

AU Esports named sixth best in country

STEVE SHRENKEL
@TheRealShrenkel

Ashland University was listed as the sixth best university in the United States for esports according to Value Gamers, a website pertaining to those in the gaming industry.

Value Gamers printed an analysis article on June 30 that ranked the top four-year universities with esports programs in the country. They were evaluated on multiple factors which included: academics, campus, food quality, professors, location, nightlife and value.

“It feels great to be ranked that highly before we even start,” Esports head coach Josh Buchanan said. “The biggest reason we got ranked so high was because of the Ashland University itself. I think it

reflects how nice Ashland is.”

Freshman River Wheeler, a Fortnite player on the team, said a lot of players including himself joined the team due to all the similar national attention that the program has gotten.

“I originally was going to be on the basketball team, but I had saw that Ashland’s esports had blown up with national coverage,” Wheeler said. “I’ve always liked playing so I just decided to try out and then joined the team.”

Being ranked so high by Value Gamers is a bit nerve wracking for everyone, he said.

“It definitely produces some pressure with it being a brand-new program, but it will just come with practice for us,” Wheeler said. “Practice makes perfect.”

The program itself features a

state-of-the-art facility located on the first floor of the library that includes 25 high-end gaming PCs and gaming chairs. The facility also features two 65” high-definition televisions for coaching and entertainment.

Buchanan said that the program is being treated similarly to other athletics.

“We’re treating this just like any other athletics on campus,” Buchanan said. “It’s an extra-curricular activity that you do alongside your education here at Ashland. We try to put more emphasis on it than a typical club or intramural sport though.”

Wheeler feels collegiate esports is different than just playing casually.

“College sports is a whole different world even with esports,” he said. “It’s way more competitive

and intense than just casual gaming.”

Currently, there are exactly 30 students on the esports team, Buchanan said.

Those on the team will compete in games such as Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Overwatch, League of Legends, Hearthstone, Rocket League and Fortnite.

There are, however, spots on the team still open for those willing to try out. Open campus tryouts for Fortnite, CS: GO, Overwatch, Hearthstone and League of Legends will be held on Aug. 28 – Aug. 30 from 4:30 p.m. – 8 p.m.

“We’re hoping to add anywhere between zero and 10 new students to the team,” he said. “We’re looking forward to trying to recruit new talent when we hold the tryouts.”

The program is offering up to \$4,000 in scholarships to students who meet the academic and competitive requirements.

Those hoping to join the team should have passion for the game, Buchanan said.

“The number one thing we look for is a really big passion for the game while also showing that you have a lot of dedication and a good mindset to continue improving,” Buchanan said. “It’s also important that you have good academics and be good students as well.”

All university esports rankings can be found at <https://valuegamers.com/analysis/best-colleges-for-esports-and-gaming>. More information about Ashland’s esports program can be found at <https://www.ashland.edu/content/ashland-university-esports>.



Esports Open Campus Tryouts

Location: Esports Training Facility (Library Ground Floor)

Fortnite August 28 4:30-8:00 PM	CS:GO & Overwatch August 29 4:30-8:00 PM	Hearthstone & League of Legends August 30 4:30-8:00 PM
--	---	---



Esports players practicing in the new Esports practice and competition facility in the bottom floor of the library.

Team previews for fall sports

ZACH READ
@zach_read20

With school ramping back up this fall, so are the Ashland University athletic teams and their preparation for the 2018 fall season. Teams have been working hard all spring and summer to showcase their talent and teamwork this fall on the field and the court.

Team: Cross Country
Head Coach: Jacob Sussman (Second Year)
Last Year’s Record: Men finished fifth in GLIAC, Women finished seventh in GLIAC.

Takeaways from last season: Last season was a transition year for the cross country teams, but they hope to make a larger impact in conference and regionals with a more experienced group after last season’s roster was primarily filled with freshmen and sophomores.

What to Watch for: Junior Kyle Shively is the only returning All-GLIAC performer on both sides but Sussman believes that sophomores Nathaniel Redden, Jake Hall, Connor Ingram and Ian Johnson will make a jump in the fall.

Impact Newcomers: On the women’s side, the Eagles have four strong incoming freshman who are planning to make a difference this fall: Taylor Anderson, Abby Moser, Destini Oler and Cassandra Ponzi.

Meet to Watch: GLIAC Championships (Nov. 3)
First Meet: at Northwood Invitational (Sept. 1)

Team: Men’s Golf
Head Coach: Dennis North (First Year)
Last Year’s Record: Finished tied for fourth at the GLIAC Championships.

Takeaways from last season: In the spring of last season, the team finished first in the Ohio Valley University Spring Championship and the Bill Blazer Memorial Tournament. The team hopes to keep that momentum heading into this fall.

What to Watch for: After finishing tied for third at the conference tournament last season, Austin Kondratick looks to put together a strong senior campaign.

Impact Newcomers: In search for a No. 5 player, look out for sophomore Hunter Lowder and redshirt freshman Luke Tanner.

Match to Watch: at GLIAC North Invitational (Sept. 29-30)
First Tournament: Ohio Dominican (Sept. 5)
Team: Women’s Golf
Head Coach: Audrey Nelson (First Year)
Last Year’s Record: Finished fifth at the NCAA Division II East Regional.

Takeaways from last season: The Eagles made the NCAA Division II playoffs for the 10th consecutive season in a row. They also had no seniors graduate so they are looking to come back in full force this season.

What to Watch For: After getting a year of collegiate golf under them, keep an eye out for sophomores Sophie Hemleben and Hannah Lemons who played in all 11 tournaments last season and averaged scores of 81.74 and 78.26, respectively.

Impact Newcomers: The Eagles have four incoming freshman who are looking to make an impact: Leah Burtscher, Cece Dillon, Sophia Lowe and Virginia Travers.

Match to Watch: Gilda’s Club Laker Fall Invitational (Sept. 29-30)
First Match: Michael Corbett Fall Classic (Sept. 9-10)
Team: Women’s Soccer
Head Coach: Taylor Clarke (Interim Head Coach)
Last Year’s Record: 12-5-2 (Reached GLIAC Semifinals)

Takeaways from last season: The Eagles dominated throughout their non-conference and GLIAC schedule while scoring 35 goals on the season.

What to Watch for: Keep an eye out for senior Deijah Swihart who spent all of last year on the sidelines due to injury. Swihart has 18 goals in her career and was the 2015 GLIAC Freshman of the Year.

Impact Newcomers: After graduating nine seniors, the Eagles are looking to have 14 new recruits this fall.

Match to Watch: vs. Grand Valley State (Sept. 16)
First Game: at Lewis (Aug. 30)
Team: Men’s Soccer
Head Coach: Oliver Slawson (Third year)
Last Year’s Record: 7-9-1

Takeaways from last season: The Eagles struggled on the defensive end a year ago by giving up 42 goals on the season, 30 of those coming in the second half and overtime.

What to Watch for: Missing all of last season due to injury was sophomore Kieran Paterson and junior Tomas Cordeiro. Look for these guys to make an impact this fall.

Impact Newcomers: The Eagles added ten players with their 2018 recruiting class. Three of those recruits, Nick Costa, Alex Mapp, and Jackson Crawford, are from the University of Akron, a Division I men’s soccer powerhouse. They also added international players Joseph Renner (U.K.) who played for Rochdale AFC youth team and Haruki Kimura (Japan) from the IMG Academy in Bradenton, Fla.

Match to Watch: at Davenport (Sept. 21)
First Game: vs. Lake Erie (Aug. 30)
Team: Women’s Tennis
Head Coach: Lexi Bolesky (Third Season)
Last Year’s Record: 8-16 (Made it to the GLIAC tournament)

Takeaways from last season: After going 1-17 in the previous season, the Eagles were able to improve and found themselves winning matches. This season, the team looks to improve in conference matchups.

What to Watch for: Keep an eye on sophomores Anna Hart, 2017-2018 wins leader (16 as a rookie), Hazuki Ogino (13 wins) and Camille Ringot (11 wins).

Impact Newcomers: The Eagles have five incoming freshman this season which brings the roster to a full depth of twelve players from all over the country. Nikhol Pluta, from Apple Valley, Cali., earned a 36-0 career high school record in league play while she won her conference league individually as a freshman.

Match to Watch: vs. Fairmont St. (Sept. 9)
First Match: Oberlin College Invitational (Sept. 7-8)

Team: Volleyball
Head Coach: Kevin Foeman (First Year)
Last Year’s Record: 14-15 (Reached GLIAC Tournament)

Takeaways from last season: The Eagles carried a 23-match home winning streak into late October but held a 5-12 record on the road. Although they made it to the GLIAC tournament, their goal is to win it.

What to Watch for: Watch out for three 2017 All-GLIAC returnees Shelby Woycik, Michaela Ping and Reanne Neal. The duo of middles Ping and Neal can really bring the heat for the Eagles this season.

Impact Newcomers: With a recruiting class of six, the Eagles hope to add depth to their roster and train up the young freshman.

Match to Watch: Midwest Regional Crossover (Oct. 12-13)
First Match: Ashland Invitational (Aug. 24-25)
Team: Football
Head Coach: Lee Owens
Last Year’s Record: 11-2 (Made it to NCAA Super Region 3 Regional Semifinal)

Takeaways from last season: The Eagles won 11 games in a row after losing their first game of the season and made it the farthest in the NCAA playoffs since the 2008 campaign.

What to Watch for: Over the offseason the Eagles gained senior transfer from Division I Miami (Oh.) Billy Bahl at quarterback to replace four-year starter Travis Tarnowski. The Eagles also need to replace their entire kicking game, so keep an eye out for who they will stick with throughout the season as a kicker, punter, field goal kicker, and holder.

Impact Newcomers: Four senior offensive lineman graduated last spring, so the Eagles are looking to replace the big guys up front. Of the 18 offensive lineman heading into the pre-season, three are juniors, two are sophomores, two are redshirt freshman and 11 are true freshman.

Game to Watch: at Grand Valley State (Nov. 3)
First Game: vs. Indiana (Pa.) (Aug. 30)



Lineman line up before a play at the AU football scrimmage on Aug. 16

ZACH READ