

sports

Libertowski on track to beating all-time goals scored record

EVAN LAUX
Sports Editor

“We definitely got a good story to tell for sure,” said men’s head soccer coach, Oliver Slawson. “The way we came back and when we did... Justin was a big part of that.”

Last season the Ashland University men’s soccer team was given the “Catching Fire at the Right Time” award, marking their striking comeback in the second half of the 2018 season.

The Eagles had a rather slow start with a 2-8-1 kickoff to their campaign. However, the team saw a 6-2-2 finish, a GLIAC Tournament title and a spot in the Division II playoffs for the first time since the program’s rebirth.

The 8-10-3 overall finish was secured in part by then-sophomore Justin Libertowski, who had a stand-out year and one of the greatest attacking seasons in the history of the AU men’s soccer program.

Libertowski, now a junior, serves as one of the dominant forwards on the team and the GLIAC.

“He’s always working, he’s always running and he’s always battling and fighting for those extra inches. He just has those qualities that you

need to score goals. It’s not easy, probably the hardest thing to do. That’s why the most popular players in the world are goal scorers,”



Justin Libertowski during a pre-season practice on Aug. 29.

EVAN LAUX

said Slawson.

Libertowski lead the GLIAC with his 13 goals last season and tied for the fifth-most in program history. They were the most by any AU scorer since 2010.

He is no stranger to success on the pitch, though. During his freshman year, he scored five goals within his first three games as an Eagle.

“I definitely learned a ton my first year here,” Libertowski said.

“High and lows, my freshman year taught me a lot about what I needed to work on and improve.”

Libertowski’s prosperous soccer

career did not begin at AU, but rather when he turned 4 years old.

“I played a little basketball and baseball, but soccer was always the most fun for me,” Libertowski said. “My dad was my first coach and by age 10, I began taking it pretty seriously.”

In high school, Libertowski played for Medina and was a part of three stand-out years. During his senior year he scored 38 goals,

crushing the school record.

Slawson believes Libertowski is fully capable of beating out AU’s previous record for most goals scored. With 18 total goals in two years, Libertowski is more than halfway to passing Kirk Harwat’s previous record of 34 goals set in 2001.

“If you’re gonna be a forward in our program, you gotta get behind the enemy line and hurt the opposition,” said Slawson. “His physical attributes help him; his strength, balance and center of gravity... they’re all a testament to his work ethic.”

Outside of soccer, Libertowski’s work ethic can be seen in his somewhat unconventional training ground located behind his house in Medina.

Around the age of 14, Libertowski, along with his brother and father, built the first edition to their “American Ninja Warrior” obstacle course.

ANM is an American sports entertainment competition airing on NBC. On the show, hundreds of competitors attempt to complete a series of obstacle courses of increasing difficulty in various cities across the United States, in hopes of advancing to the national finals

on the Las Vegas Strip.

“I just do it for fun but my brother was actually on the show a couple years back. We all used to watch it together and we had the idea of building the salmon ladder. One obstacle led to two and now we have about 12,” said Libertowski.

The salmon ladder consists of a bar which rests on two parallel walls. The walls have seven sets of rungs for the bar to rest on, with gaps in between each rung. Competitors must use their momentum and upper-body strength to climb the ladder, by raising the bar from rung to rung.

After six years of causal ANW training, Libertowski has built up his physical fitness to a point. His main goal now is to focus on the more technical elements of his offensive soccer game.

“Every chance I get on the field I’m focusing on holding the ball and keeping it in possession,” Libertowski said.

Before every game Libertowski writes Mark 5:36 on the back of his hand.

“It says ‘don’t be afraid, just believe.’ I try and go into every game playing my best and playing fearlessly, win or loss.”

AU fall sports preview

NIKO SCARLATOS AND
NATE POWALIE
Reporters

With the 2019 calendar entering September, students are beginning to ease into new classes at Ashland University. As another academic year begins, so will fall sports for the purple and gold.

Team: Football
Head Coach: Lee Owens (16th season)
Last Year’s Record: 6-4 overall, with all six wins coming in the GLIAC compared to just two losses in-conference.

Takeaways from last season: After finishing the season with six wins, the class of 2018 football team finished with the second-most wins over a four-year period by graduating class in AU history with 36, two behind the class of 2017. The two GLIAC losses were by a combined total of just 10 points against national runner-up Ferris State and archrival Grand Valley State.

What to Watch For: After Billy Bahl went down due to suspension, rookie Austin Brenner stepped in and secured five wins in seven starts for his rookie season. The sophomore out of Copley High School is coming off being named the GLIAC Freshman of the Year and looks to have a great sophomore season.

Impact Newcomers: One of the new freshmen on the team to watch this year will be wide receiver Raymell Byrd from Whitehall, OH. Byrd was a first-team All-Ohioan in high school, a district player of the year and a first-team all-district while earning varsity letters in football. Byrd also lettered in track and field in high school.

Game to Watch: at Grand Valley St. (Oct. 5)

First Game: vs. Indianapolis (Sept. 5)

Team: Women’s Golf

Head Coach: Gene Grabic (first season)

Last Year’s Record: Finished ninth out of 10 teams in the GLIAC Championship

Takeaways from last season: The ladies’ golf team started off fairly decent with a fifth-place finish out of 20 teams at the Michael Corbett Fall Classic, but only finished in the top five in a tournament once the rest of the way. Sophomores Hannah Lemons and Sophie Hemleben for the Eagles.

What to Watch For: Dayton transfer, Megan Pollock, joins the team for her senior season, and this year’s sophomores Leah Burtscher, CeCe Dillon and Virginia Travers should all expect to see more playing time this year.

Meet to Watch: Bulldog Fall Invite at Ferris State University (Sept. 28-29)

First Meet: Michael Corbett Fall Classic at Gannon University (Sept. 8-9)

Team: Volleyball

Head Coach: Kevin Foeman (second season)

Last Year’s Record: 25-7 (Reached NCAA DII Postseason)

Takeaways from last season: Foeman led the Eagles to an overall 25-7 record, which included wins in 14 out of 16 GLIAC matchups. Seven players on the team were named All-GLIAC, including setter Zoey Peck who was Conference and Midwest Region Freshman of the Year.

What to Watch For: Sophi Cudworth is the only returning senior on the team, so expect Foeman to shuffle up rotations and include more freshmen in the lineups.

Impact Newcomers: Red-shirt freshman Chelsey Farris from Elyria High School totaled 353 kills in high school during her three years of volleyball.

Game to Watch: vs. Ferris State (Oct. 26)

First Game: Ashland Invitational vs Notre Dame College of Ohio (Sept. 6)

Team: Men’s Soccer

Head Coach: Oliver Slawson (fourth season)

Last Year’s Record: GLIAC Tournament Champions

Takeaways from last season: Even though the Purple and Gold finished with an under .500 record last season at 8-10-3, they made the most of their opportunities when it counted, shutting out Northwood 3-0 in the tournament final.

What to Watch For: Justin Libertowski is coming off a solid sophomore season putting up 13 goals in 20 starts. The former Medina Battling Bee looks to lead the Eagles to back-to-back conference titles.

Impact Newcomers: One freshman to watch is a former high school state champion Zach Bruni of Canal Fulton, OH. Bruni was part of the 2017 championship team and was a solid contributor.

Game to Watch: at Northwood

(Sept. 20)

First Game: at Lake Erie College (Sept. 5)

Team: Women’s Soccer

Head Coach: Taylor Clarke (second season)

Last Year’s Record: 10-5-5, lost in the semifinal round of GLIAC tournament.

Takeaways from last season: After starting off the season with a 1-1 draw at Lewis University, the Eagles ripped off five straight wins before coming back down to Earth at the beginning of October.

What to Watch For: Sophomore goalie Hannah Lee saved 49



ZACH READ

Eagle women celebrate point against GVSU on Sept. 8, 2018.

of the 60 shots taken against her and earned four shutouts last season. Now as a junior, Lee is expected to split time in goal with junior Abby Lampe and sophomore Ellie Bowers.

Game to Watch: vs. Grand Valley St. (Nov. 1)

First Game: vs Lewis (Sept. 6)

Team: Men’s and Women’s Cross Country

Head Coach: Jacob Sussman (third year)

Last Year’s Record: Men finished sixth in GLIAC, Women finished eighth in GLIAC.

Takeaways from last season: Last season was unsuccessful for both cross country teams but in head coach Jacob Sussman’s third year at the helm, the Eagles look to make a big jump forward.

What to Watch for: Along with former Second-Team All-GLIAC runner Kyle Shively coming back for his senior season, the Eagles

will look for sophomores Matthew Long, Noah Stubenrauch, and Tristan Vaughan to help out the team and continue to make improvements in what will be their second seasons on the team.

Impact Newcomers: This year the men will have four incoming freshmen joining the team while the women will gain three. The men will be introduced to Lucas Lay, Angel Ortiz, Nick Ponzi, and Joel Pospisil. As for the women, the team will be joined by Emma Hinkle, Hannah Ohman, and Daria Reimund.

Meet to Watch: 2019 GLIAC



Championships (Oct. 26)

First Meet: Beaver Dam Invite (Aug. 31)

Team: Men’s Golf

Head Coach: Dennis North (second year)

Last Year’s Record: Finished third in the GLIAC.

Takeaways from last season: The Eagles are coming off a top-three finish at the GLIAC Championships in head coach Dennis North’s first season.

What to Watch for: The men’s golf team will be looking to improve on what was a very successful 2018 season in what is now Dennis North’s second year in charge. Returning for one last run is senior Patrick Steffen, who is coming off his best season yet, earning him All-GLIAC Honorable mention.

Impact Newcomers: The team added four freshmen that will look to make a quick impact. Jake Amann, Caden Gallagher,

Andrew Kolar and Logan Thomas are ready to help out the squad in any way they can.

Meet to Watch: Panther Invitational at Davenport University (Oct. 19-20)

First Meet: Don Underwood Invitational at Grand Valley St. (Sept. 9)

Team: Women’s Tennis

Head Coach: Lexi Bolesky (second year)

Last Year’s Record: 8-16 (Made it to GLIAC Tournament)

Takeaways from last season: The Lady Eagles finished with an 8-16 record for the sec-



ond consecutive season as Allison Brooks earned All-GLIAC Honorable Mention.

What to Watch for: Head coach Lexi Bolesky is now in her second year at the helm and will look to guide the team to the next level as they look to improve on back to back losing seasons. Returning to the GLIAC Tournament is a major goal for the team.

Impact Newcomers: The team in 2019 is going to be joined by two new freshmen, one being recruited from Florida. The Sunshine State native, Zoe Rosu, will look to make an instant impact on the team along with fellow newcomer Kristyn Conrad.

Meet to Watch: GLIAC Championships (Oct. 26-27)

First Meet: vs. West Virginia Wesleyan (Sept. 7)