

sports

Eagle track and field continues to add national marks

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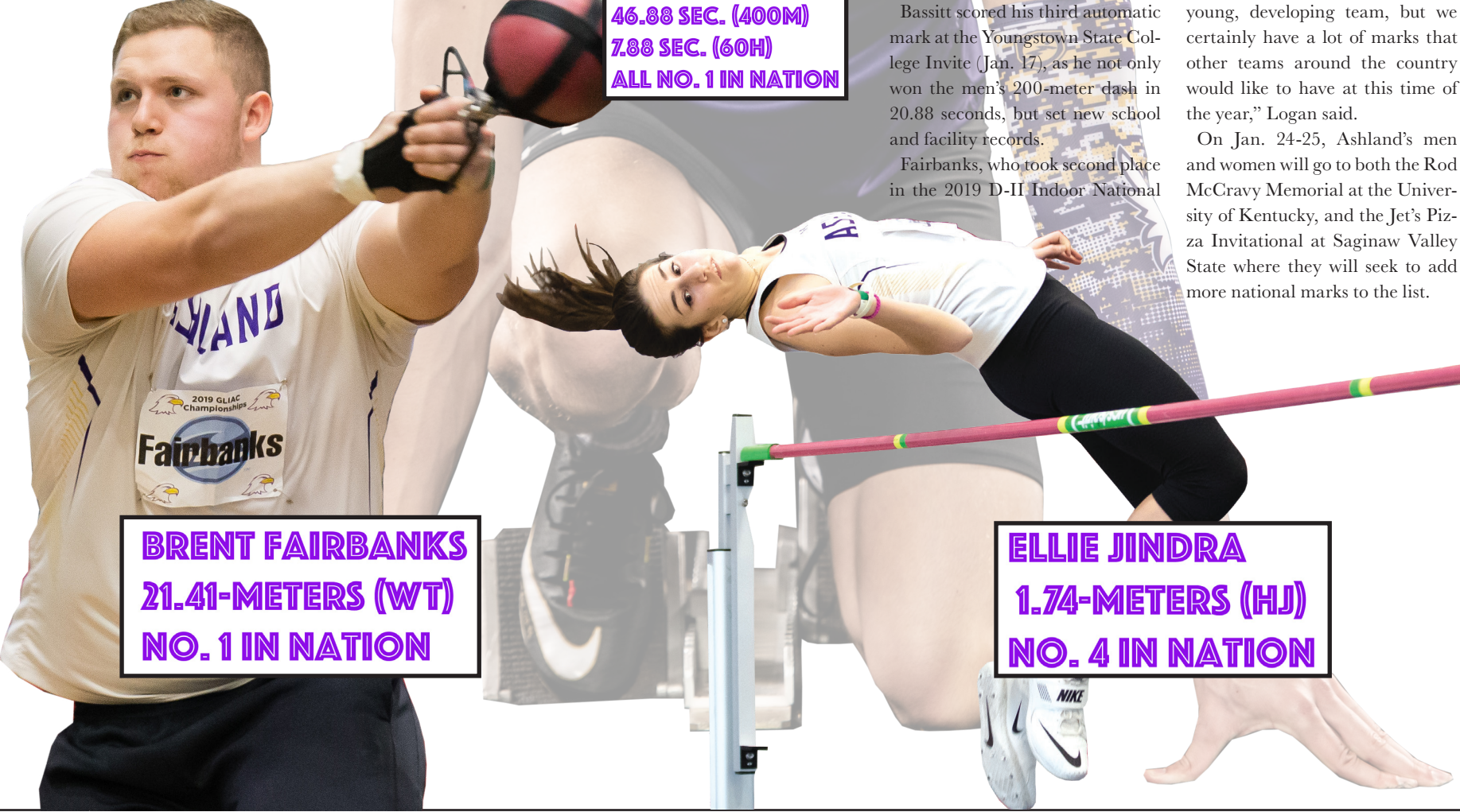
The 2018-2019 Ashland University track and field season was a historic ride that won't soon be forgotten due to its place in AU athletics history. Midway through the second semester, the men's team secured its first ever NCAA Division II indoor team national championship in the 32 years that it has been competing in indoor championships. But that was not enough. Come outdoor season, the Eagles won it all again, marking the first time ever that they had won both championships in the same year. The women's team also made appearances at the indoor and outdoor championships, finishing in 11th and 10th place respectively. But as a new season begins and rosters change, athletes are lost and new ones are added. This 2019-2020 season sees the absence of major contributors Myles Prin-

gle and Lindsay Baker to their respective teams. Despite this, both Eagle teams are already in stride. The No. 4-ranked men and No. 6-ranked women already have combined for four automatic and 21 provisional marks for 2020 D-II nationals on March 13-14 in Birmingham, Ala. "I don't think that we really compare one season to another in terms of exacting numbers," head track and field coach Jud Logan said. "Automatic and provisional marks are great but the bottom line is that there's going to be 16 people in every event in the NCAA championships. We're just trying to get as many of our athletes the opportunity to compete there as possible." Senior high-jumper Ellie Jindra leads the charge on the women's team, currently ranked fourth in the nation in the high jump. Jindra secured a provisional mark early in the season and her most recent jump of 1.74 meters

(5'8.5") was only .01 meters shy of the 1.75 meter automatic qualifying mark. Right behind Jindra are sophomore Miyuki Sugiyama and senior Paula Wollenslegel, who have marks at 1.70 and 1.67 respectively. "It's super exciting and the first time since I've been here that we've had so many provisional marks so soon," Jindra said. "I don't doubt that they'll keep coming and our team will continue to get stronger and stronger as the season goes on." Another breakout success in the women's jump category comes from Erin Sievers, a freshman pole vaulter who is ranked No. 11 in the nation with a provisional jump mark of 3.80 meters. The women's team has six other provisional marks coming from Taylor Kroll (weight throw), Gianna Dipippo (weight throw), Car-

rol Pauler (weight throw), Elizabeth Weimer (shot put), Gianna Dipippo (shot put) and Maddi Yingst (400m). "The team seems smaller than it's been in past years but everyone gets along with everyone and it's a big family. Team cohesion is a big thing here," Jindra said. "There's already a lot of people stepping up and a lot of people that haven't completed yet that are gonna be right up there helping the team at the national level." The men's team is simultaneously showing early signs of success, boasting four automatic qualification marks and 11 provisional marks. Juniors Trevor Bassitt and Brent Fairbanks sit at the top of the leaderboards; Bassitt holds three automatic marks (200m, 400m and 60m hurdles) and Fairbanks holds one (weight throw). Both athletes hold the No. 1 position in the nation in each of their events. Bassitt scored his third automatic mark at the Youngstown State College Invite (Jan. 17), as he not only won the men's 200-meter dash in 20.88 seconds, but set new school and facility records. Fairbanks, who took second place in the 2019 D-II Indoor National

Championship weight throw by only three inches, now leads the nation with a throw of 21.41 meters. Behind him are senior throwers Alex Hill and Nick Zak, occupying second and third place in the nation. "It's just awesome," Fairbanks said. "Everyday we come into practice and push each other to get better and build upon what we've been working on. We're in a very similar position to last year and everybody I've talked to is extremely energetic and excited about this season and just hopeful to win another national championship." The other nine provisional marks from the men's team come from Bassitt (60m), Tim Rumas (200m), Storm Elsesser (high jump), Ethan Tabor (long jump), Nick Zak (shot put), Jacob Glass (shot put), David Amstutz (weight throw), Travis Moore (heptathlon) and Ethan Tabor (heptathlon). "It's still early on and we're a young, developing team, but we certainly have a lot of marks that other teams around the country would like to have at this time of the year," Logan said. On Jan. 24-25, Ashland's men and women will go to both the Rod McCravy Memorial at the University of Kentucky, and the Jet's Pizza Invitational at Saginaw Valley State where they will seek to add more national marks to the list.



Four AU wrestlers ranked nationally in NWCA

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Ranked No. 8 in the nation from the National Wrestling Coaches Association at the start of the athletic school year, the Ashland University wrestling team has been powering through their matches and tournaments to achieve their highest potential. Currently, there are four athletes who are ranked nationally: junior Carson Speelman is ranked No. 4 in the 149 pound weight class, junior Aidan Pasiuk is ranked No. 6 at 184 pounds, redshirt-senior Bret Romanzak is No. 4 in the country at 174 pounds and Chandler Minnard is No. 9 at 141 pounds. "We have the success but we do it right. We do it right with the right people," head wrestling coach Josh Hutchens said. In his seventh year with the Eagles, Hutchens said he wants to see the best in his team. Wrestling is not only a physical sport, but it is also mental according to Hutchens. From practice to matches, each athlete is working towards a unique goal. "When we start practice, we do our warm-ups for about ten to fifteen minutes and then head into a technique called 'hard drilling' to gain muscle memory and for the moves to happen naturally," Hutchens said. "We want our guys to be strong, but also smart and cognisant of what's going on in a match."

are prepared for the opponent. "Simulated matches run for seven minutes which is the standard for competition. There are also grind matches where you run for ten minutes non-stop."

sent AU as students too. Hutchens believes that wrestling need not be their only focus while on campus. "They are students first. Integrity comes first. We want them to make sure that the school fits them not

"Whether in school, work or relationships, it has trained me to commit to something that might be difficult in the short term. It is hard and maybe not the most fun, but stick through it and you get re-

being a student is a top priority. For Romanzak, he was able to find the atmosphere of the campus and the students to make him choose AU. "I looked at a few schools big and small and saw how Ashland gave me what I wanted," Romanzak said. The team travels and bonds together and creates an environment that makes everyone welcomed. "Right before practice, we play this game of killer hackysack and get warmed up a bit," Romanzak said. As the team advances in the season, the main goal is to get as many wrestlers to the national tournament. "We are very focused on this season," Hutchens said. "We look at the new season and see a lot of change. We're losing a few seniors we have a few people that we'll red shirt but we will look at next season for rebuilding." Even though the spring semester just began, the next class of students that enter the program must understand that there must be a balance between athletics and academics. "It's not easy. You have to make it happen. Get your grades, be a member of the campus and the community. Put the effort in," Romanzak said. According to Romanzak, individual goals all lead to the same thing: success. Discovering what you want to work towards early on will yield better results. "We want to identify the reasons you do the sport. The earlier the better," Hutchens said.



Redshirt-senior Bret Romanzak is ranked No. 4 in the country at 174 pounds.

When it comes to competition, they may win as a team but each person has something to achieve that day. "There is a bit of individual talking beforehand but we meet as a group and stress to them what we are looking for. We're not really focused on winning. We are focused on performing well. We see these matches as practice until we get to the regional tournaments," Hutchens said. Even though they represent AU when on the mat, they also repre-

only athletically, but academically too." Romanzak has taken these ideals anvalues to heart to the point he has been recognized nationally. "I was six years old and my dad got me into it. He wrestled in high school and signed me up at the youth rec center," Romanzak said. He is working towards his masters in finance, and wrestling has made a big impact on his life from childhood up to now. Romanzak said the sport gives him a source of discipline.

warded in the long run." Romanzak admits that it is difficult for student athletes to maintain different aspects of their lives while on campus. "It is very easy to get very focused on this or that. You can get so focused on cutting weight, training, and matches that it will be easy to neglect your school work but it is the same vice versa. The key is to focus on them equally and find a good middle ground," Romanzak said. Within AU's wrestling program.