AD hears thoughts on football coach search

By Dillon Flanigan
Sports Editor

In the weeks after announcing the departure of longtime Head Coach Tom Godek, the University Director of Athletics and Recreation, Terrence Jones announced a series of listening sessions focused on hearing current and former players thoughts on what is needed in the search for the next head coach.

"To prioritize the triumphs of our student-athletes and secure a bright future for our football program, we invite everyone to share their thoughts on the qualities our next coach should embody," Jones said in the press release on Feb. 13.

The first of three opportunities occurred on Feb. 26 via Zoom and garnered roughly 20-30 alumni and donors.

The third engagement opportunity takes place on Wednesday, March 13 at the Brownson Country Club in Shelton, Connecticut at 5:30 p.m.

The second listening session took place on Wednesday, March 5, at the Adanti Student Center Theater. It took place in person, and it was primarily for members of the football team where dozens of players were in attendance, not including a handful of alumni.

Strict restrictions were in place, including the advocation or campaigning for a candidate.

With a hard 60-minute cutoff, the session was underway with an opening sentiment by Jones who identified what qualities he was looking for in the next head coach.



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University Director of Athletics and Recreation Terrence Jones speaks.

Those qualities include looking for a builder of young men focused on the academics of the student athletes, someone who is a teacher of the game and someone who is a program builder and is skilled in communication.

Two of the players in attendance were fullback James Griffiths and defensive back Josh Martinotti, seniors, who were the first two to speak.

Thanking Jones for the opportunity, they echoed a similar sentiment about the unity they have seen in the team over the last several weeks.

Adding the importance of bringing in a winner, a competitor and someone who has unwavering belief in the team. They further believe the team's next head coach to be a former Owl given the history of head coaches being alumni.

Jones responded by asking who is a senior, with nearly half of those in attendance complying, he then asked who has ever beaten New Haven, referring to the University of New Haven.

With no hands raised, he continued about how after coming onboard in February of 2024 it was different because in the past he won. He could have made a change but did not, emphasizing evaluating what the program had and thus, looking past the NE10 Conference to the Division II level at the plethora of talent the university has.

"From the trenches to the skill work, we have everything to win," Jones said in the session.

After evaluating the team in the fall, including several conversations with Godek throughout the season, the visions did not align in the future direction of the program.

Even after the first game, with not putting points on the board against Shepherd University and losing games they had leads in including against Assumption University at homecoming.

Jones added how players would come to him frustrated with how they came from winning teams only to transfer to the university and lose.

Joe Garbowski, a transfer from Stony Brook University, mentioned how panicked he was when on his first day at the university he was told that the person who recruited him was gone.

Garbowski voiced his concern with the state of the team now; how they are building up something during spring ball, only to have it torn down in the summer when the new coach arrives.

Jones tilted his hand by stating there have been over 100 applicants so far with the window closing on March 13. From there, the committee will narrow it down to ultimately 10 applicants and schedule an interview. The captains will be brought in for their input and all recommendations will be presented to Jones.

"The goal is to move quickly as possible," Jones said.

Linebacker Cooper Dayton, a senior, spoke up and requested that the team needs someone to buy into the program and to reinstate fear in playing the university on the gridiron.

Other characteristics included the need to find a person who is better organized and to blend the history of the university and the current state of the roster together.

Linebacker Ryan Phillips, a redshirt sophomore, stood up to share his view of the next head coach. Phillips mentioned the importance of a coach who is with the program long after he is gone and the importance of nutrition and the care of the athlete's bodies.

In response, Jones spoke to the opportunities that have come to the university and some that he looks to bring.

Some of the things that have been noticed include a new cold tub and a new video board at Jess Dow Field that has been fully funded through donors.

As for what's to come, Jones announced a new hot tub is in the works with a recent partnership with the Connecticut Health Athletic and Mental Performance Center, also known as CHAMP, that is located in the Health and Human Services building.

According to the CHAMP Center website mission statement, they use, "the latest technology and a team of experts to optimize your health whether you are a competitive athlete or someone who just wants to be healthier."

As for what is next on his list, Jones vision is to bring in an indoor practice facility implying this is a new day, but for some of the alumni in attendance who had the opportunity to speak, they focused on their experiences.

Former Owl Louis Datil from the Class of 2003, expressed optimism and acceptance to the young group. He stated that he did not come to homecoming because he was not pleased with the program, expressing to create the atmosphere they want.

For more on this story visit thesouthernews.com

Track & Field win NE10 again

By Matt Cain
Contributor

Beneath the roar of cheering crowds and the clatter of starting blocks, a team of determined athletes are quietly rewriting the record books. The Men's Track team is more than just a dynasty; it's a legacy. The Owls captured their eighth consecutive NE10 conference title, marking their 19th overall championship in the conference.

Fueled by grit and relentless drive, the Owls scored a remarkable 205.5 points to claim the title. They are carving their own path to victory, proving that success is not just about speed—it is about heart, teamwork and unwavering commitment.

"I was very excited. We went in with a great team," sprinter Nolan Freeman, a junior, said.

Though the Owls have dominated indoor track for eight straight seasons, their athletes now take that success in stride. It is during the outdoor season where they truly showcase their abilities.

"Hopefully, we can carry that mindset forward into the outdoor season and put together some strong races," Freeman said.

Freeman was one of the Owls' top performers in the meet, competing in both the 60-meter and the 200-meter dash, scoring in both events. The Owls entered this conference meet with a mix of young talent and seasoned athletes.

Senior hurdler Osaretin Osagie finished second in the 60-meter hurdles with a time of 8.25, while freshman Joe Nahm finished seventh with a time of 8.96.

In the 60-meter dash, Freeman earned a third-place medal with a time of 6.96, followed by first-year Owl Marquis Ward, who placed seventh with a time of 7.14.

To round out the sprinting events, the 400-meter dash saw five Owls reach the finals.

Osaretin Osagie ran a 48.80 and grabbed third place. Finishing ahead of him in second was sophomore Sam Sandler, with a time of 48.23.

A young core consisting of sophomore Quinn Favorite, a freshman and sophomores Matt Kilmer and Max Musial all posted personal bests in their first conference meet.

The sprinting group is never short on talent. With strong leadership from the junior and senior classes, freshman athletes quickly adapt to the environment.

Freshman Jalil Pena competed in the preliminary rounds of both the 60-meter and 200-meter dashes. Although he did not score points for the Owls, just being there was a valuable learning experience.

"I was scared for my first conference meet, to be honest," Pena said. "I called my mom, and that kind of got me in the right mindset to run my race."

Though Pena did not make it to the finals, the second day of the meet was spent cheering on his teammates. Despite a challenging start to his competition season, Pena is now shifting his focus to the outdoor season.

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Softball wins first four games

By Dillon Flanigan
Sports Editor

After a cold and snowy February, March is here for the university softball team, who for the first time in a decade is under new leadership in interim, with Head Coach Kate Bowen.

"I've always known how great the school was academically; how competitive the softball program was," Bowen said. "I'm really excited to just build up a Connecticut school and really put a Connecticut team on the map."

Bowen, who spent a decade in various roles at Springfield College, is excited about the team. After making a series of upsets in the NE10 conference tournament a year ago, several veterans have parted ways, but a mix of three transfers, eight freshmen and 11 returners step to the plate in 2025.

"When I first started in September, one thing that really stood out to me was when I was meeting with the returners and all the players, but specifically the returners, we talked about how they finished last season," Bowen said. "That momentum has sincerely just carried over to the fall, which was just awesome. You can just tell everyone's just ready to get right back there."

Returning to the outfield is Rachel Miller, a graduate, a consistent presence and productive hitter last year, has been in the middle of the lineup so far going 6-15 with a walk, a double and an RBI in the first four games. She will be patrolling the grass with a new crew as the adjustment is fresh but comfortable.

"We've been getting a lot of reps during preseason, and we've been switching positions around, so I think we're all comfortable in all positions, everyone's ready to go in whenever they're needed," Miller said.

Miller not only played primarily right field but also had a cup of coffee in the circle, starting two of her four appearances, she threw a combined 15 innings.

"She's going to return to the mound this year, a little bit more for innings than she's seen in the past," Bowen said. "I'm really excited to see her on the mound this year, so I think she's going to be able to make an impact there."

With the departure of Jess Perucki, Bowen pointed out that pitcher Ashley Lewis, a junior, is the only returning arm that ate the bulk of the innings aside from Perucki. Coming to practice ready to work hard and improving her pitch mix, Coach Bowen is impressed on her eagerness to improve her drop ball and spin.

In the offseason, Lewis has done just that creating an arsenal adjusting to the NE10 hitters. Two years pitching in the conference now, Lewis continued to work on her mechanics, while sharpening her pitches.

"Over the off season having more of an arsenal, working on my curveball, and just now being in the conference for two years, other the batters know what I throw, so trying to give a different look on the ball for the next two years," Lewis said.

Lewis has been stellar in her first two starts. In 13 innings pitched, she walked two and struck out 17, in back-to-back no hitters. Her first no-no at Bloomfield College on March 4, was the universities' first since Jayme Larson tossed one on April 17, 2011, against Bentley University. Lewis tossed her second on Thursday, March 6 at Post University against the Eagles and is the first pitcher in program history to throw back-to-back no-hitters.

If and when the batters begin to figure it out in the box, Lewis will have the luxury of having several returners to lean on who were on the field a year ago in infielders Nadia Cestari and Dominique DeLutri, seniors, Samantha LaFemina, a junior and her battery-mate, catcher Karly Austin, a sophomore.

In the Owls' other two games, pitcher Giselle DeLutri, a freshman, started. Giselle struggled in her first outing in three innings allowing three runs on five hits and four walks striking out two in her collegiate debut.

In game two against Post, she had a bounce back outing tossing seven strong innings, giving up one walk and three hits, striking out 15 Eagles.

Other than the impact the freshman can have, Bowen admits it is pretty cool to have a sister duo on the team in Dominique and Giselle.

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Pitcher Ashley Lewis, a junior, during Owls media day.