

# sports

## AU women’s soccer eager to win last GLIAC tournament

**WES SEYFANG**  
Reporter

Starting their season off against the Northwood Timberwolves on March 26 the women’s soccer team seeks to start their season strong and begin their journey to become GLIAC champions.

The team was scheduled to face the Saginaw Valley Cardinals on March 20 but the game has been postponed for the time being.

Junior goalkeeper Ellie Bowers, is confident in her team and what they have to offer this year when it comes to facing their opponents in the 2021 season.

“We are really looking forward to the opportunity to win a conference tournament in the GLIAC before we switch over to the GMAC. That is always a goal we strive for but especially this year without being able to compete for a national championship,” Bowers said.

The team is extremely tight knit and are led by Head Coach Taylor Clark and Graduate Assistant coach Matt Hinds.

The two encourage communication and constantly remind the team that the reason the professional women’s team is so good is their ability to communicate, and their ability to be deep in talent.

“We have a really solid line up with our starters and non-starters. Taylor often mentions how the US women’s national team is the best because they have the two best teams in the world, meaning their second string is just as good as the first. I think that is a goal we strive for as players too,” Bowers said.

The women finished the 2019 season with a record of 14-5-1 with

a 7-2 record in the GLIAC. Putting up those impressive stats are becoming a trend with the team as they have been over 10 wins or more for the last four seasons.

“We have so many great girls on our team who step up when it is their time.

“Every single person makes an impact on this team and is crucial to our program’s success.”

“Collectively we all work together to create that chemistry, and we have looked really good out on the field in our first two scrimmages we played in,” she said.

With all of their accomplishments it leaves big shoes for them to fill each and every year and they have always been able to step up to the plate and continue to thrive on the field.

“Our team pushes to get better every single day. We all come to practice ready to work hard and ready to get better no matter what the conditions,” Bowers Said.

The team has no lack of motivation and they see the potential that they have to do something great.

Bowers and her teammates say they are looking forward to playing Ferris state, Saginaw Valley, and Grand valley, their division rivals.

“They always bring the energy and rival mentality with them,” she said.

The Eagles are ready for the season and hungry to prove themselves against any team that comes their way.



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY: ABBY LAMPE

Members of the women’s soccer team picture in 2019.

## Karlee Pireu coming back with fifth year eligibility

**JORDANN LOPATA**  
Sports Editor

Growing up around basketball, lone senior on the women’s basketball team Karlee Pireu knew that basketball was always going to be a part of her life.

She has been playing basketball since she was at least four years old, just playing and shooting around in the driveway. Her dad was a high school basketball coach and played as a student in college, so she fell in love with the idea of getting the opportunity to play just like him.

“It was really important to my family to always be around the game but I started playing in a church league when I was in kindergarten or first grade so it has been a long time,” Pireu said.

Pireu also played softball all four years of high school. However, the decision to play basketball at the collegiate level came easy to her, as her passion for basketball stood out more than the passion of softball.

“I played softball in high school, played it competitively, traveled a lot with that and between the two I think basketball was just that I loved it a little bit more than I loved softball and I think the opportunities that came with it were greater,” Pireu said.

Pireu, who had many offers from other schools, whether it be division one, two, or three, made the decision to come to Ashland based on the values that she knew not

only the basketball team, but also the university itself had.

“Division two, they really focus on the person as a whole and getting more than just the athletic experience but the student athlete experience, and with that I knew that there was going to be a really good balance between the two.”

When it came down to making a decision, she wanted to find a place where she could grow as a player and a student. She wanted to be able to focus on herself and the many opportunities that Ashland had to offer.

“The tradition of the women’s basketball program really stuck out to me, I wanted to play for a winning program and a program that encompassed more than just basketball, so that was really important to me. I knew that it was a place where I was going to be able to get a great education and most importantly for me, growing my faith,” she said.

Throughout her career here at Ashland she has grown as a player tremendously. Going from playing in 30 games as a freshman to starting in all 31 games last year, she has been a great asset to the team.

“Last season just going 31 and 0, I know it was cut short due to covid but ending that season with our fifth GLIAC championship against Grand Valley in the eagle gym was just memorable and something I will remember forever,” said the senior.

Pireu has experienced a lot of things that not a lot of student athletes get the chance to experience even one time in their careers. She has been lucky enough to play in the GLIAC championships more than once.

“Being able to experience going from a regional championship game in Ashland’s gym to then flying to South Dakota and going through that experience. I think

that is something that every student athlete dreams of, is getting to go through that process.”

Pireu, this season scored her 1,000th career point in a weekend sweep against Purdue Northwest back in February. She became the 25th player in Ashland women’s basketball history to gain this honor, and even posted a game high of 28 points to send her over the 1000 point mark.

“It was a great honor, I was excited to be able to do it in Ashland’s gym for the 1000 and I think it’s a testament just to this program. I have been fortunate to play with a lot of great players and to play in a lot of games that has allowed me to get to that point,” she said.

With the ongoing pandemic that keeps fans away from Kates Gymnasium, it has been difficult for many teams to get used to an empty crowd. Something that Pireu has mentioned has been hard this season, along with all of the unknowns surrounding the pandemic.

“Everyday is something new, we’ve lost a few games this year and I wouldn’t say that’s necessarily what made it challenging but I think just balancing this world that we live in with basketball has been hard, so navigating that, not only for myself but for this team and our coaches has been a new challenge that we’re trying to work through together.”

While being the only senior on the team, Pireu has had the chance to play and learn from great players who graduated ahead of her like Sarah Hart, Renee Stimpert and Sarah Loomis. With that, Pireu has made the decision to come back and use her extra year of eligibility to join the team during next year’s season.

Pireu notes that the decision was a difficult one to make, but it was also the right decision at this moment in time of her life.

“In November we were in a three to four week quarantine as a team and I really just took a lot of time, I prayed about it, just spent a lot of time with God that the right opportunities and conversations would present themselves, and they did and once a lot of that worked itself out I knew it was a no brainer to just come back and play,” she said.

Pireu’s faith and family are also very important to her, and she noted that it was hard for them to not be allowed inside the gym to watch her play her senior season. But, she informed me that they watch the livestreams and support her in any decision she makes.

“They come to all of our home games and almost all the road games so their support means the world to me. I think they encourage me in all aspects not even in basketball but just with school and my faith in life, they have really challenged me to get the best out of myself and their support means the world, I wouldn’t be here without them.”

As for if basketball will be in her life in five years from now, that question was still up in the air. Pireu wants to move forward with her degree, and jumpstart her career, her decision to play basketball in another way after graduation is a question for a later date.

“In terms of basketball, I am still trying to figure that out,” she said.



AU ATHLETICS

Senior Karlee Pireu pictured above.