SPORTS

Yellowjacket baseball is 'going all in'

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The 2026 preseason polls are in, and the University of Wisconsin-Superior (UW-Superior) baseball team is projected to finish second in the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference (UMAC). After a fifth-place finish in 2025, the Yellowjackets enter the new season with higher expectations and a clearer identity.

Head coach Trevor "TJ" Oakes said the team's first challenge will be navigating unpredictable spring weather and the frequent schedule changes that come with it. UW-Superior also opens the season with an early slate of tough competition, which Oakes said will help gauge where the team stands. "Our guys will be tested and challenged right away, but that's kind of on purpose," he said. Oakes emphasized the importance of shared leadership within the program. "Everyone has a role, everyone's valued, everyone has self-worth," he said.

Oakes said he has been encouraged by the team's work ethic and camaraderie since the fall. He said the program focuses on being consistent, courageous, and together, values he believes this year's team has embraced while also adopting the motto "going all in," both on and off the field.

"I feel like they've embraced that motto and have really started to do it and implement it into their lives," Oakes said.

A way senior pitcher Aiden Pfeifer embraces the motto is during the team's annual spring trip to Florida. He said it is one of the early-season highlights, both for competition and team chemistry.

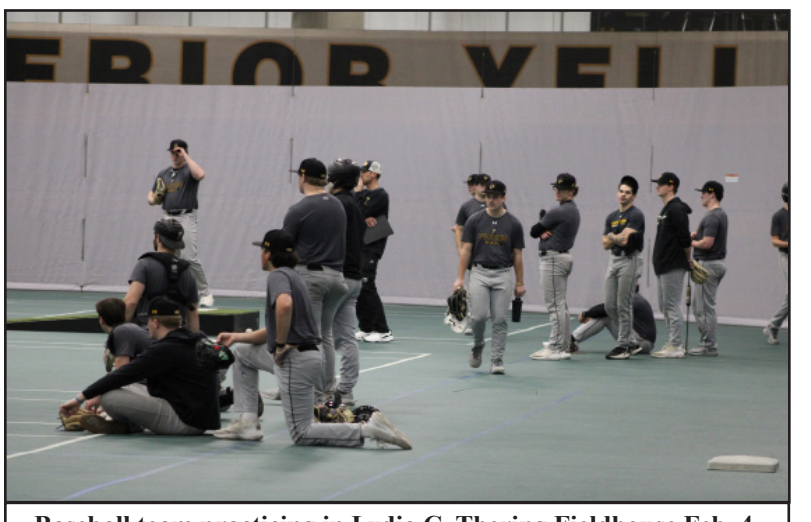
"It's a really good time for us, with it being the beginning of our season to kind of bond and get to know each other better and create more relationships before we get into conference play," Pfeifer said.

Pfeifer said the roster looks different this year after key players graduated but said the newcomers have impressed him. "We do have a little bit of a turnover after we graduated some key guy's last year, but I think a lot of them are really talented and I'm excited to see what they can bring to our team," he said.

Senior third baseman Brian O'Dwyer said the team's mindset is centered on intensity and daily commitment. "We want to show up every day with a dominating mindset…and almost strike fear into the teams we're playing," he said.

O'Dwyer said he is excited to compete alongside his teammates this spring and hopes fans continue to support the program. "It's the best group of guys I've been able to play with, so I'm really excited to see how we all perform this spring," he said.

With optimism and a demanding schedule ahead, the Yellowjackets hope their preparation, chemistry and commitment will translate into success during the 2026 season.



Baseball team practicing in Lydia C. Thering Fieldhouse Feb. 4.
Photo by Abby Hoffman | Promethean

'Grit' and growth drive UWS softball

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Positivity surrounds the University of Wisconsin-Superior (UW-Superior) softball program as it prepares to open the 2026 season, with the team embracing "grit" as both their motto and their mindset.

Picked to finish second in the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference preseason poll, that grit has shown daily through intentional, tenacious practices and a commitment to competing at a high level.

"I'm really excited," head coach Melissa Fracker said. "We certainly have the ability to go compete for a championship, but before that, we have a whole lot of non-conference games," she added.

UW-Superior returns several key contributors while welcoming nine rookies, giving the roster 22 players with a variety of personalities and skill sets. The blend has positioned the Yellowjackets to be more adaptable, both defensively and offensively, as the season unfolds.

"I think we're going to have a different type of offense, but we do return a lot of really key pieces, and I think it's going to help us be very successful this year," Fracker said.

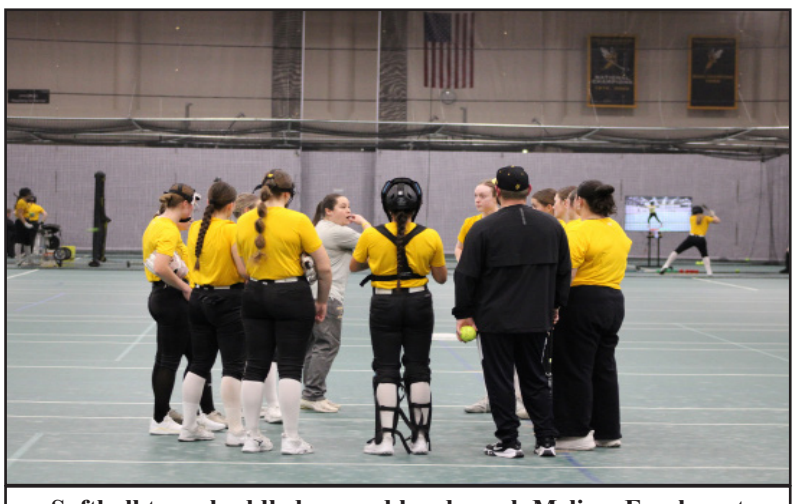
Senior outfielder Hanna Hovland said it has been "really cool" watching the team's improvement, pointing to growth at the plate as a key area of noticeable progress. "I'm just most excited to get back out on the softball field again and see this team compete," Hovland said.

That competitive mindset has been reinforced through a strong focus on team culture. The group used fall to emphasize leadership and team bonding, helping a roster with new faces to blend before the start of the season. "You got to have good culture and good chemistry on the field for sure in softball," Fracker said.

For Junior outfielder Karen Balabon, that culture reflects her experience in the program. She said playing at the collegiate level has deepened her appreciation for the sport and strengthened the relationships she has built with teammates. "I wouldn't trade it for anything, to be honest. I love it," Balabon said.

The Yellowjackets are looking forward to early-season travel, including their annual trip to Florida. Players said they value both the level of competition and the memories created through road and overnight trips.

Hovland and Balabon encouraged fans to attend games this season. "It'll be pretty fun to watch this year," Hovland said. Balabon added that fans will enjoy watching.

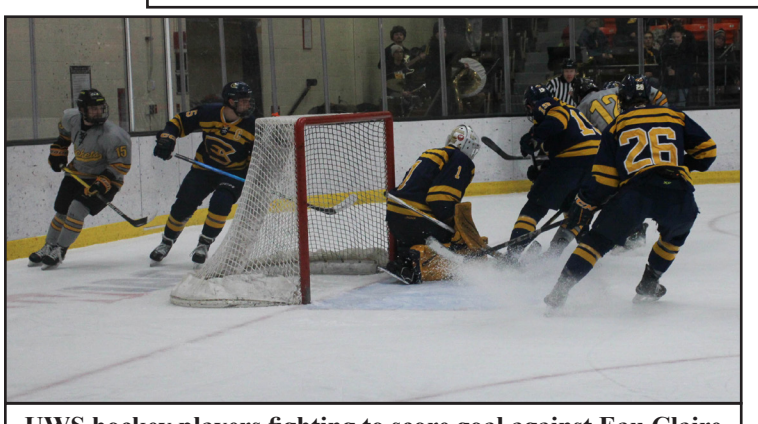


Softball team huddled around head coach Melissa Fracker at practice on Feb. 4 in Lydia C. Thering Fieldhouse.
Photo by Abby Hoffman | Promethean

UWS men's hockey and alumni basketball games

UWS hockey players chase the puck in game against Eau Claire Jan. 30 at Wessman Arena.
Photo by Emily Tews | Promethean

UWS alumni put on pressure during alumni men's basketball game Jan. 31 at Mertz Mortorelli Gymnasium.
Photo by Emily Tews | Promethean



UWS hockey players fighting to score goal against Eau Claire Jan. 30 at Wessman Arena.
Photo by Emily Tews | Promethean

UWS alumni compete for basketball durimg alumni women's basketball game Jan. 31 at Mertz Mortorelli Gymnasium.
Photo by Emily Tews | Promethean

UWS hockey team huddled after hard loss in a shoot out game vs. Eau Claire Jan. 30 at Wessman Arena.
Photo by Emily Tews | Promethean