

sports

Washington inches closer to AU freshman rushing record

DEAN PALUOCCI
Reporter

Since joining the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference in 1995, the Ashland University football team has produced three players that have won the GLIAC Freshman of the Year Award. Defensive lineman Jaime Meder, who is currently a free agent in the National Football League, won the award in 2010. Quarterback Travis Tarnowski, the all-time leader in career passing yards and passing touchdowns in AU football history, won the award in 2014. Current AU redshirt sophomore quarterback Austin Brenner won the award last season in 2018. As the 2019 season comes to an end, another Eagle has a chance to enter the record books as a winner of the GLIAC Freshman of the Year Award: freshman running back Gei'vonni Washington

the team. While Washington is the leading rusher for the Eagles, he is also the leader in rushing yards, rushing attempts and yards per game in the GLIAC, while also ranking second in rushing touchdowns. “I know for the past couple of years (Ashland) has had a lot of All-GLIAC and First Team All-Conference running backs,” Washington said. “I wanted to keep that trend going.” Washington was not initially given the starting running back spot to start the 2019 season, it was earned by redshirt sophomore full-back Austin Williams. For the first two games of the season, Washington was a back-up running back and totaled 103 rushing yards on 28 attempts. In the third game of the season against the Ferris State University Bulldogs, Washington earned the starting running back spot and

couldn't get too excited. I had to do what I had to do to keep my job.” Washington was able to keep his spot after the 28-13 loss to the Bulldogs in the third week of regular season play. Since then, he has started in every game for the Eagles. In the last six games, Washington has rushed for 100 or more yards on at least 24 carries in every game. In total, the freshman has accumulated 829 rushing yards and nine touchdowns on 169 carries in the six game stretch. Also in that time frame, the Eagles have accumulated a 5-1 record and an offense that is averaging 27.8 points per game. “It helps a ton having a guy who can bust a long run for 40 or 50 yards once he gets to that second level,” redshirt sophomore quarterback Austin Brenner said. “Just having the chance for big plays like that really takes a lot of pressure off me, as the run really opens up the pass game.”

The position Washington is tasked with is not only one that requires him to run fast, but also to do a great deal of thinking, according to Ashland football head coach Lee Owens. “He's great in pass protection,” Owens said. “He's trying to figure out, first of all, who to block. He then has to physically match-up and get that block done. If he doesn't block a guy, he has to figure out what route to run and then he has to figure out how to adjust to it based on what the coverage is. That's hard to do for someone who's played this game for two or three years, much less nine games.” The freshman was only 17-years-old while taking his first collegiate plays in the opening game against the University of Indianapolis, something head coach Lee Owens was astonished by. “He started this whole deal at 17 years old and the amazing thing is the fact that he's shown a ton of maturity to come in that young,”



EVAN LAUX

Washington currently has 963 rushing yards compiled from his nine games with AU.

Owens said. “Most kids his age are still playing in high school. He's grown up in a hurry and has become one of the best backs in the league.” When asked about his maturity, Washington stated that he has always strived to be an individual who holds the team over everything else. “That's always been my type of personality,” Washington said. “I'm just a team player. I never try to single myself out or give myself all the glory. I give everybody the glory, because you need 11 players to play football. One person can't play on their own and carry the team.” Owens whole-heartedly agrees with Washington's team-player mentality and appreciates his selfless nature. During halftime in a game against Wayne State on Oct. 19, Owens was making running back adjustments as the Eagles were down a couple scores. “I kept asking him ‘are you okay?’ and he kept saying he was fine. Fi-

nally, I found out that Sunday he told me he was upset because he missed a block. We had a sack late and it really wasn't his guy, but he felt like he should have had him. Most running backs don't want to block at all, much less be mad over it. That just sums up how special of a player he is. He's never worried about how many yards or carries he gets or what we are asking him to do.” In the 99 years of Ashland University football, only one freshman running back has accumulated over 1,000 yards rushing; Matt Otero in 1997 with 1,030 rushing yards. With Washington currently at 963 rushing yards, he inches closer to possibly having one of the best rushing campaigns for a freshman running back in school history. Washington will get his next opportunity on Nov. 9 when the Eagles travel to Findlay to play the Oilers at 12 p.m.



EVAN LAUX

Washington rushes downfield against Davenport on homecoming.

Washington is the leading rusher for the Eagles with 963 rushing yards and nine rushing touchdowns on 209 attempts through the nine games he has played with

proved his skills on the field. “It was exciting,” Washington said. “But I realized it was my job to lose. We've got four or five other running back behind me, so I

Esports Fortnite team begins season ranked No. 5 in nation

MASON JONES
Reporter

The Ashland University's Esports Fortnite team is off to a promising start as it was ranked No. 5 out of 300 teams throughout the nation in preseason polls, which were ranked by the Collegiate Starleague. With just one year of play after the inauguration of the Ashland Esports team, their players are certainly making a name for themselves in the world of competitive gaming. Better yet, since there were no seniors that graduated out of the Fortnite team last spring, the team still has all of its core players. The small but powerful roster includes: senior Alec Mueller, juniors Gabriel Alonso and Chris Smith, sophomores Michael Krohn, Brant McAdams, and River Wheeler and freshman Mikah Juma and Lucas Ratcliff. “We didn't get to play in the playoffs last year, but we had a lot of collegiate tournaments that had teams that played very, very well,” Fortnite team captain Michael Krohn said. “The whole year I was saying ‘we're going to be the best, I want to be the best and I want you guys to want to be the best.’ That was kind of the mentality I was trying to put into the team and it seemed like it has impacted the other teammates a lot.” Although the team was unable to make the official playoffs last season, the team still believes it has a high chance of making them this year due to everyone's efforts and the time spent practicing for the competitions that await. “We go through a lot of different practice cycles, there are times where we practice four days a week

or three days a week, but what we found that works best for Fortnite is that we have two days of team practice a week where we mainly focus on sharing information,” head Esports coach Josh Buchanan said. “We have everybody give their teammates things to work on, so when they go back to their dorm or have free time outside of class they can work on those things that were discussed and improve on their gameplay individually.” Buchanan is entering his second year as head coach, with Travis Yang as the assistant head coach. “As a coach for Fortnite, it is kind of heart wrenching sometimes,” Buchanan said. “Fortnite is one of those games that requires super-duper high skill, but there is also some luck involved, like where you

drop into the map and what items you get. There are times where your team could run into really good players and not get as many eliminations.” Last year the Collegiate Starleague used the elimination style for scoring Fortnite competitions, where the winner was decided based on what team had the most player-eliminations in a particular game. Teams played for the best two of three games. This year, there will be custom made lobbies for Fortnite, and a specific division where everyone queues up to play solely other colleges or teams without the contact of random players. Buchanan is the head coach for all Esports teams, including Super Smash Bros. Ultimate, Overwatch,

Hearthstone, League of Legends, Fortnite and Counter Strike. While all games are played online, there are some facilities that are used for larger tournaments and playoff play. According to Coach Buchanan, there are two in-person events for Fortnite and several more for the other games in the program. A lot of the scene centers around what the creators of Fortnite, Epic Games provides, according to Buchanan. The schedule is sporadic, since things can pop up at any time throughout the season. The season officially began on Oct. 27, however it is hard to pinpoint upcoming games and tournaments due to the nature of the Fortnite season schedule. Finalists of the CSL Fortnite

Competition will be invited to the Collegiate Starleague LAN finals at the end of the season. The finalists will compete for a \$25,000 prize pool. Two weeks into the season, the Eagle Fortnite team is continuing to practice for the challenges that await them this year. “I usually come in early and work on mechanics first like aiming, then live gameplay, and then I'll be ready to go,” Fortnite team captain Michael Krohn said. “I also listen to music to get me into the groove to play. It helps a lot.” With a high preseason ranking early on, a skilled set of players and a supportive coach, the Eagle Fortnite team is planning on having a promising year.



EVAN LAUX

Ashland University was the first college in the nation to offer a scholarship for the video game Fortnite.