opportunity to break it,” head coach Robyn Fralick said. “One of the things we always talk about with our team is ‘stay in the huddle’ because of the peripheral noise. Those records are great, but the only way that it’ll ever be talked about again is if somebody else comes close to breaking it.”

Winning 52 games in a row is an impressive streak in its own right, but the way that Ashland has won those games is simply jaw dropping. 31 of the 52 games of been won by at least 30 points including an 87 points win over Alderson Broaddus on Nov. 12, 2016.

The average margin of victory during the streak is over 32 points per game and so far this season, the Eagles are outscoring opponents by a whopping 37.9 points per game, which leads the nation.

In comparison, Washburn had an average margin of victory of 21.9 during their 51-game winning streak. The winning streak has spanned two seasons and the Eagles have not skipped a beat despite having new players on the court.

“We’re a different team,” Fralick said. “We have different people, we also just have a different dynamic but the foundation of who we are hasn’t changed, our core values, our expectations of our players is the same.”

Despite having some turnover from last year’s National Championship team, there is one name that has been on the floor for all 54 games over the last two seasons, and that player is Jodi Johnson.

Johnson came to Ashland from Wadsworth High School, where she was a first team All-Ohio player and made an impact the first day she walked on campus. She started the Eagles’ first scrimmage of the season against Ohio State back on Nov. 6, 2016 and she scored the first basket of the year and has never looked back.

“Jodi is just a special player, she’s a special person and she impacts the game in every possible way,” Fralick said. “She rebounds, defends, she gets steals, gets to the free throw line, she scores and she can also play the one through five at any time so that really makes her unique in her versatility on the court.”

Johnson has become a mainstay in the starting lineup and as just a sophomore is second on the team in scoring this year averaging 18.4 points per game while also pulling down 5.5 rpg and dishing out 3.3 assists per game.

Put those numbers next to Laina Snyder (19.8 ppg, 7.8 rpg, 2.7 apg) and Andi Daugherty (13.7 ppg, 5.1 rpg, 3.9 apg) and the Eagles have arguably the best trio in the country.

“Andi and Laina have done things here that people have never done before, not only individually but their team, when you look at the success of the program during their time,” Fralick said.

But as with any great team it is not only three cogs that make the machine work to perfection, it is the entire team.

Ashland is getting unparalleled production from their bench as they average 30.4 points per game and contribute in many other ways, including giving the starters some much needed rest.

“I don’t remember the last time I played a 30 minute game,” Johnson said. “All of the starters, we average about 20 minutes a game and obviously that is a big strength. We play our hearts out until that sub comes in and coach Fralick always says, ‘earn your sub.’”

This system has been very effective for the Eagles as they led the nation in scoring last season and are currently averaging 100.2 points per game this year.

Not only is Ashland beating the teams that they are expected to beat, but they are winning against the top competition from across the country. During the streak, the Eagles are 8-0 against teams ranked in the top 25 and they are outscoring them by nearly 20 points per game.

Despite the overall dominance of the streak, there has been a couple of occasions where Eagle Nation was forced to hold their breath, none more notably than the matchup against Cedarville on Nov. 11, 2017.

After a back and forth contest the entire way through, the Yellow Jackets were able to grab a one point lead with 28 seconds left in the game. It looked as if Ashland would have plenty of time to get the shot they wanted to try and win the game, but a turnover gave the ball back to Cedarville.

This is where the Eagles championship mindset came to the forefront. AU was able to force a turnover and were left with one final chance with a baseline out-of-bounds play from under their own rim with under two seconds left.

Renee Stimpert triggered the ball into Snyder who rose up in the lane and sent the Eagles to a 79-78 win in what was their closest margin of victory during the streak.

“We made a lot of mistakes in that game and then we figured it out with our backs against the wall and things not really going our way, the last 15 seconds of that game my team put together consecutive winning plays and they



Jodi Johnson is in her second year on the team and averages 18.4 points per game.

figured it out,” Fralick said. “You just can’t always teach that.”

The game against Cedarville was the first of many times this year that Ashland has been battled and tested by their opponents but at the end of the day its Ashland on top. Great teams tend to have a target on their back and for Ashland they certainly get the best effort from their opponents on a nightly basis, but Fralick and the team do not shy away from the challenge.

“We are focused on our own growth and so those other things are peripheral, you want to get people’s best, thats a good place to be,” Fralick said.

Johnson said that because other teams play Ashland so tough, it allows for the team to grow, even if the scoreboard is not close.

“I mean it’s definitely a benefit for us getting that experience I mean we play some very good teams but Lake Superior State this year, they aren’t the best team in the league but they definitely had the energy throughout the whole game that made it feel like, to us, that it was a close game. Just having that gives us a lot of experience,” Johnson said.

Ashland has climbed the mountain and they are at the top of Division II women’s basketball, but that does not mean they are done growing yet.

The exhibition game against the

University of Connecticut earlier this year allowed the Eagles to experience first hand how the best college women’s basketball team of all time handles themselves on the floor.

“Going to UConn for us was to get the experience of what the best looks like and we did,” Fralick said. “I mean we experienced that at a high level just how it felt to play them was just very different in their relentlessness and so we learned. In that second half I feel our team showed a lot of fight and that was kinda what we had been looking for.”

UConn holds the record for the longest winning streak in sports history after winning 111 straight games and they have passed that torch on to Ashland.

“We got to witness was greatness looks like they are the top of the top Division I, the big dogs, and we got to see what that was like,” Johnson said. “We can take what we learned from there how they run how they play and try to make that happen at the DII level.”

Ashland’s current winning streak is the longest active streak in all of NCAA sports and that number certainly looks as if it will continue to go up.

While the UConn record is still ahead in the distance, the overall, men or women’s, Division II record is just around the bend.

ABCA Hall of Famer: leader on and of the field

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On Friday (Jan. 5), in Indianapolis, Ashland University baseball coach John Schaly achieved head coaching immortality.

Schaly was inducted into the American Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in a moment that was special in more ways than one. Schaly joined his late father, Don, as just the second father-son duo inducted in the Hall of Fame.

“It means a lot to me to be associated with something as big as that with my dad,” Schaly said. “It makes me really proud and I know he would be too.”

Baseball has always been a huge part of Schaly’s life thanks to his father. His influence on his son started at a very young age and continued on when he played under his father at Marietta College.

The Schalys were also the second father-son combination to each win 1,000 games at four-year universities.

“He’s the main reason I got into coaching,” Schaly said. “80 or 90 percent of the things I do I got from him.”

These influences led Schaly to immediately know his destined career path from a young age.

“I just knew at a young age that I wanted to stay in the game,” Schaly said. “I knew all along that this is what I wanted to do since I grew up in a college dugout.”

Schaly is going into his 20th season as Ashland’s head coach. He has 726 wins to his name and over

1,089 for his total career. Schaly is also the winningest coach in AU history.

He credits the players for the success and tries to bring the same connection that he and his dad had to the team.

“I feel the team is an extension of our family,” Schaly said. “It’s what keeps me going. It keeps me young and energetic.”

Adam Schaly, just like his father John, understands the importance of the team feeling like a family. Schaly grew up just like his father, immersed into baseball at an early age.

“I was always at the baseball field growing up,” Schaly said. “I was always around the game. It’s just how we both grew up and bonded.”

That connection is something that him and his dad has tried to share with the players, just like John and his dad.

“Just recently, a player got a little sick and had to go to the Mansfield hospital,” Schaly said. “Dad and I went to the hospital to check in. It’s little things like this that show you care and the players a part of the family.”

Schaly said his dad tries to make the team seem like a family. He makes sure players know they aren’t just a pawn in the system, but individuals who are extremely important to the organization.

One of the former players at the ceremony was Ashland University Assistant baseball coach Aaron Hilt. He understands what it’s like to be a part of the baseball family that Schaly created.



Coach Schaly is in his 21st year as the head coach at AU and has won 726 games.

“He (Schaly) was the main reason why I chose Ashland,” Hilt said. “He’s the main reason why a lot of recruits come to Ashland.”

Hilt played at Ashland before being welcomed back into an assistant coach role. Hilt said he enjoys being able to have such a close relationship with the coach where he even has dinner with his family.

Hilt always felt that he always had a personable relationship with Schaly and that he was a great leader not only on but off the field as well.

“He’s a great leader and he always found a way to win no matter what it took,” Hilt said. “He’s also such a personable guy where he has an open-door policy and cares

about his players.”

For Hilt, Schaly truly cares about the people in the organization. Hilt said Schaly helped him during one of his darkest times in where he was unsure of where to go in his academic career.

“I wouldn’t be where I was at today if it wasn’t for him helping me,” Hilt said. “He went the extra mile to sit there and help me get back on the right track.”

Schaly had a lot of time to reflect over the induction as he found out about it well in advance of the actual event.

Due to him being on the ABCA board of directors, Schaly found out about the induction class at last January’s convention. The conven-

tion is a time-honored tradition for Schaly and many other coaches across the country.

“Any sort of baseball coach can join the association and come to the convention,” Schaly said. “We had over 6,000 coaches there during my induction.”

Seeing all of the familiar faces that had grown under Schaly at the ceremony for support is what made his coaching career completely worth it to him.

“Seeing what former players have become that came to the banquet is the rewarding part for me,” Schaly said. “To see what great husbands, fathers, and leaders in their community; that is why I continue to coach.”