



# sports

## Once an Eagle, always an Eagle

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Bright white glows up the green turf below the lights of Jack Miller Stadium. High rows of bleachers full of screaming fans decked in purple and gold, stomping their feet. The sound of the cheers echoing throughout the stadium and fills the ears of the players on the field and the coaches on the sideline. For most, the cheers coming from the crowd fuel the hungry craving of motivation to win. For Taylor Housewright, that fuel used to pump him up on the field, but now it flows through him on the sidelines as he coaches those players that now stand in his spot.

Housewright has called Ashland home for a while and is known in Ashland High School and Ashland University athletics. Between leading the Arrows to the state final four and leading the Eagles to one of the best seasons in program history, Housewright has made a name for himself in football.

Over the years he has since evolved that name from the thought of a player to a well-rounded coach.

“I knew I wanted to coach ever since I can remember” Housewright said. “I never wanted to do anything else and right out of college I moved to North Carolina with my buddies until the coaching thing became open. It ended up becoming open halfway through the season at Miami of Ohio. I knew I was going to get into it eventually.”

The start of Housewright’s journey began when he was younger continued when he was roaming the halls of AHS. During his time as an Arrow, he was under the wing of Scott Valentine, and led the team to one of the most impressive seasons recorded.

One of Housewrights biggest accomplishments as an Arrow, was leading his team to a chance at a State Championship in 2007. That chance though, ended a lot sooner than the team would have wanted but Housewright helped the Arrows make it to the Division II Final Four.

Despite the heartbreaking loss, Housewright was still optimistic about his future. He always knew he wanted to continue playing but the question was where and the thought of Ashland University was

not even in his head.

“I didn’t think I would go to Ashland until probably January 15, 2008,” Housewright recalled. “I had an offer from Ashland and a couple others, but to me, it was the best fit. I knew a new facility was being built because I knew the people in town that were going to build it, so I knew it was coming.”

Coming into his first year as an Eagle, Housewright redshirted and was the backup quarterback to Billy Cundiff. Before his starting debut in 2010, Housewright watched Cundiff and took notes. His first starting season, the team went 8-3 and his first game was recorded as a win. After a starting season record of 1-3, Housewright and the rest of the team rattled off seven wins in a row and ended up with the 8-3 record and barely missed the playoffs.

“I started out rough but going into junior year there were high expectations,” Housewright said. “We had a lot of young guys on offense and I think I played with nine freshmen. We ended up going 6-5 so not the expectations that you think of compared to previous seasons, which was embarrassing.”

Housewright also said that season during a game against Saginaw Valley State, he got hurt and was unable to finish the rest of the game. He said it was a game they lost but should have won. The team had a few big wins that year but an overall up and down season.

“The last game of the year was against Lake Erie and they were not a great team and we should have beat them but we didn’t and it was a big downer,” Housewright said. “It was bad for program because we had high expectations.”

Housewright credits that season as a blessing in disguise due to the amount of guys that stayed after the season was over and were motivated to do better than before.

“Coach Owens made sure we knew that we could have been better,” Housewright said. “He worked us and I remember that summer we had a lot of guys here to play. It was 2012, my last year, and we had a great team.”

The 2012 team consisted of many great leading stat holders for the AU Athletic program. Some of those players were current Cleveland Browns player Jamie Meader. Safety Bryan Gamble, a transfer

student from Illinois who caught two touchdowns in a Rose Bowl game during his freshman year. Cody Bloom filled the middle line-backer position. On offense, Dan Piko was the receiver along with Anthony Taylor.

“We knew we could be good but we didn’t know how good,” Housewright said. “One thing led to another and all of a sudden we are undefeated conference champs and a Top 5 team in the country.”

Housewright helped lead the team to their 11-0 undefeated season, a season that will be remembered as one of the program’s best. Playoffs came and brought the freezing cold temperatures along with the fire of competition.

“Playoffs came and we are in the second round of playoffs,” Housewright said. “It was freezing cold and I remember we were down by five and got 80 yards to go in 45 seconds and we drive all the way down and I got sacked. I had the opportunity to get rid of the ball but was sacked to end my college career.”

Housewright chuckled and remembered he ended his college career the same way he ended his high school career.

Despite the rough ending, Housewright had many positives to his time playing on the field. Housewright had All-GLIAC honorable mention 2010-2011, the most single-game total offense yards in 2012 and earned the highest placement by an Eagle in the Harlon Hill Trophy voting and finished fifth. Housewright was also named All-GLIAC first team and was the GLIAC player of the year in 2012.

After graduation, Housewright started managing a bar. At the end of that year, Miami of Ohio’s head coach was fired and the interim coach, Mike Bath, reached out to Housewright.

“Bath called me and said ‘I think they are going to hire me, do you want to help me?’” Housewright said. “He wanted to install the offense we ran at Ashland. I called my dad and told him and he told me that I would be stupid to not take the opportunity. So I quit my job, moved to Oxford and helped coach quarterbacks.”

After that season, Miami fired all of their football staff, so Housewright was left without a job once again. He moved back to Ashland

with some friends and decided to attend a coaches convention in search of a new job. After Miami hired a new staff, Housewright reached out in hope of a job.

“I knew the new coach at Miami, Chuck Martin, and he hired me as a graduate assistant on defense,” Housewright said. “In my first year we won one or two games. That following spring, I got a job at Wittenberg.”

Housewright got the job at Wittenberg with the help of Martin. The program at Wittenberg has averaged nine wins a year in the last 21 years since head coach Joe Finchman arrived in 1996. Housewright coached receivers at the Division III level school and enjoyed his time there.

“Wittenberg is a great school with great kids,” Housewright said. “Kids are playing there for the right reasons, it’s not paying their way through because it is a D-III so they really enjoy it.”

During his time there, the team went 9-1 and the Tigers came in second that year. After completing a year with them, Housewright got a call from Owens asking him if he wanted to return to Ashland and coach receivers.

“It was a great opportunity,” Housewright said. “After being back for a year, the position to coach defensive backs became open and I was moved over to defense and it has been good ever since.”

The adjustment from being coached to being the coach is two different worlds that Housewright is fortunate enough to experience. “Being a player, you don’t see the ins and outs,” Housewright said. “I’ve learned a ton from seeing the other side of it. Just from how to manage players, game play, fundraising, so it’s pretty neat to see this side of it as well and get the view of it as a player and compare it to a coach.

The journey Housewright has had is something he describes as an enjoyment. The advice he would give to those that are looking to coach, is make as many contacts as you can and be patient.

“Try to make as many contacts as possible,” Housewright said. “Be ready to work your way up. You start low and eventually you will have more and more responsibility and you just have to be patient

## THE WEEK AHEAD

### Volleyball

Nov. 11 @ Tiffin

### Football

Nov. 11 vs. Saginaw Valley State

### Women’s Basketball

Nov. 10 vs ODU

Nov. 11 @ Cedarville

### Men’s Basketball

Nov. 10 vs. Lake Erie

Nov. 12 @ ODU

Nov. 14 vs. Notre Dame

Nov. 15 @ California (Pa.)

### Swimming & Diving

Nov. 10 @ Findlay

Nov. 18 @ Malone Invitational

### Wrestling

Nov. 12 @ Ohio Intercollegiates

Nov. 18 @ Findlay Open

because it’s a long process. Don’t do it for money, do it because you enjoy it and enjoy being with the kids, that is the best part about being around the guys.” Housewright is happy that his journey led him back home, even if it is home.

“It’s neat being back in town and coaching at the school you played at,” Housewright said. “I keep trying to leave Ashland and I keep getting sucked back in but it’s not bad. I really enjoy what I do.” The Eagles will play Saturday (Nov.11) in the regular season’s last game against Saginaw Valley State starting at 1 p.m.

## Wendell Davis: Defying the odds



AU ATHLETICS

Wendell Davis missed all of the 2016 season due to injury.

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The floor glistens in the spotlights. A few fans sit in the stands as the men’s basketball team hosts West Liberty in their first home scrimmage of the season on Nov. 2. The starters walk out to the center of the floor in their black practice jerseys and in the middle of the pack for the Eagles is Wendell Davis.

Ashland wins the tip and Davis immediately controls the pace for the Eagles. He rolls off of a screen at the top of the key and dribbles into the short corner, steps back and knocks down a short jumper to give AU the lead. Next possession down the floor for Ashland the shot clock is winding down and Davis catches the pass on the left wing and rises up for three: Bang. Wendell Davis was back.

Davis was making his first start on his home court after missing all of last season due to a torn ACL, but in 2017-18 Ashland is thrilled to have their All-Conference leader back.

“Wendell is the vocal and inspirational leader of the team,” head coach John Ellenwood said. “His passion is what drives his teammates.”

In his first full scrimmage back, Davis scored 26 points to lead the Eagles to a 91-82 win. Davis shot 6-10 from the field and 2-3 from behind the arc and added in eight free throws.

Davis enters the season as the program’s 13th all time leading scorer with 1,331 points and the redshirt senior is ready to make more noise in division II this year.

“Last year I learned a lot from sitting on the bench and sitting with the coaches,” Davis said. “I

learned a lot from what they see things versus how a player sees things. I think this year that helps me a lot because I help guys out just by being more clear on what the coaches want from us.”

Davis led the way in 2016 as a junior for the Eagles averaging 17.4 points per game and pulling down over 7 rebounds per game.

His contributions led the Eagles to a 25-win season and led AU to a NCAA tournament appearance for the first time in 25 years and had landed Ashland as one of the favorites to win the conference in 2017.

Then during the summer of 2016, Davis had one of those moments that define a team’s season when he was playing for his summer team. He came down after a rebound and heard a pop in his knee, but Davis would not let that stop him.

“It actually happened twice,” Davis said. “I went out of the game then I thought it was nothing big so I went back out, I played, I scored a couple of points got some rebounds and then I jumped again for a rebound and it snapped.”

Davis was forced to miss a substantial amount of time, but he did not let that keep him from getting better.

“I got to sit out and watch and that was my first time not being able to play basketball so I got to learn a lot mentally and just grow as a basketball player, not playing

the game,” Davis said.

Davis learned more than just how to play the game of basketball while he was injured, he also learned to appreciate the little things.

“You forget sometimes in the grand scheme of things that you’re able to play the game, we get so focused and wound up on, oh, I want to do so good, or we got so many goals, but sometimes you just gotta be able to appreciate going out and competing,” he said.

Ellenwood said that the road for Davis was not easy, but that he has put in the work to get back to game form.

“He worked extremely hard on his conditioning and controlling his weight,” Ellenwood said. “He got stronger and strengthened his core. He also worked on observing from a coaching perspective while on the sideline last season. This helped him become a better communicator with the coaches and his teammates.”

When Ashland tips off the regular season, Davis will be in the lineup, but he will be without many of the players he spent his first three years with.

Michael Hundley, Boo Osborne and Adrian Cook have all been lost since Davis last stepped onto the court at Kates Gymnasium. The only starter other than Davis that is remaining from that historic 2016 season is Marsalis Hamilton.

Davis acknowledged the new look

Eagles, but is happy with what he has seen from the team so far.

“I became family with everybody on the team. Everybody is looked at as a brother and we don’t just say that, it’s on and off the court. Us growing off the court has made us so much better on the court,” Davis said. “We’ve been getting after it. We still have some young guys on the team that have to embrace a big role, Aaron Thompson, Jay Slone and Joey Zahn, but we are hungry and a lot of guys are working really hard.”

Davis has garnered many preseason awards already for the Eagles as he has been named a preseason All-American as well as being named to the preseason All-GLIAC team.

“Seeing the preseason stuff was like a pat on the back,” Davis said. “It was like a lot of hard work for me personally this summer to get back to where I am especially coming off the ACL injury so it felt good, but then I also know that it’s a preseason, so that means nothing, it’s just saying what you could possibly do.”

All of the hard work that Davis put in during his year off the floor will have an opportunity to be showcased in his final season.

“I have certain things that I want to do, but overall I want to have fun,” Davis said. “I want to embrace the moment and live in the moment of every game.”