

SPORTS

Athletic trainers: the backbone of Yellowjacket Athletics

Abby Hoffman
ahoffm26@uwsuper.edu

March celebrates National Athletic Trainer Month, a time to recognize the work of sports medicine staff and the impact they have across NCAA and club programs.

At the University of Wisconsin-Superior, athletic trainers Ben Kasper, Kirsten Heffner, Morgan Olsen and Trevor Weidt, in partnership with Essentia Health, provide comprehensive care for student-athletes throughout the year, with Dylan Takkunen set to join the staff in the fall.

Athletic trainers handle a wide range of responsibilities, from injury prevention and rehabilitation to coordinating medical care and managing required documentation.

“They really are the ones that provide the day-to-day support,” said Nick Bursik, UWS director of athletics. “They are a big part of our department and the student-athlete experience.”

Bursik also acknowledged team physicians Dr. Kathryn McLellan and Dr. Luke Widstrom, who work alongside the athletic trainers to support the health and well-being of UWS athletes.

At UWS, trainers treat injuries ranging from ankle sprains to ACL tears while also creating individualized plans to help pre-

vent future and recurring injuries, especially for athletes with a history of injuries. “We help build programs that can help prevent injuries from happening,” said Ben Kasper, head athletic trainer.

On a typical day, the staff leads rehabilitation sessions and provides treatments such as dry needling, electrical stimulation, the Graston® technique and other soft tissue mobilization techniques. However, much of their effort happens behind-the-scenes.

“A lot of people think we’re only there when someone gets hurt,” Kasper said. “It starts way before that and way after that.”

Even during games, when trainers may appear inactive, preparation remains constant.

“If you ever see us standing around, that means it’s a good thing. We’re having a good day,” Kasper said. “But...things can kind of go south at any minute.”

That’s where the preparation comes in. “We’re thinking about, ‘Okay, if this happens, here’s where we need to go, here’s what we need to do,’” Kasper said.

Athletic trainers also serve as a support system for athletes navigating the mental challenges of injury and recovery, helping connect them with additional campus resources when needed.

For Kasper, the most rewarding part of the job is helping athletes return to competition after long recoveries. “Seeing that person go through the beginning stages and all the way to the end...that’s the best,” he said.

While their dedication may not always be visible, every practice, game, meet and tournament wouldn’t be possible without the care and preparation provided by athletic trainers.



Athletic Training Room in the Marcovich Wellness Center on Mar. 30.
 Photo by Abby Hoffman | Promethean

UWS alum returns to campus to coach men’s club soccer

Abby Hoffman
ahoffm26@uwsuper.edu

For Brandon Johnson, stepping into the role of head coach for the University of Wisconsin-Superior men’s club soccer team is both a new challenge and a meaningful return.

Johnson, a 2018 UWS alum, played his final two collegiate seasons with the Yellowjackets after starting at North Iowa Area Community College. He transitioned into coaching at the youth and high school levels before returning to the college game.

Johnson began with Two Harbors Soccer Club, coaching competitive and recreational girls’ teams.

From 2019-2024, he coached at the high school level, eventually becoming head coach of the Two Harbors boys’ varsity team. He then assisted at Lake Superior College before returning to UWS in 2025 to work with both the men’s and women’s NCAA programs.

When the head club position opened, Johnson leapt at the opportunity, calling it the most important role he’s ever had.

“I take a lot of pride in that, and I think, obviously being an alum with the school, it’s important for me too,” Johnson said. “It’s really nice to be back.”

The club program completed its first season in fall 2025, and Johnson takes over following Gus Nascimento’s departure. With the program still in its early stages, he said the priority is further establishing a strong identity.

“We want to make sure that we’re building a culture,” he said.

Unlike NCAA programs, club soccer offers a more flexible option for student-athletes while still maintaining a competitive environment. Johnson said that balance allows more students to stay involved in the sport they love.

As he begins assembling and getting to know the roster, Johnson said finding the right fit is essential. “My recruitment philosophy is, if we’re a good fit for them and they’re a good fit for us. That’s what we want,” he said.

That philosophy reflects his overall coaching style, which centers on building relationships with players.

“I always like to know them as a person first,” Johnson said. “Making them feel seen and cared for...other than just how they’re doing on the field.”

As the team continues spring practices, Johnson aims to create an experience players will value beyond graduation while maintaining a competitive edge.

“I like to win. I’m competitive,” he said. “I’m



New head coach for men’s club soccer,
Brandon Johnson.
 Photo by Holden Law | Yellowjacket Athletics

able to hopefully provide them with an experience that, like afterwards, you’re like, ‘Yeah, I’m really proud to be a part of that.’”

Looking ahead, Johnson said he hopes the program becomes a “household name” and a lasting presence on campus.



Men’s Golf UMAC Championship Board in the Golf Simulator Room from 2025.
 Photo by Alicia Zoltowski | Promethean

Gus Schupp
gschupp@uwsuper.edu

The University of Wisconsin-Superior men’s golf team took home the 2025 cham-

pionship, beating Bethany Lutheran, according to the Upper Midwest Athletics Conference (UMAC). This is their sixth UMAC Championship title. Yellowjacket men’s golf swept all the major awards in the process, according to the Yellowjacket Athletics.

UWS golfer Andrew Rude was named to the All-Sportsmanship Team. Blu Anderson and Trevor Durfee were noted as All-UMAC Honorable mentions. Matthew Unger was named

to the All-UMAC Second Team. The UMAC Rookie of the Year was Andrew Slatten. Both Rude and Slatten were named to the All-UMAC First Team. Rude brought home the UMAC Player of the Year.

In winning the championship for men’s golf, the Yellowjacket men’s golf team has earned a spot at the NCAA DIII National Tournament this spring at Mission Resort & Club in Howey-in-the-Hills, Florida, which will take place May

12-15. The spring season for the men’s team will open at the Illinois Wesleyan University Invite on April 3-4.

The women’s golf team claimed second at the UMAC Championships for the fall 2025 season, falling short to the University of Northwestern (St.Paul), according to the UMAC. The women’s team opens the spring season April 11-12 in Gustie Spring Classic in Hastings, Minn..

Five golfers on the team were honored with UMAC

postseason awards. All-UMAC Honorable Mentions: Makayla Ammerman, Sophia Otto, and Ashton Parnell. Two were named to the All-UMAC First Team: Olivia Weyenberg and Abby Schintz. Parnell was the Yellowjackets honoree on the All-Sportsmanship Team.

The UMAC coach of the year was Paul Eberhardt for his work with the men’s team. Eberhardt is in his 10th season coaching the men’s team, and his seventh year with the women’s team.

Upcoming Home Schedule

Softball

vs. Northwestern (Minn.)
 Apr. 22 (Wed) 3 & 5 p.m.

vs. Northwestern (Minn.)
 Apr. 23 (Thurs) 12 p.m.

vs. Crown
 Apr. 24 (Fri) 4 p.m.

vs. Crown
 Apr. 25 (Sat) 11 a.m. & 1 p.m.

Games played at NBC Baseball & Softball Complex

Baseball

vs. North Central (Minn.)
 Apr. 17 (Fri) 3 p.m.

vs. North Central (Minn.)
 Apr. 18 (Sat) 1 & 3:30 p.m.

vs. Minnesota Morris
 May 2 (Sat) 1 & 3:30 p.m.

vs. Minnesota Morris
 May 3 (Sun) 12 p.m.

Games played at NBC Baseball & Softball Complex



Tennis

Women vs. Minnesota Morris
 Apr. 19 (Sun) 10 a.m.
 Superior High School

Women vs. UW-Eau Claire
 Apr. 19 (Sun) 4 p.m.
 Superior High School

Men vs. Crown
 Apr. 24 (Fri) 1 p.m.
 Yellowjacket Tennis Complex

Women vs. Crown
 Apr. 24 (Fri) 4 p.m.

Track & Field

Conway Classic
 Apr. 25 (Sat) TBA
 SCCU Stadium

UMAC Championship
 May 1 (Sat) - May 2 (Sun) TBA
 SCCU Stadium