

## New Boss, Same Productivity Level

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Just weeks before the 2017-18 Women's Basketball season was set to begin here at UW-Superior, the team received some very surprising news. Head Coach Don Mulhern has resigned from the head coaching position and took a position down at St. Kates. Since it was such short notice, Assistant Coach Zach Otto-Fisher would take the position as interim head coach. The news of Don Mulhern left a lot of people surprised and had the team filled with an array of emotions, but everyone knew the season must continue. This would be just one of many bumps in the road that they would need to overcome. The Women's Basketball team ended the season with a 23 and 5 record and 16 and 0 record in the conference.

As the women's basketball season came to an end, after a hard-fought battle came up short in the first round of the NCAA tournament against UW-Whitewater. It can be observed that the coaching change had little effect on the team's success, as it has matched Mulhern's success he had with the team previously. Senior Captain Jade Tucker puts it, "I don't think much changed since our interim coach was with us the previous season, but I think it impacted player roles. We would have to be open-minded with changes made to practice and assist him in his transition as much as we could. Luckily for us, our new coach has already earned players' respect and trust so there weren't any problems."

Interim head coach Zach Otto-Fisher adds "I will say anytime you take a team and change the head coach there will ALWAYS be an effect. Outcomes may change, but the culture of the program remain in place. For this group of girls to be faced with a little adversity and having to step out of their comfort zones- and still find success is a tremendous feat in its own." Otto-Fisher describes stepping into the role in three words, "Exciting, chaotic, and rewarding."

Even with a new coach in place, The Yellowjackets held the same expectations for the season. Sophomore Eva Reinertsen describes her expectations for the team as, "We would win more than 20 games, go undefeated in our conference, and make it past the first round of the NCCA tournament." Coach Otto-Fisher adds, "Every year as a coach, your expectations remain the same. Develop young student-athletes into stronger women. On the court specifically, our expectations were to win the conference tournament and get a bid to the NCAA Tournament. This year we were fortunate enough to meet the goals as a team and go to the NCAA tournament. With that said you could argue that the real expectation was to get a win in the NCAA as well. Unfortunately, that was not met."

Success is measured in a number of differ-

ent ways, not just wins and losses. This team has a lot to be proud of as far as success goes, even if they may have fallen short meeting one of their expectations. This team has made school history as they have won three straight UMAC conference championships and four conference championships all together in a row. Due to these championships this team has received 3 straight bids to the NCAA tournament.

One of the greatest accomplishments for this Yellowjackets team was winning yet another conference championship. Winning a championship is a great accomplishment in any level you participate in, but at a collegiate level it is incredible. The Yellowjackets have won four conference championships, and 3 straight in the UMAC. Tucker describes being a champion as this, "It feels incredible! This is all a dream come true, seriously." To become a champion takes a lot of hard work and dedication and that is just what this Women's basketball team possesses.

A key to many success stories begins with the team chemistry. This Yellowjacket team created and shared a very close bond. Reinertsen sums up the team bond as such, "I think that our team spends a lot of time together which makes us very close. We really are a lot like sisters and our team function's a lot like a big, slightly dysfunctional, family."

Every game for this women's basketball team was a challenge for them this season. Every game was not just given to them, it had to be earned. For players and coaches some games stick out more than others for many different reasons. For coach Otto-Fisher, he feels the best game of the season was the team win over Bethany Lutheran at their place.

He describes the game as "It was a game that we kept our composure through the whole game, went through some adversity, but found a way to play as a team down the stretch and get the win on the road. Trailing most of the game, and then keeping our cool in the fourth quarter and seeing the senior leadership step up and say, 'we are not going to losing this game' was great to be a part of."

Every team loves a border battle. For the Yellowjackets a rivalry of theirs is the College of St. Scholastica, which just happens to be across the bridge from UWS. Reinertsen describes this border battle game as "A game that always comes down to a battle for who is the best team in the area." Tucker enjoys participating in such a battle as she states,

"It's hard to beat the energy and pressure of a Border Battle!" Coach Otto-Fisher seen the Border battle game played at Scholastica as the best team game played all year. "We were up for the challenge of crossing the bridge and shutting them down in their

gym. Our defense was top-notch (best I've seen in years) and the movement of the ball on offense was something special. All girls contributed to that win and held them to 18.6 percent shooting," says Otto-Fisher. Such border battle always pumps a team up just a bit more than any other, and that was definitely the case in that game.

A nail-biting game that Otto-Fisher, Tucker, and Reinertsen all recapped was the game against Minnesota-Morris at their place. "On the road playing a very tough team that was looking to give us a loss in the conference. It was a 1-point game with 11 seconds left and we were able to convert a Jade Tucker lay-up to put us up 3 and then a Kontny hard foul against her and Hannah Norlin's 2 FTs sealed the win. The girls had to work hard for that win," says Otto-Fisher.

Reinertsen described this game as being very "Intense and very challenging for us as our conference win streak was on the line." The nail bitters are always the most exciting ones, and the best part is in every game the Yellowjackets were able to come out on top.

Coach Otto-Fisher states "I think the hardest game of the season to coach was the UMAC semifinal game vs Northwestern. Things were not going our way on either end of the court. We had more turnovers in that game than we had compared to other games on the year, our shots weren't falling, and we were letting the ball slip out of our hands. We were playing like a team that I had not seen all year." Not every game will be easy or always go your way for both the coaches and the players, but their ability to overcome any obstacle or challenge in their way and still come out on top is something special.

This Yellowjackets women's basketball team showed great progression through the season, from the first day of practice to the very last game played in the NCAA tournament. Reinertsen recaps the season as "This season had its ups and downs, but we were able to work hard, grow together as a team, and have success as a result."

"This season was challenging because I knew there was a lot of pressure riding on my senior class, but it was also exhilarating and rewarding because we took it head on and we were successful together" says Tucker.

Coach Otto-Fisher sums up an ending to a season perfectly. "Ending a season in never easy. You have girls graduate and move on, you don't get to go to practice anymore, etc. It is always bittersweet because you are proud of the successes the team had and happy to have coached them, but still a little sad because the girls moving on. The girls should all be proud of their accomplishments and hungry for more next year."

## UW-Superior More is than a Sport, for some, it's a Commitment

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One glance at the stat sheet for this past season in hockey and you see an outstanding player, but there is much more to him beyond the blue line. University of Wisconsin-Superior hockey association is lucky to have Duluth native, Ryan Carlson, as part of their team.

As a strong player and defenseman, Carlson is a natural leader. As the season came to a finish UWS ended 9-15-3, and with Carlson returning next season as a sophomore the association is looking up. Growing up in Duluth, Minnesota he was a natural when exposed to the ice. His passion stemmed from looking up to his older brother who was also a hockey player and having his dad as his coach.

After graduating from Hermantown High

School he furthered his hockey career with the Steinbach Pistons up in Canada. Coach McKenna saw Carlson's potential and was eager to have him as a player, and with his intended major and minor, UWS was a perfect fit.

As a new father, Carlson faces more duties than the average student athlete while also being a volunteer coach for the Bantam A team in Hermantown, Minnesota. With the strong motivation Carlson has to support his family, he intends to graduate with a major in Physical Education and a minor in Coaching and Health Education K-12. Carlson would love to continue to have hockey in his life and give back to his community by being a Minnesota High School Hockey coach.

Although hockey and school seem to take over his life, Carlson finds joy in the smaller things as well such as listening to music, working out and loves the challenge that all other sports bring. When asked who his biggest inspiration is, he confidently answered, it is himself. Setting goals and seeing through to those goals is what keeps him motivated.

With sports comes fans, and hockey fans seem the most devoted, especially within this area. Another Minnesota native and a hockey lover since birth, is fan, Kaitlyn Paczynski.

Born into a family that was dedicated to hockey, she was thrown out on the ice at the age of four, and was a natural on skates.

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