

Photo Essay

# Fall sports teams heating up amid NCAC regular season competition



Bryce Strickler/Sports Information

Logan Agin '20 scored two goals during the Big Red's 4-1 victory over Kenyon on Saturday, October 15, bringing her season total to 3. The Big Red have now won four straight games, including their first three NCAC games of the year.



Jace Delgado/Sports Information

Leo Herard '22 netted the team's lone goal on at #9 Kenyon on Saturday, October 15 to even the score at 1-1 in the 50th minute. The Big Red weren't able to build off Herard's score, eventually falling 1-3 to the Lords. The loss drops the Big Red's NCAC record to 1-2.



Bryce Strickler/Sports Information

Charlotte Happel '21 and Abby Scully '21 embrace during Denison's dominant 6-0 win at home against Wooster. The duo each got on the scoring sheet, with Happel scoring twice and Scully once. Scully added two assists to round out a strong day for the team. Lily Bayliss '23 and Charlotte Godfrey '21 also scored during the big win.

## Denison Sports Network: Building from the ground up

**JACK WHITE**  
Staff Writer

At Denison University there is no opportunity to major or minor in Broadcasting. However, there are numerous students that are passionate about learning the various skills within the world of the broadcasting industry. Now, while there is no broadcasting department at Denison, there is an outlet where students can express and share their desire in wanting to acquire deeper knowledge behind the world of media.

Today, this outlet is known as Denison Sports Network, or DSN for short.

In 2002, Craig Hicks, Assistant Athletic Director for Athletic Communications, was hired here at Denison. When first beginning the job Hicks was the only Sports Information Director (SID) for six to seven years. Hicks said, "Having to cover all of the sports by myself was very limiting in regards to what I could take on. Occasionally, the Doobie would come down and help out with games, but I didn't like the lack of control or consistency."

In 2008, Hicks finally received an assistant, Jason Miller. He was looking to develop and evolve the DSN. Initially, Hicks said, "I was very nervous

if whether or not we would be sustainable." 17 years later, this broadcast organization has only trended upward and they aren't settling. The DSN continues to take the proper means to expand and build upon the groundwork established. However, they need the continued assistance from the student body. Hicks expressed, "with wanting to add streaming and live stats during

athletic events this was going to need to be primarily a student based team of employees."

In the grand scheme of things, there was no need to worry about the potential issue of sustainability. Hicks said, "There are a lot of people on this campus that care a lot about sports, that want to be involved. I knew we would be filling a void here at Denison and

I am most proud of how far this has come. Given that we act like a team, where there is comradery, friendships are formed, and you get to make great connections as well."

Curt Ashcraft, Assistant Director of Athletic Communications in the Department of Athletics, has been with Denison since 2016. Ashcraft said his favorite part about working at Denison is "being able to see when students get it. When you take time after time, after time, after time, teaching them little things such as, running a streaming software, teaching them the do's and don'ts of broadcasting, and what we expect on a stats level. Then when I finally see it click and you see that lightbulb go off and they put into action, that is greater than any broadcast I've ever done or award I'll ever win. This is when I'm the happiest."

At the beginning of another school year, Hicks' Student Assistant, Shea McMahon, was up in the booth broadcasting a men's soccer game. As McMahon began to sign off he became tongue tied and didn't know what to say. Hicks said, "He awkwardly stumbled out of that and then he asked me during the broadcast 'what the hell are we calling this?' Then that's when Hicks responded without hesitation: The Denison Sports Network.



Photo courtesy of Denison Sports Network

The Denison Sports Network (DSN) has grown immensely since its conception in 2002. Once only featuring audio broadcasts, a preview of their 2019 product, streaming through stretch internet, can be seen above. The platform features live and on demand broadcasts and gives students a great way to get involved with Denison athletics.

# Mental health: An often overlooked issue in the world of sports

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Sports Editor

To say the National Football League (NFL) is evolving into something new is an understatement.

A historically strict league has now started to see signs of players taking a step up for themselves and take control of their own careers, instead of the owners of the teams they play for. While injuries are nothing new in professional sports, the toll the sport has had on mental health of players is something that has been overlooked until recently with more and more players taking a stand for their individuality.

With this past summer's startling retirement of Indianapolis Colts' franchise quarterback Andrew Luck, player health has come even more into the spotlight. In his press conference announcing his retirement, Luck explained the constant toll his injuries throughout the years have put on him, both physically and mentally. New England Patriots' legendary tight end Rob Gronkowski similarly spoke out about the toll the sport has on mental health within players.

Research has started to be conducted on mental health issues within the NFL, and while interviewing players, researchers started to realize the impact professional football has had on

players. Discussing his time in professional football, one player said, "The reason it's so lonely is we put those walls up...and nobody can know that I'm feeling concerned about my performance, that I'm insecure about this or that because football, in a sense, is [the] ultimate meritocracy and such a manly thing that you just you always feel like you gotta be on, you know?" Another player, reflecting on the trauma of ending his career, said, "I really believe it's more of an emotional issue of losing your identity and some of those other things that can cause emotional trauma, more than what's happening physically."

The impact mental health has on these athletes has led to an almost revolution within the NFL, with players taking more control of their careers than the team owners who have had the influence since the beginning of the league.

Former Pittsburgh Steelers running back Le'veon Bell is a prime example of this new phenomenon taking place within the league. Bell decided to sit out an entire season without pay from the Steelers, as a result of not being paid enough money for what he feels he is worth. This is because running backs are often paid less than other star players and have smaller contracts. Running backs are seen to be much more "disposable" for a team as a result of low career life-span for

the position. Bell averaged 351 total touches (279 carries and 72 receptions) over his four full seasons with Pittsburgh between 2013-2017. Leading up to his holdout, he echoed the sentiment that he wasn't paid what he believed to be fair compensation for the physical toll the Steelers put on his body. As a result, he has signed with the New York Jets for a massive contract worth \$52.5 million over four years, including \$27 million guaranteed.

This has led to other players threatening to sit out of the league as well, including Cowboy's star Ezekiel Elliot, who threatened to sit out the season if he wasn't paid by the Cowboys. This is a change, with players taking a more active stance in their payment, knowing the toll they put on their bodies every season. It has become especially prevalent with star running backs such as Bell and Elliot.

The new health epidemic the NFL has been dealing with is Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE). CTE is a disease caused by numerous head injuries that leads to many psychological issues. Through research, an extraordinary high number of former NFL players are now suffering from CTE. One of the main symptoms is depression. For a league that requires so much from players, their physical health is at risk and the players are finally starting to fight back

for their health.

The NFL has historically been viewed as a corporation that views its players as being more of a tradable good than the living, working professionals they really are. Players today are trying to change that.

Players are speaking out more. The NFL has developed programs for players to help with their mental health, and people are noticing. If the NFL wants to survive and allow for players to continue to play the sport they love, with less burden on their psychological well-being, it must listen to the players.

Former Seahawks wide receiver Percy Harvin made headlines recently for an interview he gave in which he explained how he smoked marijuana before every game he ever played in to calm his nerves and help him play. This is obviously against league protocol, yet players are doing it anyways because they see no other options. The NFL has yet to do anything to help players with their mental health so players took to breaking the rules to do what the NFL refused to do.

Mental health is an underlooked issue, that may also just be the most dangerous issue of professional sports. The NFL better take notice of what the players are saying and feeling, because otherwise the league will see its end and more and more players will suffer as a result of negligence.

## Football rolls over Oberlin 49-0 in NCAC matchup, improves to 4-1

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The difference between a good football team and a great one is culture. Denison's football team has an established culture of commitment, unity, and tradition. Defensive-lineman Ben Cross '20 spoke to their pride of The Rock.

"Our biggest tradition, and one of the staples of our program, is the Woody Hayes rock. It's required that all Denison football players (both past and present) touch the rock every time they pass it." This indicates a high level of discipline within Denison's football family. A discipline which allowed the Big Red to dominate a weak Oberlin team, scoring 49 unanswered points.

The Big Red took the initiative, jumping out to a 28-0 lead with less than a minute remaining in the first half. Denison's defense pounded their chests, suppressing any momentum Oberlin's offense managed to scrounge.

Oberlin's offense was held to 226 yards of total offense, averaging 3.6 yards each play. Comparatively, Denison had 493 total yards of offense, averaging a gain of 6.6 yards per play. A true display of the gap in offensive firepower between both teams.

With 4:21 remaining in the first, quarterback Drew Dawkins '22 connected with wideout Peyton Vining '21 for an explosive 41-yard touch-

down pass.

Denison continued to capitalize on this momentum. Ryan Hallinan '22 snagged a 46-yard interception for a touchdown. It was an impressive catch, however, this play illustrated the team's comradery. Ryan intercepted the ball, and the remaining Denison players had adjusted immediately. He created an opportunity, but the team put him in a position to score. And the team had fun doing just that, playing the sport for the people, the family.

Ben and the team reiterated how special this season's been. "This has been a special season so far and our strong culture and confidence in one another has allowed us to band together and move forward," Ben said.

The second half of play provided an opportunity, giving hard earned playing time to non-starters. It's to be noted that starter Alex Minton '20 rushed for two touchdowns, closing any opportunity Oberlin had to recover.

Late in the fourth, Brad Baldinger '20 recorded his first touchdown of the season, which connected with wideout Esteban Sainz '22. Despite the game being essentially concluded, this drive consisted of plenty of energy and passion, which was prevalent throughout the game.

The game concluded 49-0 in Denison's favor, improving their record to 4-1 overall and 3-1 in conference play. This Denison team will continue to build off this success. Their commit-



Bryce Strickler/Sports Information

Ryan Hallinan '22 runs toward the Denison endzone after intercepting an Oberlin pass in the first quarter of Saturday's 49-0 win. Hallinan converted the interception for a score and brought the score to 14-0. He also added a team-high 7 tackles on the day.

ment to not only the game, but to each other makes this team unique. The response to their success has been great. Ben Cross '20 expressed, "We all appreciate the support of the Denison community. People around campus come up to me all the time talking

about our program, and I think that is very special." There are only a few opportunities left to support our exciting football program at Piper Stadium. However, their next game will take place at 2pm on Wooster's homefield.



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