

sports

Eagles soar to new heights: AU athletes who’ve gone pro

JOHN MARGIDA
Reporter

Eagles soar to great heights, and that is not more apparent than at Ashland University. Over the past 10 years, multiple esteemed AU athletes and coaches have gone on to perform on professional athletic teams.

The Eagle football team has seen

gonna start you if you don’t go to class.’ But that didn’t last long he came back as a starter in a hurry after that.”

Meder graduated in 2014 with a degree in criminal justice. He went undrafted out of Ashland and was signed as a free agent by the Baltimore Ravens for the 2014 season.

That did not last long, however, as Meder stayed with the Ravens

during his collegiate career, totaling 129 receptions for 1,755 yards and 26 touchdowns.

Shaheen forged his senior year and was taken with the 45th pick in the 2017 NFL draft by the Chicago Bears.

Some notable NFL players that Shaheen was taken ahead of in the second round of that years draft are Cincinnati Bengals starting

“We recruited him out of high school as a football player but weren’t sure how he would be, he was tall and skinny,” Owens said. “He played JV football his first semester and got bigger and stronger and ended up playing some varsity games for us that year.”

Shaheen would then turn it to one of the best tight ends in the country.

“I believe he was a second round draft pick and the last player that was a second round draft pick from a Division II program was Walter Peyton,” Owens said.

After making minor plays in his rookie season with the Bears in 2017, Shaheen sat most of the 2018 season. In the team’s second preseason game, Shaheen suffered a sprained ankle and foot. After returning in November, he played in six games, recording five catches for 48 yards and a touchdown.

Matt LaFleur is the current head coach for the Green Bay Packers. LaFleur was the offensive coordinator for the AU football team in 2007.

Owens was very fond of LaFleur, knowing he would make it big one day and that he was an up and coming coach. When LaFleur first got the job from Owens, he had promised him that he would coach at Ashland for two seasons.

To get LaFleur to come to Ashland, Owens also helped LaFleur’s wife, BreAnne, land a job in her field of physical therapy. He also promised LaFleur he could call plays and have one of the best quarterbacks in Division II football that year.

LaFleur had only been a full-time

college coach alongside Owens for a year before the Houston Texans came calling.

“The Texans head coach Gary Kubiak offered him a job to help coach at the time,” Owens said. ““You got a big opportunity to coach in the pros but you promised me two years,’ I’d say to him.”

10 years later after his 1 year stint with AU, the Packers are 3-1 in the NFC North under the coaching of LaFleur.

Art Warren is a former pitcher for the AU baseball team. Warren originally attended the University of Cincinnati and transferred to AU in 2014.

Warren was coach by long time AU head baseball coach John Schaly and pitching coach Arron Hilt who have nothing but rave reviews of Warren.

“We are so proud of him and he has earned it. If anyone deserves it, it’s Art, with the injury he’s gone through and the work he’s put in,” Schaly said.

Warren had a rough go early in his career transferring and running into injuries. His first season at Ashland he had to sit out the entire year while recovering from Tommy John surgery. He ended up only pitching one full year at Ashland before getting drafted by the Seattle Mariners in the 23rd round of the MLB Draft.

“That first year of coaching Art then getting that phone call from him saying he made it to the pros and hearing the joy in his voice ... that’s why we coach,” said Schaly.

When Warren was at Ashland he topped out at 96 mph on his fastball according to Schaly.

Schaly and Hilt had two fond memories stick out during Warren’s time with the program. His biggest win which was in the regional semifinal against Grand Valley in his lone season, and a start that he had coming off of Tommy John surgery.

“Warren was pitching fresh off of Tommy John surgery and was on a pitch count but was throwing a no hitter at the time. As I’m walking out of the dugout, Art is yelling at me ‘you aren’t taking me out!’” Hilt said.

Warren made his MLB debut not to long ago on September 12, 2019 and has been working some innings of relief here and there as the Mariners season winds down.

“He’s just the type of guy you really want on your roster,” Hilt said.



AU ATHLETICS

Jamie Meder poses with fellow Browns players during the 2018 season.

three men go on to the NFL: Seattle Seahawks defensive tackle Jamie Meder, Chicago Bears tight end Adam Shaheen and former AU offensive coordinator Matt Lefleur, who now coaches the Green Bay Packers. Arthur Warren, who pitched for the AU baseball team in 2015 now pitches for the Seattle Mariners in the MLB.

Meder, originally from Parma, Ohio, played for the Eagles from 2010-2013 and became one of the most dominating defensive players in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. In 2012, he became the first ever AU player to be named the GLIAC Defensive Linemen of the Year.

“We recruited out of Cleveland, Division II was the only way he could play football academically,” AU head coach Lee Owens said.

Owens explained that his most fond memory of Meder dates back to his freshman year at AU in 2010.

“The only game he didn’t start in during his time at Ashland was against Indianapolis. He skipped class a lot, so I told him ‘I’m not

for only one year. The following season Meder was picked up by his hometown team the Cleveland Browns.

The 6-foot-3, 309-pound Meder started all but one game for the Cleveland Browns in 2016, and is best remembered for blocking a 32-yard field goal attempt by Chargers kicker Josh Lambo in Week 16 to secure the Browns’ sole win of that season.

Meder would play for the Browns for 4 seasons until he was waived in September of 2018. He would record close to 100 tackles and two sacks in his time with the Browns.

Most recently, Meder was signed by the Seattle Seahawks to a reserve/future contract in January.

“He is going to continue being successful, and I believe he is going to be a good father and husband regardless of the whole football thing continues,” Owens said.

Adam Shaheen came in as a transfer walk on the AU football team and played during the 2014-2016 seasons. Shaheen was one of the best tight ends in the country

running back Joe Mixon, Ohio State standout Linebacker Rae-kwon McMillan, former Cleveland Browns starting quarterback Deshone Kizer and up and coming superstar wide receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster



AU ATHLETICS

Adam Shaheen catches a pass against Quinten Demps in a pre-season practice.

6-year-old Kenley Miles signs to AU volleyball team

LEAH BURTSCHER
Reporter

On Sept. 25, the Ashland University women’s volleyball team officially signed Kenley Miles as their newest team member.

AU has partnered with Team IMPACT, a non-profit organization that allows children facing life threatening illnesses to get involved



LEAH BURTSCHER

Junior middle hitter Lexi Lombardo speaks at draft day ceremony.

with local colleges and universities through their athletic programs. By joining these teams the kids are able to make connections and form bonds they otherwise would not

have the chance to.

The Eagles welcomed Kenley at a monumental draft day ceremony held in the Reinhart Room of AU’s Kates Gymnasium. The announcement was made to a room full of excited staff, team members, cheerleaders, and family members.

“This gives them the chance to experience something that they

it shows strength in them to go outside of their comfort zone and try something they had never tried before” junior middle hitter Lexi Lombardo said.

For kids dealing with serious and chronic illnesses, sometimes the best thing they need is something to help them to cope in a positive way.

“It gives them an opportunity to become distracted from what they are dealing with from their outside life so they can have this fun, loving family that we hopefully can be to her” sophomore defensive specialist Sophie Dahn said.

Team IMPACT prides itself on its ability to create a network of support for children in need.

“She has already been in tears because she is so excited. Everyday she asks ‘Is it time to go to the game?’ It just makes her feel really important and included” Miles’ mother, Morgan said.

“I hope that this helps her with independence, as we take a step back, and help her keep her mind off things by feeling included and keep up her positivity,” Morgan Miles said.

According to Team IMPACT, this program not only grants the children facing these medical chal-



LEAH BURTSCHER

Six-year-old Kenley Miles prepares to sign to the AU volleyball team.

lenges a new support system, but also provides a new perspective for student athletes.

“They get a chance to be around 18 adults who are good, positive role models and someone they can have relationships with. They can see what it’s like in college and just connect with people that can have a huge impact on the rest of their lives” head volleyball coach Kevin Foeman said.

Kenley Miles was not the only new addition to the Eagles thanks to Team IMPACT. On Sept. 16, Jagger Shaw was welcomed to the Ashland men’s soccer team. Both of these two new eagles are going to be great additions to their respective teams and AU is excited to welcome them home.