

# SPORTS

## Representation fuels women's athletics

Abby Hoffman  
ahoffm26@uwsuper.edu

Increasing representation of girls and women in sports is inspiring young athletes to get active, and for Yellowjacket athletes, that same visibility fuels ambition.

On Feb. 4, for National Girls and Women in Sports Day, the University of Wisconsin-Superior's women's tennis players joined staff to reflect on the impact of women in athletics.

For junior player Claudia Curtis, representation encourages her to embrace student life on campus. "You see more women and more stories about women in sports, and I think that really makes me want to just become not only a better athlete but more involved as a student-athlete," Curtis said.

Competing promotes efficiency and drive for many athletes. "I'm always trying to improve myself," junior player Kate

Jonas said. "Discipline as an athlete has definitely translated off the court."

The experience women gain from Yellowjacket athletics lasts long after graduation. Niya Wilson, a UW-Superior soccer alum and now the athletics department business and compliance manager, attributes who she is today to her time as an athlete. She described it as "the most incredibly life-changing experience."

As National Girls and Women in Sports Day highlighted, the impact of women in athletics at UW-Superior reflects a common theme: representation matters, and the lessons learned through sport extend far beyond competition.

Seeing women lead, compete and succeed reinforces what is possible. For alumnae, those same experiences continue to shape their careers and confidence.



Women's tennis team huddled up during match vs. Concordia on Feb. 14 at the Duluth Indoor Sports Center.

Photo by Emily Tews | Promethean

## UWS tennis shares Valentine's Day cheer

Emily Tews  
etews1@uwsuper.edu

The University of Wisconsin-Superior's women's tennis



Signed Valentines from Yellowjacket tennis players on Feb. 14.

Photo by Emily Tews | Promethean

team opened their spring season on Valentine's Day with a match against Concordia at the Duluth Indoor Sports Center.

To engage with fans, the Yellowjackets invited people from the community, including athletes from their youth camps.

"[We] did a big invite to all of the camp families, all the youth and just people in the area, we are going to sign valentines and give them out to the people that come," head men's and women's tennis coach CeeJay Shaufner said.

The team did exactly that. As every individual who came and watched was greeted by a women's tennis player and gifted a small valentine written by a player, along with a chocolate for their supporters.

The team had a full sweep of 7-0 with their doubles pairs and singles matches, proving how strong they are coming into this season.

Senior Hailey Bault said, "I think we're right where we should be, I think we have proven ourselves over the last couple of years. We have been kind of dominating in our conference, and I think we still really have a strong team, so I think we are going to do just as well as we have been if not better."

The Yellowjackets are excited to compete throughout the season and are hoping for a return trip to nationals. They encourage fans to continue showing up in support.



Lillian Kimber ready to rally with her doubles partner Amery Oberg Feb. 14.

Photo by Emily Tews | Promethean

## Double sport athlete MyKenzie Leccia

Abby Hoffman  
ahoffm26@uwsuper.edu

The dream of being a collegiate student-athlete does not come true for everyone. Demanding schedules, coursework and daily responsibilities quickly separate those who can manage the opportunity from those who cannot.

At the University of Wisconsin-Superior, some athletes double that challenge for the love of the game. Among them is senior MyKenzie Leccia, who has balanced both softball and basketball for all four years of her college career.

Leccia has earned numerous Upper Midwest Athletic Conference, College Sports Communicators and National Fastpitch Coaches Association honors. But her impact extends beyond the statistics.

Her success comes not only from

her performance on the court and field, but from the leadership and support she brings to both teams.

"She just goes above and beyond to take care of everybody and work hard and be a positive force," head softball coach Melissa Fracker said. "Athletically, she's very gifted, but I would say, as a person, that's her biggest strength."

Head women's basketball coach Eveline Parsons, in her first season coaching Leccia, echoed that sentiment. "I remember meeting her the first day, and she just had a great, like energy about her," Parsons said. "She's been a great leader for our team, just really pouring into everybody."

Leccia said navigating overlapping seasons was challenging at first, but she caught on. "After freshman year, I kind of got into a rhythm with time management and knowing what my body can and can't do," she said.

With coaches who understand the dual-sport commitment, she is able to fully invest in whichever sport is in season without losing touch with the other. "It doesn't stop her from connecting with her teammates and making sure that she kind of knows what's going on in both realms," Fracker said.

Once quiet and reserved, Leccia said she has developed into a confident, vocal leader while maintaining the work ethic instilled in her by her father.

"I've always had this work ethic, courtesy of my dad," Leccia said.

Her schedule forced her

to become more intentional. "Having two sports, having to do my time management, you do have to really...focus in on doing things right the first time," she said.

As her senior year unfolds, Leccia has reflected on her four years as a Yellowjacket.

Her favorite basketball memory came during her freshman year, when UW-Superior handed Northwestern its only conference loss of the season.

In softball, a championship moment during her sophomore year remains just as vivid. With a runner on second and the game tied in the conference tournament, Leccia delivered a ground-rule double.



MyKenzie Leccia with her parents during the senior game vs. Morris on Feb. 21 in the Mertz Gymnasium.

Photo by Abby Hoffman | Promethean

"I was literally shaking," she said. The sight of her teammates running toward her with their arms raised is something she will never forget.

At the center of her journey, there are the relationships built across both programs. She credits her coaches and teammates, but her deepest gratitude belongs to her parents, who introduced her to sports and have continuously shown up ever since.

"I wouldn't be where I am without them," Leccia said.

She is not fully ready to see it all come to an end, but having one more softball season and plans to pursue collegiate coaching after graduation has made the transition easier. The work ethic that carried Leccia through two programs ensures her time in sports is far from over.



MyKenzie Leccia and her parents running through the team tunnel during the senior game vs. Morris on Feb. 21 in the Mertz Mortorelli Gymnasium.

Photo by Abby Hoffman | Promethean