

## The Team Behind The Teams

### Yellowjacket Athletics

SUPERIOR, Wis. (April 5, 2018)

- Without student workers we wouldn't be able to do what we do. It's a statement uttered again and again by athletic administrators across the nation. At smaller institutions like UW-Superior, the importance of student employees cannot be overstated.

"We have to rely very heavily on our student staff here. We just don't have the resources to staff all of our needs with paid professionals, so our best option is to be proactive in hiring good students and giving them the tools they need to not only do the job, but to do the job well," said UW-Superior Athletics Director Nick Bursik. "And for them, they get some true, hands-on experience that will hopefully serve them well when they enter the workforce, and in the process they fill a need for our department."

For people that attend a sporting event at UW-Superior, the student-athletes competing in the athletic arena are the main attraction. But there is a team behind the team that affects the game-day experience for fans in more ways than one.

"To steal a theatre analogy, the student-athletes competing in the game are the front of the house, while our student workers doing their jobs each night are the back of the house," Jon Garver, who oversees student employment for Yellowjacket Athletics said. "At any given sporting event on campus, we have 10 and sometimes as many as 20 people working in various capacities."

When fans arrive at a game, they purchase a ticket that is sold to them by a student. The same ticket would then be torn by another student when they enter the facility. The scoreboard that fans look at dozens of times a game? The music that's being played? The person singing the national anthem? The photos that accompany a game recap and appear in the gallery on the web site? Statistics? Social media? All of it provided by a dedicated staff of students. It's the everyday reality at an N.C.A.A. Division III institution like UW-Superior.

"Student workers do just about everything on a game day. From keeping statistics to selling concessions and everything in between, if you can think of it there's a good chance we have a student doing it," said Stephen Eibes, Sports Information Assistant at UW-Superior, who himself was a four-year student worker in the athletics department at UW-Stout. "Our student employees are invaluable. They make game day easy for not only the fans and spectators, but also for the Yellowjacket student-athletes and coaches."

Jade Jensen is a senior at UW-Superior, and is likely just as recognizable, if not more so, than the student-athletes. For the last four years Jensen has been at nearly every UW-Superior home sporting event, and in that time has taken tens of thousands of photos.

"My job in the athletics department is one that has shaped my entire college experience. Taking pictures is one of my main hobbies, and sports and action photography happens to be my favorite," Jensen said. "During the past four years, I have been able to refine and practice my photography in a way that would not have been possible without the job I was given. I know that every time I go to work, I'll be around some of the best and most fun co-workers. I have a great boss, and I get to take pictures. I am basically working a dream job."



Photo by Yellowjacket Athletics

Jensen, who will be graduating from UW-Superior in May, has seen her work in newspapers, in magazines, on web sites across the country, and in the homes of student-athletes and their families.

"I've gotten a lot of requests and given a lot of photos to people over the years. It makes me happy that they appreciate the work that I do," Jensen said.

Kelly Cockerill is another graduating senior who, for the past two years has done double duty, working as a member of the Yellowjacket statistics crew as well as working in the main athletics office.

"I absolutely love working in the athletics department. Being able to have a hand in all of the behind the scenes work of our athletic games and meets really opens up my eyes to how much work goes into our competitions. There are a lot of people who have a hand in the scheduling, travel, meals and countless other parts of our competition. We don't really think about how those pieces come together for us, we just play our best as a Yellowjacket and have the red carpet rolled out for us," she said. "And I know I never really gave too much thought about how all the pieces go together before us athletes get to the rink or the court, or wherever we're competing, either. Now, as a student worker in the athletics department, I'm able to see how everything comes together and get the opportunity to help bring some of these pieces together."

Cockerill also just wrapped up her career as a member of the Yellowjacket women's hockey team, bringing a different perspective to the table.

"As a hockey player, when it's game day at home we roll into the rink two hours before game time and the ice is perfect and ready for the puck drop, your name is on your locker tag above your gear, and the stat crew is preparing for the upcoming game," A look through the viewfinder of a Yellowjacket

basketball broadcast. Cockerill said. "There's usually a hustle-bustle of game workers setting things up, like piling pucks on the blue line for warm ups, getting the scoreboard set up and keeping things tidy. But as an athlete you really don't notice those little things that are going on as much, you just know when you show up at the rink, the whole production of the hockey game is already set to begin. You are just tasked with getting yourself ready to play."

"Once I began working in the athletics office I saw just exactly how much man power it takes to get all these competitions organized and ready to go. It really is a production, getting each part of the game to fall perfectly into place, with live feed of the game, live stats, game contracts, getting teams to the game, that's not even close to everything that needs to get done and it already seems like a lot. But with all the people involved with each of those pieces working together, games go perfectly almost every time."

And these are just two of the nearly 50 students who help make Yellowjacket Athletics go.

Sure the student workers get paid to watch and work in sports, but there's also a sacrifice that comes along with it. As most college sporting events occur in the evenings, student workers give up a valuable class-free part of their days in addition to weekends. And when school is out during the semester break, the show must go on, so student workers return to campus to do their part.

"I'm not sure people realize how much our workers sacrifice. They give up study time in the evenings. They give up big chunks of weekends depending on how many events we're hosting. They come back to town during breaks to help us out," Garver said. "They are an incredibly integral part of our team here, and they do all of it without much fanfare."

"We'd be lost if we didn't have that group of people working with us every day."



Photo by Jade Jensen