



# sports

## Freshman thrower making a name for himself

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Every year coaches set out to bring in new players to further build their programs. It is the foundation of every successful coach because the coaches that hone in the best talent usually achieve more success. Simple, right?

But not all of the largest, most successful or most resourceful schools get the best athletes.

There is always something more, a connection between a player and coach that establishes that commitment.

Jud Logan, Ashland University head coach of the men's and women's track and field teams, had his eyes on a particular athlete for years. An athlete that not only stands out in his ability, but stands out in his character and work ethic.

It also helps that he stands at six-foot-four and weighs 280 pounds.

Logan first knew he would soon be wearing the purple and gold when he spotted him as a freshman at one of the university's track and field camps for aspiring high school athletes.

"He's been under evaluation from me for over three years," Logan said. "He's just one of those coach's dreams that you want."

Logan is referring to Ashland University true freshman thrower, and Austintown fitch product, Brent Fairbanks.

Fairbanks has shown flashes of promise through a level of work ethic and determination that has been with him since his early years of high school and led to him becoming third in the nation his senior year in the hammer throw.

"He was one of those kids that always stayed extra, made our coaches stay out an extra 15 minutes, late to dinner," Logan said. "Always the last one to leave and the first one to be there."

Logan knew he had all of the qualities he was looking for before he ever officially got on campus. Those qualities led him to rank fourth in the nation for the hammer throw as a freshman.

Similarly, Fairbanks knew Ashland was the school for him before it all.

The prestigious track and field program that the four-time Olympian has build over his 13 seasons as the head track and field coach, made Fairbank's college decision a no brainer, even when he was receiving major interest from top-tier schools that included Ohio State University.

"As soon as Coach Logan made an offer here, I immediately committed," Fairbanks said. "It was a perfect fit for me because we're a very good school for what I want to study, plus the track team is elite, especially compared to a lot of D-1 schools."

The business administration major hopes to be a throwing coach at an university someday and eventually own his own athletic center.

"Basically anything that gets me to that point would be good for me," Fairbanks said.

Fairbanks developed his love for throwing as a freshman in high school when he realized the other



AU ATHLETICS

**Brent Fairbanks is one of the few freshman throwers that has not experienced a redshirt year.**

sports that he participated in were not for him.

He played basketball, baseball, soccer, football and wrestled, and "hated" all of them.

However, he credits his parents for not forcing any one particular sport or path upon him. Through this, along with support, Fairbanks has been able to develop his own interests.

"They've been extremely supportive of me coming to college for track and coming to Ashland and they've always encouraged me to do what I love," Fairbanks said. "The fact that they're so willing to support me, makes it all the better to push myself for them."

Leaving Austintown and coming to Ashland was uncharted territory for the freshman thrower.

His mother received her degree online, and his father did not attend college.

Stepping into the unknown is the struggle of all humanity and Fairbanks did not avoid that obstacle. Fairbanks was weary of how he would be received by his fellow Ashland students.

While coming from a large school in Austintown where he grew up in the shadow of a reputation that hid the growth he'd made over the years.

The fresh start at Ashland University allowed him to show people the type of person he had developed into.

"It's kind of interesting for me to come here and meet people who only know me as a mature adult," Fairbanks said.

Logan credits his coachability as a major reason why he has experienced a great amount of success as a freshman.

Competing as a freshman is something most throwers do not get to do due to the nuances of being a college athlete.

"If we can give them that transition year and then they comeback that second year, they know what the program's about they know what they're expected and then their freshman and they have four more years of eligibility," Logan said.

Redshirt-sophomore thrower, and the second ranked hammer thrower in the nation, Alex Hill, is one specific case of why the redshirting process is so widely instituted in Logan's program.

"I would recommend it for everyone who comes into college," Hill

said.

Hill never threw the weight or hammer prior to arriving at Ashland, so the redshirting option proved to be beneficial in his circumstances.

In the case of Fairbanks, former national champions Jordan Crayon and Danny Roberts departed from the program prior to this season leaving a void that needed to be filled.

"Those two guys were really stalwarts in our program," Logan said.

Fairbanks showing in the pre-season made the decision to burn his redshirt easy for Logan.

"Some freshman get thrown into the fire and there are some that are amongst the best in the country as a true freshman and Brent is one of those kids," Logan said.

Since the decision was made, all Fairbanks has done is make his case for why it was the right decision.

"We thought he could go top eight in the United States, now we believe he can probably go top five," Logan said. Hill believes that Fairbanks can break the freshman record Hill set last season, despite having a year extra in the program.

"This year I can definitely see him breaking the freshman record which is 21 meters and placing in nationals," Hill said. "I think he can get All-American."

Fairbanks possess a blend of well crafted technique and strength that has allowed him to out throw most of his opponents this season.

"He has a lot of patience and his technique is really good coming in all throughout high school he threw so that's one thing he came in doing very well," Hill said.

The strength that his 280 pound frame carries has also been a major contributor to his success. Hill mentions that Fairbanks arrived on campus with unique strength as a freshman.

"He came in stronger than half the guys on the team," Hill said.

What makes Fairbanks so intriguing is not that his head nearly brushes the top of doorways, or that he has refined his craft, it is his humility.

Fairbanks affirms that he would not be in the position he is if it were not for those around him.

"Coach Logan made me realize just how much potential I might have and every moment that I've

talked to him or interacted with him since Ive got here. he has made me want to work as hard as I possibly can," Fairbanks said.

He adds that Logan's ability to place emphasis on specific areas of a throwers technique and tweak it to near perfection makes a baffling difference.

"I knew coming in that he was an amazing coach, but I honestly did not know that I could achieve what I am achieving right now," Fairbanks said.

Hill has also had a major impact on Fairbanks' success, as the two constantly pass motivation back and forth.

"Alex Hill has done an amazing job of pushing me to compete especially since he is the number one on the team," Fairbanks said. "He really sets the bar high for me to compete with, and for me to try to succeed him, and try to be as good as I possibly can."

During the Youngstown State College Invitational, the two competitors took turns taking the lead from one another until Hill was finally able to pull away and win his first GLIAC Men's Field Athlete of the Week honor.

Despite early success, the season's journey for Fairbanks has not been a smooth sail. The transition from high school to college off of the field has been his main struggle.

"I don't sleep well enough before meets, I probably don't eat well enough before meets which is a major part of performance," Fairbanks said.

He goes on to note that his eating and sleeping habits are vital for his performance, but Logan has noticed a progressive change in the way that he treats his body.

"He's already dramatically made a lot of changes on how he is taking care of his body and that's enabled him to have better practices," Logan said.

Through it all, Fairbanks has a bright future, not only for his career, but for the latter portion of his first season competing.

Fairbanks currently has a personal best of 67-feet-11 putting him in the top five of all throwers in the nation. He aims to reach the milestone of 70 feet in the hammer throw before the season concludes. A mark that only ten other throwers in Ashland history have reached, the most by any school in Division I, II and III.

The next school along that list is

## THE WEEK AHEAD

### Women's Basketball

Feb. 1 @ Wayne State

Feb. 3 @ Davenport

Feb. 8 vs. Lake Superior St

### Men's Basketball

Feb. 1 @ Wayne State

Feb. 3 @ Davenport

Feb. 8 vs. Lake Superior St

### Swimming & Diving

Feb. 14-17@ GLIAC

Championship

### Wrestling

Feb. 3 vs. Tiffin

Feb. 7 @ Findlay

Feb. 11 @ John Carroll

Open

### Track & Field

Feb. 2 -3 @ Akron Blue/Gold

Feb. 9 @ Grand Valley St.

Feb. 10 @ Tiffin

Virginia Tech with only four.

"He can very well hit 70 this year let alone, what we were hoping for in his third or fourth year," Logan said.

Fairbanks is not stopping there. Over the course of his career he wants his name etched in stone as one of the best.

"I'd like to be top three in the program's history," Fairbanks said, "I'd like to win my fair share of national championships,."

Logan hopes to aid Fairbanks in his quest for greatness as he does with of his athletes giving the coaching they need to take their game to the next level and continue to build the monument of Ashland's track and field program.

"We talk about building a cathedral and you can only lay so much brick a day, and so you'd love to see the completed cathedral," Logan said, "but each day these guys come and they put another piece of stone on that thing, and the next thing you know they haven't even looked for a while and then they turn around and look back and the cathedral is way bigger than what it was."

The cathedral is continually adding stones to its structure, the latest stone being Brent Fairbanks.

As Logan continues to add more bricks to the cathedral, he hopes to establish it as the greatest of them all.

"We're trying to do what what we've done: become the best throws program in the country regardless of Division," Logan said.

## Esports to come to campus in fall of 2018

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT  
@goashlandeagles

Ashland University officials have announced that the institution is creating an esports program on campus and will begin intercollegiate competition in the sport starting next fall.

AU will offer talent scholarships of up to \$4,000 per

year for those interested in competing in esports, which is a form of competition performed through electronic consoles and video games.

"This esports program is for anyone with a passion for video games

and a desire to pursue this at a higher level while getting a quality private education," said Al King, director of athletics at AU. "Esports puts an exciting and innovative spin on a sport that requires skill, intellect and strategy."

King said the University has hired Joshua Buchanan as the coach for the esports program. Buchanan comes to Ashland from

Bloomsburg (Pa.) University, where he recently graduated with an undergraduate degree in economics and philosophy.

He currently serves as a player-manager for Sloth E-Sports Club LLC, a top 3 North American

Starcraft 2 team. Buchanan will oversee every aspect of the team, including mentoring players, event schedules, arranging transportation and lodging and assisting with player benefit administration, including travel and tournament entry fee compensation.

He is also charged with player scouting and recruitment and regularly consults with team leadership in planning short-term and long-term organizational objectives.

As a player, Buchanan currently ranks 40 th in the United States in Starcraft 2 and has over five years of competitive experience.

He also serves as a Starcraft 2 commentator for competitive events like Cheesadelphia and Stream.Me Arena and works as a Starcraft 2 freelance coach.

Buchanan also has experience in other game titles, such as Super Smash Bros. Melee, League of Legends, Dota 2, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Overwatch, Heroes of the Storm and Hearthstone.

The University is making plans now to create an esports arena on the first floor of the AU Library, a location that will house an area for practice and competition.

According to King, AU will feature varsity and junior varsity

teams and will begin intercollegiate play in the games of League of Legends and Overwatch.

The University will also explore the possibility of playing other titles based on the demand of prospective student-athletes.

To apply for a scholarship, prospective and current AU students should submit a form that can be found on the esports page at [www.GoAshlandEagles.com](http://www.GoAshlandEagles.com).

Those that apply will be asked to schedule an interview with Coach Buchanan through Skype, Discord or in person. For more information, send an email to Buchanan at: [au-esports@ashland.edu](mailto:au-esports@ashland.edu).