

# SPORTS

## A Career of 1,000 Memories

Norah Schmitz  
[nschmit6@uwsuper.edu](mailto:nschmit6@uwsuper.edu)  
Spring is almost here, which means winter sports are slowly ending. For the University of Wisconsin- Superior Men's Basketball team, a chance to host a playoff game is within reach. One player who has helped them is J'Vaun Walker.

The senior guard hit 1,000 career points against Marian University on Jan. 22, 2024. He finished that game with 9 points, earning his historic milestone on a free throw.

"J'Vaun has impacted me as a coach by not only being able to work together on the basketball side of things on the court, but also going through both adversity and successes together," said Head Men's Basketball Coach Greg Polkowski.

"J'Vaun came to campus during the Covid Pandemic and also at a time when we were still developing and growing our program. J'Vaun's belief, commitment, and enthusiasm in all of these processes has made all of



J'Vaun at the free throw line against Ripon College

Photo By Isaiah Wiita

us better and allowed us to find further successes together in this journey. I have a great appreciation for not only what I have learned from J'Vaun but also in our relationship," said Polkowski.

Being able to hit such a big milestone doesn't come easy. Overcoming challenges is a big part of the game and being successful. "I've had my fair share of bad games and at times that's brought my confidence down," said Walker, "I realized that being consistent in staying confident is helpful to play consistent as well."

Being able to stay confident through challenging times was made easier by his team. "I think what makes us so special is our bonding off the court. This team is really

close with each other. To us we know that there's life after basketball and I think the relationships we've made reflect that," said Walker.

With the end of the season closing in and the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference tournament around the corner, the Yellowjackets' leading scorer hopes to secure a playoff game at home.

"I'm looking forward to the memories that we'll make in the last stretch of the season, as well as making a push to host another home playoff game," said Walker.

The Yellowjackets have a chance to host a playoff game as they wrap up the season on the road facing Martain Luther on Feb. 16 and Bethany

## UWS Partnership with Cenovus Energy

Isaiah Wiita  
[iwiita@uwsuper.edu](mailto:iwiita@uwsuper.edu)

UW-Superior and Yellowjacket Athletics have announced that they will be partnering with Cenovus Energy to advance the on-campus athletic facilities. According to a Yellowjacket Athletics press release, the agreement will bring \$450,000 to the university for additions to Superior Choice Credit Union Stadium.

"We are excited for the impact this partnership will have on enhancing the student-athlete experience. The partnership will help with new amenities for Superior Choice Credit Union Stadium," said Nick Bursik, director of athletics at UW-Superior.

A few of these additions include a new video board, a fan zone area, which creates a pre-game environment for fans on certain game days, and to create

the Cenovus Women in Leadership program.

"The Cenovus Women in Leadership event is an exciting component to our partnership. The event will include a keynote speaker and dinner and be designed to inspire the future female leaders within our campus and community," said Bursik.

The first Cenovus Women in Leadership program event will be held on Apr. 3, 2024, with guest speaker Lindsay Whalen, a former WNBA player for the Connecticut Suns and Minnesota Lynx.

The Superior Choice Credit Union Stadium is expected to be completed by the fall of 2024 for future Yellowjacket athletes, spectators, and students.



UWS Student-Athletes Receiving Check from Cenovus Staff.

## Outside Baseball in February

Lily Hanson  
[lhanso26@uwsuper.edu](mailto:lhanso26@uwsuper.edu)

The UW-Superior baseball team started practicing on Jan. 21 and will continue their season throughout the spring.

A few weeks into the season, UWS Head Baseball Coach TJ Oakes and the rest of the coaching staff appear to be very pleased with how the season is going so far.

"We felt like the guys came back ready to go and could tell that they put in the necessary work over the offseason," Oakes said.

With warm weather in the Twin Ports, the baseball team got the chance to start practicing outside.

"Often times it gets very difficult to simulate

game-like situations when you are indoors so being outside has allowed us to simulate live situations with actual baseball dimensions," Oakes said. "We joked with our team that we typically don't take our first team infield and outfield session until prior to our very first game but this year we got that session 30 days prior to playing."

Nick Fredrikson, a 6th year senior on the team, takes this opportunity to practice outside to prepare for the early half of the season.

"Getting some time to practice outside already this early in our season has been great, as it has enabled us to get game like reps fielding wise way earlier than previous years," said Fredrikson.

The baseball roster has

plenty of freshman, sophomores and juniors this year, but only a few seniors. As this may seem like a setback, Coach TJ made it clear that the team's leadership and chemistry is strong.

"We do not have captains as a part of our program, as we believe everyone can be a leader on a team no matter what age you are," Oakes said. "We are a young group but a passionate group who have meshed well together."

Fredrikson also mentioned that the team carries a lot of leadership qualities.

"I am in a position having been around the program a while where I am expected to be a leader," Fredrikson said. "But we also have a ton of great leaders on our team, including first or second-year players."

The team will continue their season throughout the spring semester and continue to work toward securing a spot in the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference tournament.



UWS Baseball Team in Dugout in Spring 2023

Photo By: Promethean File

## Softball Season Preview

Evan Ludwig  
[eludwig@uwsuper.edu](mailto:eludwig@uwsuper.edu)

After an Upper Midwest Athletic Conference tournament championship and NCAA tournament appearance the UW-Superior softball team looks to have another successful season.

"We return 16 of 24 from last year's roster and I believe the NCAA appearance has given the team the desire to go back again and the experience of last year will give them the confidence and understanding of what it takes to make that happen," said head softball coach Melissa Fracker now in her fourth season at the helm of the Yellowjackets.

The Yellowjackets finished last season with a 31-13 record while going 17-4 in conference and ultimately achieving a second-place finish in the regular season.

After bowing out in the NCAA tournament to Luther College, Junior Catcher/Infielder Zoe Thomson thinks an early start to the season will help the team.

"Being outside this early in the season allows us the opportunity to give



UWS Softball Team prepping for 2024 season

Photo by Mikayla Swanson

our outfielders reps that they wouldn't be able to get practicing in the gym," said Thomson.

An early start outdoors pushes the Yellowjackets towards their opener at the UW-Oshkosh Softball Invitational.

After their opener the team travels to Florida for a series of games during spring break.

"Our Spring Break trip gives us time away from the field to build deeper connections and plenty of time on the field together to figure out what makes our team motivated so we can use that to be successful," said Fracker.

The Yellowjackets are scheduled to open up UMAC play against Northland College on Mar. 22.