

H2P

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
ATHLETICS MAGAZINE
WINTER 2021-22

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MADE**



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WINTER 2021-22

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Pitt football and volleyball made history with remarkable runs. See the cover story on page 16.

H2P (Hail to Pitt), the official magazine of the University of Pittsburgh Department of Athletics, is published by the Office of University Communications and Marketing and Pitt Athletics. Send correspondence to University of Pittsburgh, Department of Athletics, H2P, Petersen Events Center, 3719 Terrace St., Pittsburgh, PA 15261. ©2022 University of Pittsburgh #113280. H2P magazine accepts no responsibility for unsolicited contributions of artwork, photography or articles.

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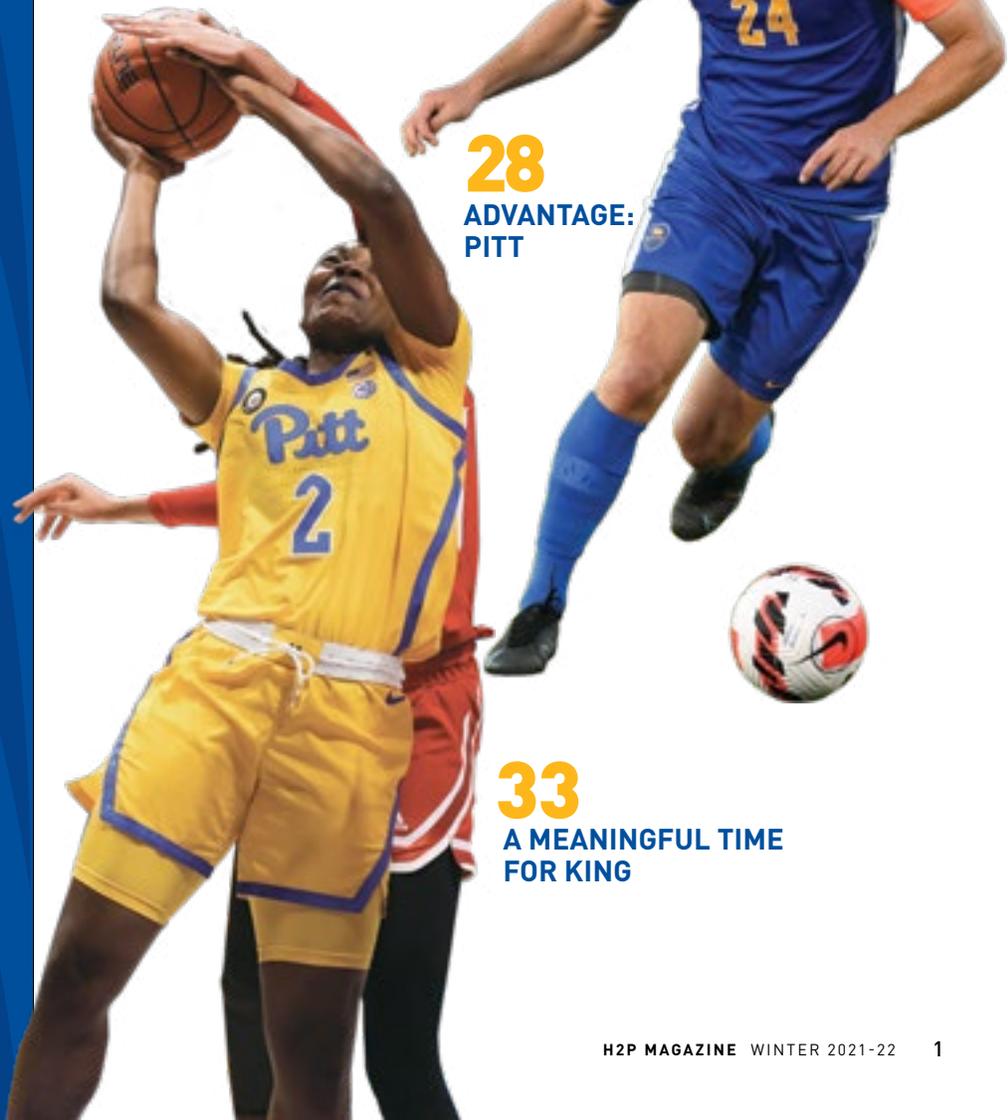
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A MEANINGFUL TIME FOR KING

Dear Pitt friends,

The final months of 2021 were incredibly thrilling as our men's cross country, men's soccer, volleyball and football programs competed in the postseason.

An NCAA top-five finish in our cross country region, a quarterfinal finish on the pitch, a national semifinal appearance on the court, and an ACC Championship and Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl appearance turned the fall season into a whirlwind of activity that brought tremendous pride to the University of Pittsburgh and Pitt community. That success was recognized as the Panthers enjoyed their **highest-ever ranking of 10th** in the Directors' Cup fall standings.

Among the many memories from the fall season, seeing the incredible support from our fans at every venue was most memorable! Ambrose Urbanic Field was standing room only; Pitt blue and gold stood out in a sea of Louisville, Nebraska and Wisconsin red in Columbus; and in Charlotte and Atlanta, the atmosphere was simply **electric!** Your energy inspired, was infectious and had an immeasurable **impact!** On behalf of our coaches, student-athletes, and staff **thank you** for your passionate support and believing in what we are building. **You** are an invaluable member of our **team!**



The City of Champions was lit in Pitt blue and gold and watch parties brought Pitt fans together cheering every play. Young athletes are training now in hopes of becoming the next Kenny Pickett, Chinaza Ndee or Jasper Löeffelsend. Success is contagious!

To see our student-athletes compete at the highest level is phenomenal! Opportunities to compete for championships are the result of patience, hard work, perseverance, learning and sacrifice—all qualities that will positively impact our student-athletes throughout their lives. And win or lose, the ripple effects of these moments extend beyond the final score and trophy ceremonies. Playing for championships unifies and inspires. Panther Nation was completely energized, and the buzz was evident! The City of Champions was lit in Pitt blue and gold and watch parties brought Pitt fans together cheering every play. Young athletes are training now in hopes of becoming the next Kenny Pickett, Chinaza Ndee or Jasper Löeffelsend. **Success is contagious!**

Inspired by their fall peers, the winter and spring programs are working hard to earn the

same opportunities. This year, Pitt is joined by our 19th varsity sports program—lacrosse. Head Coach Emily Boissonneault led our lacrosse team to an overtime win in its inaugural game! Our team is the ninth team to join the preeminent ACC. Six of the nine teams are ranked in the top 15 in the country at the time of this issue's publication so we expect to see strong competition this year. We hope you will join us for a game at Highmark Stadium in this inaugural season and cheer on a group of 38 incredible women who are building the foundation for what we believe will be an exceptional program. You will see a lot of Panther goal celebrations and, if you're watching carefully, an occasional "turf monster."

Here's to many more memorable moments in 2022.

Hail to Pitt!

Heather Lyke
Director of Athletics





COMPLIANCE CORNER

The NCAA Recruiting Process

Whether our sports are in or out of season, our coaches are always looking for talented prospects who can take their team to the next level. Recruiting is a year-round job for each of our teams, and the support that we receive from each of you plays a huge role in our efforts to bring the best and brightest to campus. What follows is an overview of what goes into recruiting a prospect to Pitt.

Who is allowed to recruit for Pitt Athletics?

Per the NCAA, each sport is limited to a set number of Pitt coaches who can participate in recruiting activities. That number varies both by the sport and the type of recruiting activity the coach may engage in. The NCAA requires that each coach pass a yearly exam that covers a wide range of recruiting topics.

What can Pitt supporters do in the recruiting process?

If you see or know of a prospect you think would be a great fit for a particular Pitt sports team, feel free to notify our coaching staff and they will do the rest. Though we appreciate your guidance, we ask that you leave the actual recruiting activities to our coaches.

Prospects and their families always notice and comment on the engagement of our Pitt faithful. Your attendance at games, philanthropic support and engagement with our teams on social media are crucial elements to Pitt Athletics' success and enable our coaches to go out and recruit the best athletes to elevate each of their teams.

When are Pitt coaches allowed to recruit?

The NCAA has recruiting calendars for all sports that regulate when and how coaches can engage with prospects and their parents/guardians and coaches. For more information on each sport's recruiting calendar, please visit ncaa.org.

What are permissible recruiting activities for Pitt?

Pitt coaches and staff members engage with and recruit prospects in four main NCAA categories:

- Phone calls/text messages/ other recruiting materials

Depending on the age of the prospect and time of year, the number of phone calls or text messages Pitt coaches may send to a prospect varies from none to unlimited. A prospect or their parent/guardian may call or text Pitt coaches at any time.

- Visits to Pitt's campus

Whether it is through an unofficial visit, in which the prospect or their family pays for the travel expenses, or an official visit paid for by Pitt, engaging with Pitt coaches and seeing our beautiful campus often make a difference in the recruiting process.

- Off-campus recruiting

The NCAA's COVID-19 temporary recruiting dead period precluded Division I coaches from engaging in any off-campus recruiting for more than a year. The opportunity to see prospects in action is an invaluable evaluation tool for our coaches. In most of our sports, the NCAA limits the number of days a coach may go off campus to interact with or evaluate prospects.

- Pitt sports camps

Working individually with a prospect in their discipline is another essential way our coaches evaluate which prospects would best fit their team's culture and goals. The NCAA does place limits on the number and location of camps in which our Pitt coaches can



work. Please visit pittsportsamps.com for a list of all upcoming camps.

If you have NCAA compliance questions or want more information on anything shared above, please reach out to the Pitt compliance office at compliance@athletics.pitt.edu.



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HERE WE GO!

“We have talked all year about the fact that we were going to face adversity, and emotion was going to be a big part of it. I am really happy our girls were able to stay focused and take one moment at a time.”

—Head Coach Emily Boissonneault

P

Pitt lacrosse launched its inaugural season in dramatic fashion with a 9-8 overtime win over Duquesne on a sudden victory goal by Carlie Leach on Friday, Feb. 11, at Highmark Stadium in Pittsburgh. Senior Kierin Ratliff-Kailbourne, a member of Pitt’s 2019 National Championship club team, anchored the Panther offense with four goals, while Leach found the back of the net twice. Graduate transfer and four-time All-America selection Paige Petty added a goal and an assist, while local product Karina Latsko came up big in the fourth quarter with six draw controls. 📍



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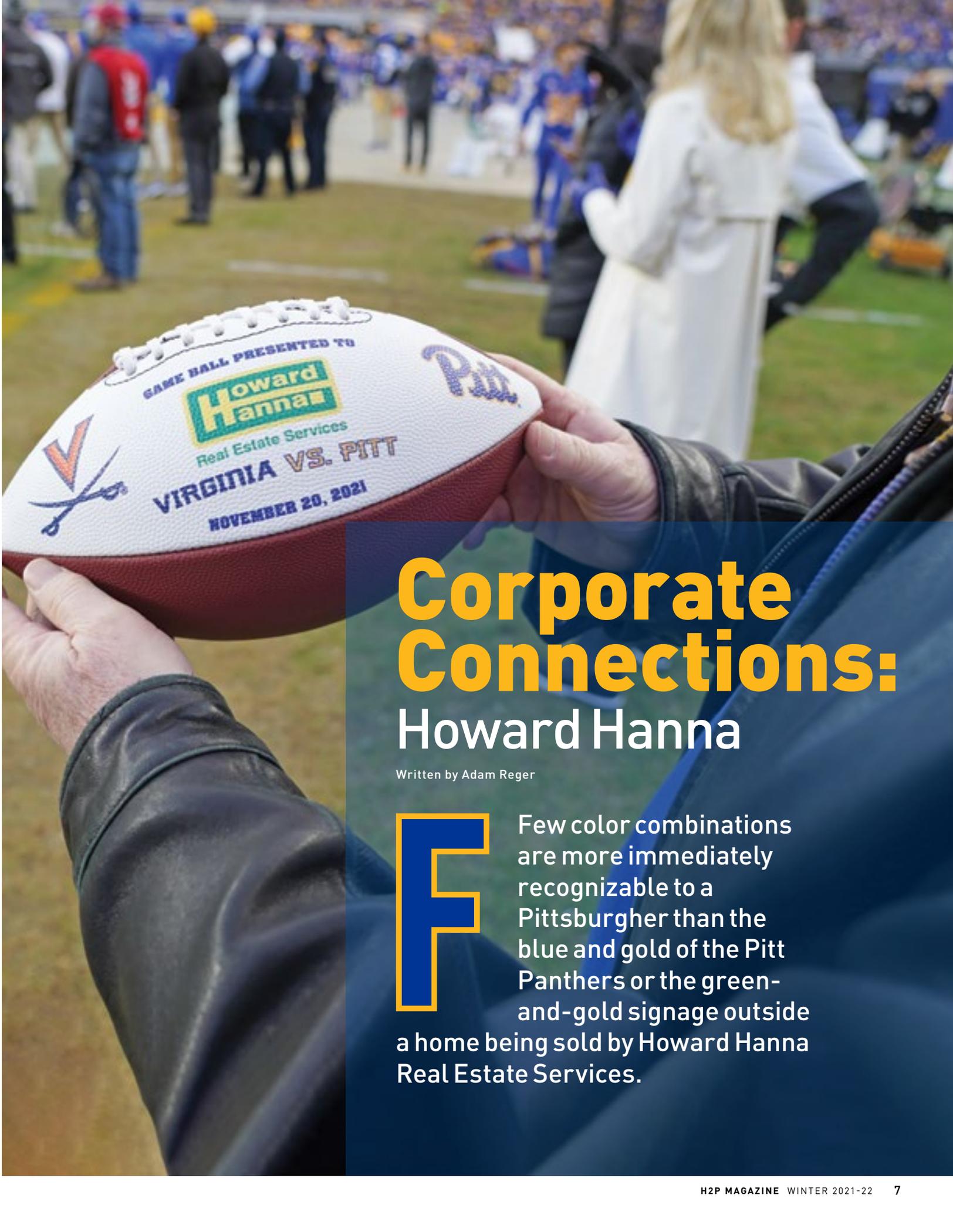
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Corporate Connections: Howard Hanna

Written by Adam Reger

Few color combinations are more immediately recognizable to a Pittsburgher than the blue and gold of the Pitt Panthers or the green-and-gold signage outside a home being sold by Howard Hanna Real Estate Services.

Long connected by their deep hometown roots, the University of Pittsburgh and Howard Hanna have now officially teamed up for a multiyear partnership that makes Howard Hanna the Official Realtor of Pitt Athletics.

The alliance got off to a terrific start with the 2021 season, which saw the Panthers capture an ACC championship and earn a berth in the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl. Howard Hanna served as the presenting sponsor of Pitt football's Junior Captain program in conjunction with the Howard Hanna Children's Free Care Fund, a long-running campaign that has raised more than \$18 million to provide medical care for children who need it, regardless of their ability to pay for those services.

The brokerage's iconic branding decorated the Panthers' tunnel during their Nov. 20 home game against the University of Virginia. And at halftime of that game, Howard "Hoddy" Hanna III, chairman of Hanna Holdings, Inc., presented a check to Director of Athletics Heather Lyke for \$20,691 for the Pitt Student-Athlete Success Fund, a \$57 donation for each of the Panthers' first downs during the season.

"Howard Hanna is deeply rooted and respected in Pittsburgh, and its long-standing commitment to the University of Pittsburgh is well recognized," says Lyke. "Extending that partnership to athletics is a tremendous opportunity to work together to benefit the children in our communities and work toward our goal of comprehensive excellence."

The formal partnership between Pitt and Howard Hanna cements a long-term connection between the University and the brokerage, which is the nation's top privately owned broker and the largest home seller in Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York. Founder Howard Hanna Jr., who passed away in September

"Howard Hanna is deeply rooted and respected in Pittsburgh, and its long-standing commitment to the University of Pittsburgh is well recognized," says Lyke. "Extending that partnership to athletics is a tremendous opportunity to work together to benefit the children in our communities and work toward our goal of comprehensive excellence."

2021 at the age of 101, studied marketing at Pitt and then returned after serving in World War II to earn a master's degree in business marketing. In 1957, with an initial investment of just \$40, he opened the real estate firm's first office in Oakland, within hailing distance of the campus that meant so much to him.

A number of Hanna's children and grandchildren have gone on to attend

the University. Pitt named Hanna a Legacy Laureate in 2013 and in 2019 designated him a Distinguished Alumni Fellow in recognition of his success in growing the firm into the nation's largest independently owned real estate business, one that today employs more than 13,500 people in 11 states.



Annie Hanna Engel and Howard "Hoddy" Hanna III at the Pitt-Virginia game



Flanked by Pitt spirit squad members are (from left): F. Duffy Hanna, Heather Lyke, Howard "Hoddy" Hanna III, and Annie Hanna Engel.

Founder Howard Hanna Jr., who passed away in September 2021 at the age of 101, studied marketing at Pitt and then returned after serving in World War II to earn a master's degree in business marketing.

Hanna was—and posthumously remains—a member of the Cathedral of Learning Society, which recognizes those who have given \$1 million or more to Pitt.

The family has long sponsored two need-based endowed scholarship funds for students studying business.

That charitable support lives on through Hanna's family and the real estate firm he founded.

"For generations, the Hanna family and Pitt have had a very strong relationship, and we are thrilled to finally make it official through our new partnership," says F. Duffy Hanna (LAW '00), president of Howard Hanna Financial Services. "From 1957, when the first Howard Hanna office opened in Oakland, to the beginning of our partnership in the 2021-22 season, we are proud to be affiliated with the University."

For the Pitt Department of Athletics, the partnership ties the University's teams and programs to a

well-recognized and highly regarded business.

"This partnership will highlight Howard Hanna's commitment to the Pitt Panthers and bring awareness to the company's services and community initiatives," says Laila Brock, vice president of sponsorship sales and operations for Pitt Sports Marketing. "We are very excited to have them join our roster of official partners."

Upcoming promotional plans include recognizing Howard Hanna employees at Pitt basketball games and an "Upgrade Your Real Estate" contest, through which Panther fans can enter to win a VIP experience at the Petersen Events Center, including

a private club-level table at select men's basketball games.

With 19 active varsity sports programs and more than 475 student-athletes, Pitt Athletics offers abundant additional opportunities for joint promotions in the future.

"We are so excited to support and share in the energy of the greater Pitt community and of Pitt Athletics," says Annie Hanna Engel (LAW '97), chief legal officer, Hanna Holdings, Inc., and president and chief operating officer, Howard Hanna Insurance Services. "From our family to the extensive Pitt family network, we are proud to support the home team of our hometown." 

EVERY DAY IS GAME DAY.



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OF PITT ATHLETICS

*National rankings derived from the REAL Trends 500 report; based on 2020 transaction sides. 



TRADITION MARCHES ON

Written by Kara Henderson

The Pitt Band is more than just the beating heart of the crowd; to its members and supporters, it's a family that, on Oct. 14, 2021, celebrated 110 years of excellence and tradition.

"Anything that sustains itself for [more than] 100 years has value," says **J. Roger Glunt** (BUS '60), a Wilkinsburg, Pa., native whose high school goal was to become a Pitt Panther and join the Pitt Band. His wish came true in 1956. As one of the first trumpet heralders and a section leader, he says that being in the band gave him both life lessons and opportunities.

"I could fill a book with proud moments," says the emeritus trustee and former president of the Pitt Alumni Association, who recalls the band's leading a 1958 parade for President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Jack R. Anderson (A&S '70) is a former Pitt Band director whose passion for the program Jack began with a childhood rooted in music and University traditions. At age 3, he sat on the sidelines while his father, also named Jack Anderson, worked as Pitt's assistant band director. In 1968, he joined the band, where he met his wife, Peggy (A&S '70), and Glunt, who has been his friend for more than 50 years. His two daughters later played in the band as well.

Whether members have spent four or 40 years in the band, the consensus is that the experience is unlike any other.

"Band has given me amazing opportunities to do things I never would've gotten to do, like perform in front of tens of thousands of people," says current drum major Jack Bailey. "Band taught me how to build a strong connection and interact with people from all walks of life."

Bursting through the tunnel, the adrenaline rush from the blaring trumpets, throwing cookies to the crowd—these are some of the special traditions that Bailey, a senior microbiology major, says he'll miss. So, too, will assistant drum major De'Jovia Davis.

"Pitt Band has been the best part of my experience here," says Davis, a senior urban studies major, Pitt Pathfinder and basketball manager. Davis is the first Black woman to hold the position of assistant drum major and, she says, "I don't want to be the last."

She recounts many pivotal moments when the "band family" made all the difference, including one particularly difficult day in her sophomore year, shortly after the death of her mother.

It was Parents' Day, and her eyes welled up with tears as she watched friends and bandmates embrace their loved ones. In an instant, a young kid stood before her, dressed as a drum major, and asked for a photograph. She was comforted by seeing "the



impact we make with our music in the larger community and being part of something bigger than me," Davis says.

The Pitt Band's commitment to supporting its members is a testament to the organization's impact beyond music and likely why former members have extolled the band's virtues.

"The Pitt Band truly is a family and is dedicated to the spirit of Pitt," says Anderson. "It gives me an immense sense of pride and has been my family for a long time. I don't know anything different and wouldn't do anything different."



Emma Finucane, a senior communication major and president of the Panther Pitt student section, attests to the spirit of the band and its importance for students.

“The band epitomizes Pitt pride,” says Finucane. “When [the band members] leave their seats for halftime, there’s a noticeable shift in energy. They have an integral role and impact the

student game-day experience.”

Current band director Brad Townsend came to Pitt from Oregon State University in 2013, drawn by the exceptional leadership capabilities of the band’s students. Over the years, he has grown especially proud of the band’s work ethic and ability to connect with the broader Pitt community.

“We’re a bridge between the fans and the athletes,” says Townsend. “We’re concerned about doing the best

show and being a positive force at a Pitt game, win or lose.”

For Bailey and others, the long-lasting relationships and shared experiences are what’s made the Pitt Band so remarkable.

“Band is a place where hundreds of people come together and share a love and a passion for music and performance and together make unforgettable experiences and lifelong friendships,” says Bailey. 🐾

From Student Athlete to Community Advocate

Written by Josh Rowntree

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When Ron Idoko, a native of the Bronx, was looking for schools that could help him chase a premed dream, he whittled down his list to four options.

“USC was too far, Miami was too hot and Buffalo was too cold,” says Idoko. “And Pitt seemed to be around the right distance and [had] the right weather.”

Despite a love for athletics, that wasn’t at the forefront of his decision-making process.

“Growing up in New York City, it’s a basketball town,” he says. “I really didn’t know that much about college football until I got to Pitt. I only played one year of high school football, and that’s

because I couldn’t make the basketball team. When I got to Pitt, I realized that college football is much more popular than I realized.”

Idoko was enamored with college football’s pageantry and with how Pitt got to play games at Heinz Field. He thought that he could translate his athletic 6’2” frame to the football field in some way and joined the Panthers as a walk-on defensive lineman in 2002. But his academic focus quickly turned away from premed.

“I realized I didn’t like the sight of blood and didn’t like touching people like that,” he jokes.

So he changed his major to communication, and that’s when a love for public service began to blossom.



“A lot of my interest in learning about communication centered around being able to take time with myself and sit with my thoughts and realize the differences in terms of how I grew up, where I grew up and how I interacted with others,” Idoko says.

He began to analyze systemic hardships, particularly in communities of color, and how to initiate change through equity-centered education and policies.

With that in mind, Idoko wanted to dive deeper into secondary education.

After graduating, he worked at a local for-profit school for five years. It was there that his eyes were opened even more to social injustices.

“I learned more about systemic issues—how people are taken advantage of and placed into insurmountable debt and given promises that aren’t fulfilled,” he says.

“Some institutions in the for-profit sector are designed to really leech onto people who have little and put them in even worse positions.”

So Idoko got out and made his way back to Pitt, where he joined the Pitt Alumni Association as its director for alumni clubs and groups, traveling the country to meet with Pitt alumni and learn of the expansive reach of the University’s graduates. He also became involved with Equipoise, a group that represents Pitt’s Black faculty and staff.

“We tried to further identify ways to channel needed resources to create an environment to retain Black folks,” he says.

That lit a spark in Idoko

to make his life’s work making Pitt a more welcoming and inclusive university for all. In April 2019, he was more than prepared to take the reins as diversity and multicultural program manager in Pitt’s Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

Idoko freely admits that the University of Pittsburgh has not been immune to issues of systemic inequities in its past. But he feels that significant progress has been made toward changing that, and it starts with Pitt’s leadership.

“At the University, you have a lot of folks who are committed to addressing issues of systemic inequity,” he says. “Having willing partners and collaborators was really empowering for me. I’ve been able to create a bunch of programs and town halls that give people the opportunity to learn about issues that are





impacting our community that aren't always self-evident."

Primarily, Idoko has focused on injustices in the criminal justice, education and health care sectors.

"We have a world of expertise and talent," he says. "If we can focus people on these issues and understand how they manifest, we can address them collectively."

Idoko has played a major role in Panthers United, a program that strives to promote an environment of inclusion for student-athletes and staff, one that has been particularly vital as social justice issues have come to the forefront in today's society. He has facilitated educational programs for the Department of Athletics and advised on diversity, equity and inclusion strategy.

"We've been really active in trying to identify resources, whether it's by way of education for staff and students or thinking about programming to address concerns and challenges that students have brought to the table," he says. "We've seen more students get active in terms of calling out societal issues. And we want to support them."

"There's been a much more concerted and thoughtful effort across the University that has been really well received but also is sort of a work in progress. There's more work to do."

Idoko is captivated by the growth of current student-athletes and their

willingness to speak out against inequity.

"Their ability to talk about these issues openly, consistently and proactively, it's just leaps and bounds from where I was [at their age]," he says. "Students feel much more empowered to call these issues out."

Idoko not only leads diversity, equity and inclusion programs for the University but also teaches public services classes in Pitt's College of General Studies. It's not a path that he dreamed of when he was sitting in those same classrooms or going through those long practices on the football field two decades ago.

"I ended up becoming an academic. I never would've imagined that," Idoko says. "But to me, what it speaks to is the power of knowledge, the power of education."

The opportunities he received as a student-athlete at Pitt have set him up to make a difference at Pitt as a whole and for the individual students he works with daily.

Ultimately, it's his hope that the lessons he has learned and relayed to Pitt students will spread to wherever life takes them and will impact a world that shouldn't be resistant to change.

"The things that we don't know are often the things that sometimes position us to not succeed or move through life the way that we had hoped," he says. "If we focus on what it means to create equitable human connections, to embrace our differences and actively discuss these things, and realize that there's no harm in talking about the challenges that come with difference, we would be in such a better position as a society." 

Standing for Social Justice

Athletes Receive ACC UNITE Award

In September 2021, the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) announced the recipients of the inaugural ACC UNITE Award, which was created to honor individuals affiliated with the league who have made an impact in the areas of racial and social justice.

The award was created by ACC's Committee for Racial and Social Justice, Champions of Racial Equity (CORE), and further developed and approved by the conference's 15 member institutions. It will be presented annually to individuals who:

- **best exemplify ACC CORE's mission** to promote and encourage racial equity **and social justice** through education, partnerships, engagement and advocacy;
- **have helped to create meaningful, lasting change** by improving systems, organizational structures, policies, practices and attitudes;
- **have been a pioneer;** and/or
- **helped to pave the way for minorities** either at the institution or in the community.

The inaugural awards celebrate the first male and female athletes of color to integrate the athletic teams at each current ACC institution.

Pitt's 2021 UNITE Award Winners:

Male (1911):

Hubbard Hollensworth, track and field
Harry Ray Wooten, track and field

Female (1974):

Terry Akrie, track and field
Rosalind Alford, track and field
Willa Bentley, tennis coach
Michele Bressant, track and field
Alexis Grandy, volleyball
Elsetta Marshall, gymnastics
Leslie Nichols, tennis
Kim Phillips, track and field
Sheree Scott, gymnastics
Phyllis Singleton, basketball



We Are the Champions:

The 2021
Pitt Panthers
Football Team



Written by R.J. Sepich

F For the past seven seasons, under the leadership of head coach Pat Narduzzi, the University of Pittsburgh football

program has relentlessly chased its first Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) crown.

During training camp, after practices and before games, the Panthers articulated that goal by coming together, raising their fists in the air and shouting, “ACC

champs!” on the count of three.

What was on the mind of every Pitt player, coach and staff member for years finally

became reality on the evening of Dec. 4, 2021, at Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, N.C.



Coach
Pat Narduzzi

A Heisman Trophy finalist quarterback, a Biletnikoff Award-winning wide receiver and a collection of committed veterans and talented underclassmen combined to do what no Pitt football team had ever done before: win a conference championship outright.

The scene in Charlotte that Saturday night was straight out of a dream for the thousands of Pitt fans in attendance. The belief in the possibility of witnessing that moment is what drives so many to keep coming back each fall Saturday in support of their favorite college football team. There is nothing like it.

Narduzzi raised the ACC Football Championship trophy aloft. Then Kenny Pickett hoisted it above his head, followed by the other captains and the game's most valuable player, Erick Hallett II.

Each time the trophy was lifted toward the Carolina sky, Pitt fans released another roar, exorcising years of frustrations and disappointments experienced in following a program that has been consistently respectable for a long time without quite matching the glory years of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Finally, a new generation of Pitt football fans knew what it feels like to be champions.

What made that feeling even better was knowing that there was nothing fluky about the Panthers' reaching the ACC mountaintop. The 2021 Pitt team featured several national award winners and a dozen All-ACC players. The roster was rich with talent and leadership.

Of course, Pickett and Jordan Addison deservedly grabbed many of the headlines throughout the season. But Pitt's squad included so many contributors, from seventh-year seniors John Petrishen and Tre Tipton to one of the nation's most experienced linebacker units to a group of running backs willing to play any role necessary to help the team win.



The Panthers once again boasted one of the nation's top pass rushes, with Calijah Kancey and Habakkuk Baldonado striking fear into opposing offenses on a weekly basis. Cal Adomitis won the Patrick Mannelly Award as the best long snapper in the nation and received first-team All-America honors. Lucas Krull and Gavin Bartholomew emerged as a formidable duo at tight end. No matter who was on the field, the offensive line gelled and helped to produce the most prolific scoring offense in program history.

Every positional group, every individual played a significant role. Even the walk-ons and scout team often received praise from the coaches for helping the starters to get prepared for games during practices.

The team's 2021 motto—We Not Me—was encapsulated perfectly in the ACC Championship victory over Wake Forest when the defensive backs played their best game of the season, intercepting the Demon Deacons' star quarterback, Sam Hartman, four times and shutting out their opposition in the final three quarters.



The decisive 45-21 win in the conference title game not only proved that Pitt was without a doubt the best team in the ACC but also why it should be considered among the nation's elite. A landmark top-15 finish in the national rankings was secured.



The decisive 45-21 win in the conference title game not only proved that Pitt was without a doubt the best team in the ACC but also why it should be considered among the nation's elite. A landmark top-15 finish in the national rankings was secured.



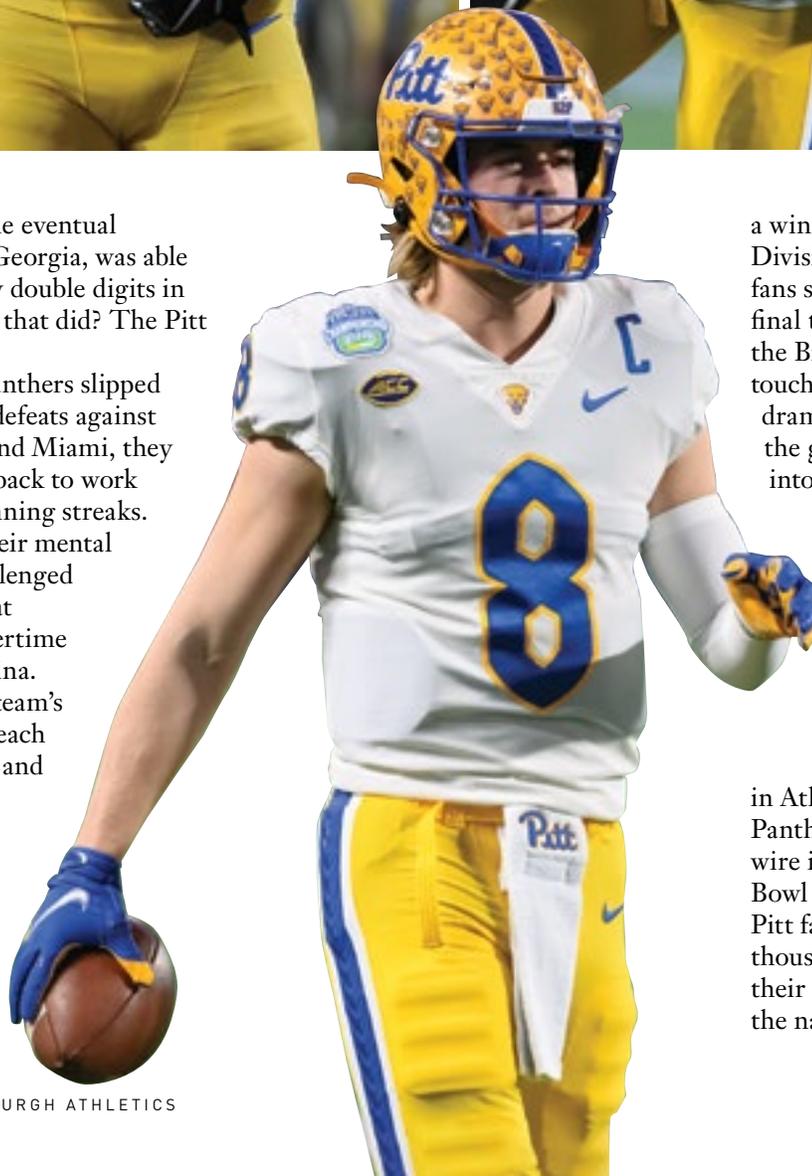
Lopsided wins became the norm for the Panthers. Pitt dismantled Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Georgia Tech and Duke with offensive explosions before locking down Virginia Tech and Syracuse with dominant defensive



displays. Not even the eventual national champion, Georgia, was able to defeat Clemson by double digits in 2021. The only team that did? The Pitt Panthers.

Even when the Panthers slipped up in disappointing defeats against Western Michigan and Miami, they responded by going back to work and starting new winning streaks. They also showed their mental toughness when challenged with adversity early at Tennessee and in overtime against North Carolina. The reward for this team's persistence was that each game became bigger and bigger.

That culminated on Senior Day in November against Virginia in front of an expectant Heinz Field crowd that knew



a win would clinch the ACC Coastal Division crown for the Panthers. Pitt fans said goodbye to Pickett for the final time. And Addison said hello to the Biletnikoff Award by catching four touchdowns that night, including a dramatic 62-yard touchdown late in the game that sent the Pitt faithful into a frenzy.

N

No Pitt fan in attendance will ever forget that night or the night in Charlotte or even the scene

in Atlanta, when a banged-up group of Panthers battled Michigan State to the wire in a thrilling Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl at Mercedes-Benz Stadium. Pitt fans once again showed up in the thousands and boisterously supported their team in a New Year's Six bowl on the national stage.



No Pitt fan in attendance will ever forget that night or the night in Charlotte or even the scene in Atlanta, when a banged-up group of Panthers battled Michigan State to the wire in a thrilling Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl at Mercedes-Benz Stadium. Pitt fans once again showed up in the thousands and boisterously supported their team in a New Year's Six bowl on the national stage.



Those who followed the 2021 Pitt Panthers will always remember a football season for the ages.

They will remember Pickett's Heisman campaign; the Brandon Hill interception at Tennessee; the Jared Wayne catches at Virginia Tech; the SirVocea Dennis pick six against Clemson; the overtime monsoon versus North Carolina; and the historic milestone moments against Virginia, Syracuse and Wake Forest.

And we know they can't wait for Sept. 1, 2022, when Pitt and West Virginia begin a new season full of anticipation with the renewal of the Backyard Brawl rivalry. Let's create more memories. Hail to Pitt! 🍷



And Then There Were **Four**

The 2021
Pitt Panthers
Volleyball Team

Written by Carly Weisenbach

It's not easy making history. It takes hard work, perseverance and resilience. When the Pitt volleyball team made history not once but twice in an eight-month span during the 2021 calendar year, the Panthers solidified themselves among the top programs in the nation.



Coach
Dan Fisher

NCAA



Kayla Lund

It's clear that Fisher has a dynasty on his hands, as Pitt reached the 30-win mark for the third time in four seasons.



Eight months later, the Panthers came closer to a national title than any women's team in University of Pittsburgh history, reaching the Final Four for the first time. Pitt took down UMBC, Penn State, Kansas and Purdue on the way to its appearance against Nebraska in the national semifinal in front of more than 16,000 spectators at Nationwide Arena in Columbus, Ohio.

From the beginning, it was apparent that the 2021 season would be special for the Panthers. Super-senior co-captains Kayla Lund and Chinaza Ndee decided to use their extra year of eligibility to remain with the team and pursue another shot at the national championship. With two impactful transfers added

to the mix—middle blocker Serena Gray and outside hitter Lektor Member-Meneh—ninth-year head coach Dan Fisher had stacked the deck. The foursome of Panthers earned All-America recognition from the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) at the conclusion of the year, and Lund became the program's first-ever All-America First Team selection.

It's clear that Fisher has a dynasty on his hands, as Pitt reached

the 30-win mark for the third time in four seasons. The Panthers completed the 2021 campaign with a 30-4 record and seven wins against AVCA top 25 opponents. Since 2018, Pitt has won more matches than any other NCAA Division I women's volleyball program in the nation, with 109 wins over four seasons. 🏓

HALL OF FAME



The A-List



After a year's postponement due to COVID-19 concerns, the Pitt Athletics Hall of Fame Class of 2020 induction event—a dinner at Heinz Field—was held on Oct. 22, 2021. Honored at the dinner were the following inductees:

- Jennifer Bruce (women's basketball)
- Chantee Earl (women's track and field)
- Bobby Grier (football)
- Craig "Ironhead" Heyward (football; posthumous)
- Brandin Knight (men's basketball)
- Ken Macha (baseball)
- Curtis Martin (football)
- Bob Peck (football; posthumous)
- Jackie Sherrill (football coach)
- Arnie Sowell (men's track and field)
- Glenn "Pop" Warner (football coach; posthumous)

Three members of the 2020 class—Donna DeMarino Sanft (gymnastics student-athlete and coach), Ann Marie Lucanie (volleyball) and Pat Santoro (wrestling)—were unable to attend the event and will be honored with the Class of 2022.

Established in 2018, the Pitt Athletics Hall of Fame honors student-athletes, coaches, teams and other members of the University of Pittsburgh community who have performed with distinction and been instrumental in the success of Pitt athletics. 

To see more event photos, visit pittsburghpanthers.com/HOF.



Pictured from left, Jackie Sherrill, Bobby Grier, Ken Macha, Arnie Sowell, Chantee Earl, Jennifer Bruce, Brandin Knight and Curtis Martin





The Pitt men's soccer team enjoyed great success during its 2021 season, highlighted by an ACC Coastal Division co-championship and a second-straight trip to the quarterfinals in the NCAA championship tournament. Finishing with a 13-5-2 record, the Panthers set a new program record in total assists with 63 and tied their second-highest season total for goals with 52.

Advantage: **Pitt**

Written by Nick Macdonald

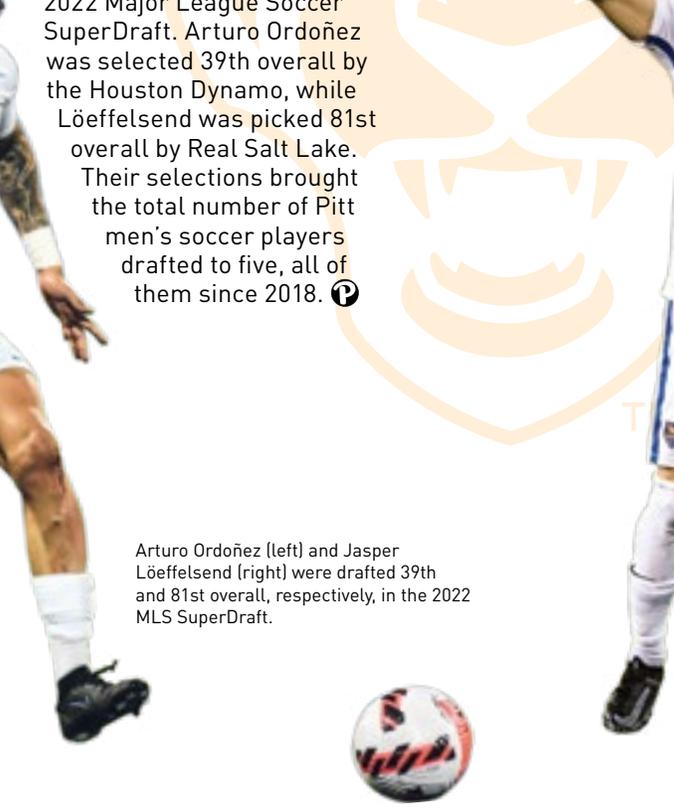


Local product Michael Sullivan (Deer Lakes High School) and, right, Alexander Dexter celebrating a goal with Jackson Walti

Ambrose Urbanic Field proved to be a tough place for opponents to play, as the team finished with an 11-1 record at home and posted a conference-best 19-match home winning streak at home from Oct. 7, 2019, to Nov. 10, 2021. Members of the team earned multiple postseason accolades, including eight All-ACC selections and four United Soccer Coaches South All-Region honors.

For the second consecutive season, Jasper Löeffelsend was named ACC Defensive Player of the Year and Head Coach Jay Vidovich was named ACC Coach of the Year. Löeffelsend also was named a United Soccer Coaches Second Team All-American and College Soccer News First Team All-American, becoming the

first Pitt men's soccer player to earn multiple All-American accolades in a career.

The Panthers earned a national ranking in the United Soccer Coaches poll every week during the 2021 campaign, extending a streak of 31 straight weeks ranked with 26 in the Top 10. The men's soccer program also saw two players drafted in the 2022 Major League Soccer SuperDraft. Arturo Ordoñez was selected 39th overall by the Houston Dynamo, while Löeffelsend was picked 81st overall by Real Salt Lake. Their selections brought the total number of Pitt men's soccer players drafted to five, all of them since 2018. 



Arturo Ordoñez (left) and Jasper Löeffelsend (right) were drafted 39th and 81st overall, respectively, in the 2022 MLS SuperDraft.



The team celebrates in front of the scoreboard after defeating Virginia Tech 4-1 to clinch a share of its second-straight ACC Coastal Division crown.

Right: Bertin Jacquesson and Valentin Noel celebrate after scoring a goal.

Below: Goalkeeper Nico Campuzano





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A Meaningful Time for King and the Community:

Deaf Awareness Night

Written by Josh Rowntree

Liatu King's early impact on the University of Pittsburgh women's basketball team has been loud. But before she arrived on campus, much of her life revolved around silence.



K

King is a CODA, a child of a deaf adult. Her mother, Patricia Oporum, is deaf, and before King spoke, she learned how to communicate with American Sign Language (ASL) at just 9 months old.

King is now a sophomore forward for the Panthers, but as a child, she frequently had to interpret for her mother, whether that be at medical appointments or other important situations in an adult's life.

"To think about her growing up in an environment where there's no sound, and then you get thrown

into the world and you better be able to communicate, it tells you so much about who she is, her composure and her maturity," women's basketball head coach Lance White says. "She's had to communicate for her family a lot."

King and her mother were provided with an ASL interpreter when she came to Pitt on a recruiting visit in high school. Shortly after she committed to Pitt, Department of Athletics leadership began to think of a way to honor King's journey and her mother with a Deaf Awareness Night.

Because of COVID-19 restrictions, the event was pushed to Dec. 1, 2021, when the Panthers beat Rutgers 58-50 in the Big Ten/ACC Challenge.



Opurum—who traveled in for the game from the Washington, D.C., area—watched as King spoke to her verbally and in ASL, finishing the speech by signing “I love you.”

“She just came to tears of joy,” King says of her mother. “She was overwhelmed with emotions of how special Pitt made her feel.”

Fans received shirts that had “Pitt” spelled out in ASL on the front. During the pregame introductions, players signed their names. Pitt also displayed important facts about ASL and the deaf community on the video boards during time-outs.

“I was excited because it was people getting to know who I am and my background,” says King, who scored 11 points in the win. “And it was Pitt showing how much family means here.”

King admits that the buildup to the night was a bit different for her. She received multiple interview requests and filmed a video that was posted to Pitt’s social media pages in which she talked about her relationship with her mother.

The video aired during the game, and Opurum—who traveled in for the game from the Washington, D.C., area—watched as King spoke to her verbally and in ASL, finishing the speech by signing “I love you.”

“She just came to tears of joy,” King says of her mother. “She was overwhelmed with emotions of how special Pitt made her feel. She was very appreciative of everything. That 15 seconds of fame meant a lot to her.”

While the days leading up to and the night of the event were a bit more chaotic than usual for the easygoing King, it was the aftermath that really

caught her by surprise.

“Once [the video] was public, it blew up over the basketball world, with [popular sports social media company] Overtime reposting it,” King says. “At that point, I got a lot of [private messages] from people I didn’t even know, saying they related to my message, how it inspired them, how they wanted to learn ASL or were learning ASL.”

“It was a lot of encouraging words on how I shouldn’t give up and how, when they were younger, they were going through the same things.”

King estimates that she received more than 100 private messages on social media from people who could relate to her story or wanted to show support.

“A lot of people were reposting it,” she says. “On Instagram and Twitter, I was getting a lot of love. My mom said that Facebook was a whole other thing.”

“That whole night was a success. I’m just looking forward to bigger and better things going forward.”

King and Pitt Athletics leaders are already thinking about how to make the event an annual tradition and how to make it even bigger. White is fully on board, too.

“We talk so much in our program about understanding how we all have different ways we grew up and backgrounds,” he says. “She’s such

a special kid and really is a great example of who we are as a program and a great student-athlete.”

Ultimately, King hopes that her life experience reverberates through the ASL and deaf community and beyond.

“It’s a positive message to those who had ASL as their first language,” she says. “And it’s a positive message for anybody. It doesn’t even have to be someone who is a CODA—it could be for someone who has two hearing parents and just wants to hear an inspiring story.”

“It’s a story of never giving up and always trying to persevere. And you never know someone’s story until they tell you.” 🗣️

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Armando Sciuлло wrestled at the University of Pittsburgh in the early 1990s under the tutelage of legendary head coach Rande Stottlemeyer. Today, Sciuлло serves as chief of surgery at AHN Grove City and as an adjunct clinical assistant professor at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine. He also chairs the board of the Pittsburgh Wrestling Club, a private nonprofit organization focused on providing world-class training opportunities for wrestlers with Olympic goals. He; his wife, Beth (a former Pitt cheerleader); and their three children live in Grove City, Pa., but drive to Pittsburgh often to attend Pitt wrestling matches as well as football and basketball games.



What degree did you earn at Pitt and when did you graduate?

I earned a Bachelor of Science and graduated in 1993.

How did your Pitt education and athletics experience prepare you for your career?

My experiences at Pitt taught me how to persevere in the face of adversity. I learned how to use the expectations and commitments as an athlete and apply them to my everyday goals. Being a Division I athlete was no walk in the park. Not to be cliché, but after being a collegiate wrestler, [everything] else in life seemed to be attainable with the right mindset. When I look at where I am today, I think back to my mentors and role models at Pitt. [Coach] Rande Stottlemeyer had a direct impact on how I tackled life after college.

Why did you choose to attend the University of Pittsburgh?

I grew up in Greenfield, right next to Oakland, and graduated from Central Catholic High School. So I grew up looking up to Dan Marino and saw how he succeeded at Pitt. I love being in Western Pennsylvania, and Pitt was it!

What is your favorite memory from your days as a student-athlete at Pitt?

I'd have to say that would be the year Coaches Stottlemeyer and [Jim] Beichner asked me to be Santa Claus and pass out the gifts at the team Christmas party.

What has been your greatest professional accomplishment thus far in your career?

Becoming a surgeon

“Medical school is tough; however, the work ethic and focus that I got through wrestling helped me to succeed. For that, I feel indebted to Pitt. I wanted to find a way to give back.”

Do you stay in touch with your teammates from your competition years? What do those relationships mean to you?

I have stayed in close contact with my teammates. We definitely have a bond. There is something about beating on each other every day that builds that bond. I love those guys as brothers.

What would you say was your best athletic moment at Pitt?

As a walk-on, it was earning my first letter.

What is one piece of advice you would give to current student-athletes?

Enjoy the time as a student-athlete and embrace the “grind.” It won’t be easy, and it will require sacrifice and hard work, but it will prepare you for life.

What was your favorite thing to do on campus when you weren’t in the classroom or involved in your athletic activities?

Going to Zelda’s and CJ’s; social bonding

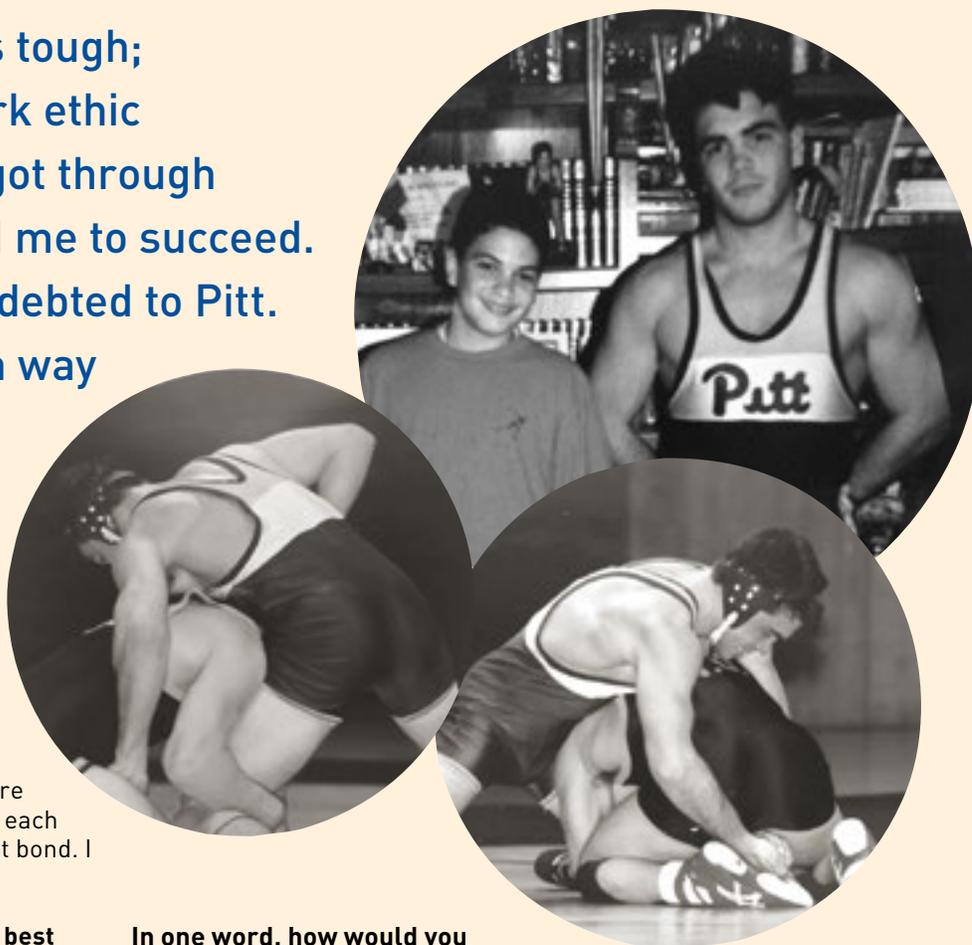
In one word, how would you describe your experience as a Pitt student-athlete?

Unforgettable

You are very involved with Forever Panthers alumni and with keeping current Pitt wrestlers connected to Pitt. Why is it important for you?

First of all, my participation in athletics actually helped me to get into medical school. To elaborate on that, I struggled academically, but my medical school valued a well-rounded student. Athletics is a part of that. Medical school is tough; however, the work ethic and focus that I got through wrestling helped me to succeed. For that, I feel indebted to Pitt. I wanted to find a way to give back.

As for the current wrestlers, I want them to realize that Pitt is a stepping-stone for them in life. It will be the foundation of where they go next. It’s amazing how you will cross paths with friends and alumni and how this will affect your growth and success. They will need to know Pitt will be there for them after graduation, and Forever Panthers is a way to stay involved. Your time in college is a very special time and will give you some great memories, but it doesn’t have to stop at graduation. Stay involved, help where you can. Succeed in life and help the next generation achieve their goals. 📌





YEARS IN THE MAKING:

A Historic Gift



Chris Bickell (A&S '97) always wanted to be an agent for change for his beloved Pitt football program. He felt it as an undergraduate, supporting the Panthers through thick and thin. He felt it again years later, with the program consistently on the precipice of a breakthrough. He vowed to make a difference, if ever given the opportunity, to do whatever he possibly could to help Pitt once again boast a championship team on the gridiron. And in 2021, Bickell did just that.

Written by Chris Cappella



On Sept. 2, 2021, Pitt's Department of Athletics announced a \$20 million gift to the football program from Chris Bickell. The unprecedented support is the single-largest donation in Pitt Athletics

history. Half of the gift will be used immediately to enhance the training, nutrition and learning environment infrastructure for Pitt football, while the remainder will be placed in an endowment to support such efforts in perpetuity.

In recognition of this historic gift, the head football coaching position at Pitt will now be named the Chris Bickell '97 Head Football Coach.

"I really felt like we were in a time where someone needed to put a spark in the program," he says of his gift. "I wanted to show people that there was someone leading the charge to reignite and fund a championship team."

Bickell's journey to making this momentous gift is a full-circle tale, much like his professional career.

Originally from the outskirts of Philadelphia, Bickell grew up in a Penn State household, opting instead for Pitt due to the University's academic reputation and rich athletics history as well as his own desire to be different.

At Pitt, Bickell joined the club hockey team, settling in as a goal-scoring wing and being named co-captain in his senior year; excelled in the classroom; and set the foundation for a successful future as a businessperson.

He also joined a Greek organization, a fortuitous decision that set off a chain of events impacting the Pitt community more than two decades later.

As a student, Bickell was always looking for a way to stretch a dollar. He discovered that the ATM at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System building across the street from his fraternity house didn't charge withdrawal fees, and it became his go-to spot to take out spending money.

Less than a decade later, he'd be working with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs through his company, Patriots Technology, which helped to process health care applications.



As Bickell excelled professionally, his passion for Pitt football grew, and his desire for the program to succeed started burning even more.

Like many young alums, Bickell started giving to Pitt in small amounts—\$50 here, \$100 there, whatever he could to make a difference.

Following his work with Patriot Technologies, Bickell served as a founding partner of Liberty IT Solutions, again working with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Today he is CEO of WellHive, a firm that seamlessly connects military veterans with health care services.

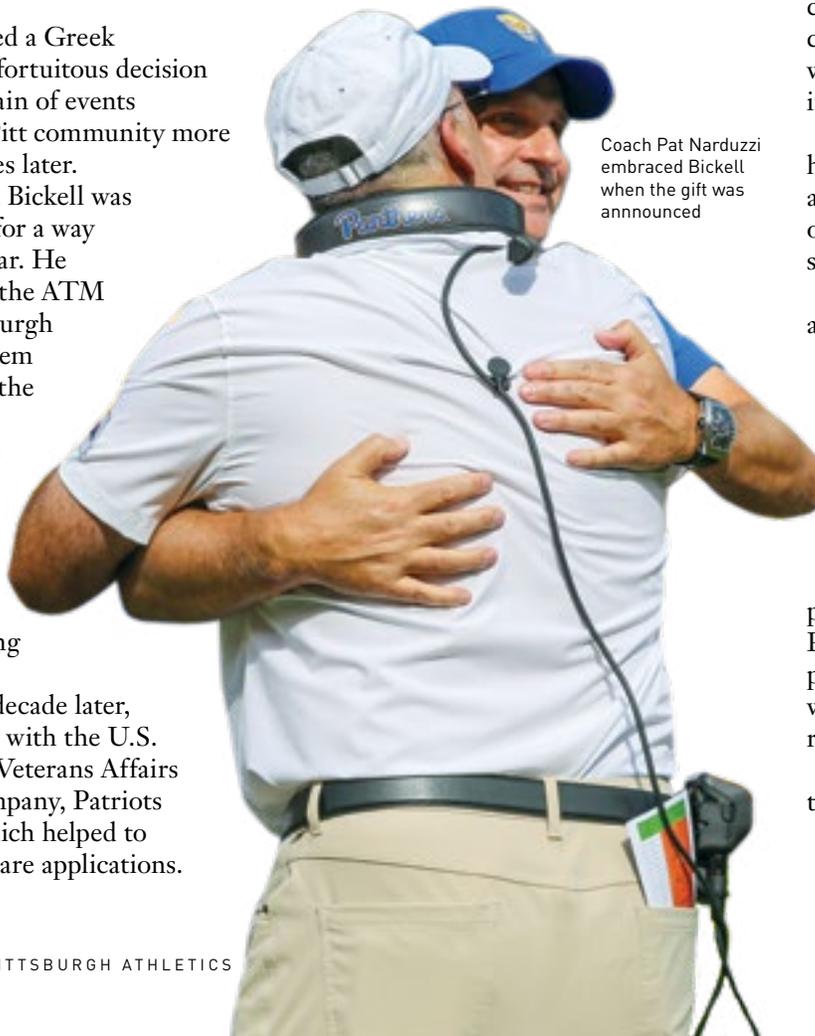
Bickell found success in business because he is a big thinker, thoughtful about the needs of others and is continuously pushing limits. The companies he has founded and worked for have had a transformative impact on veterans.

Those same concepts motivated his historic gift to Pitt. Bickell saw a need and wanted to be the first of many donors to transform the student-athlete experience at Pitt.

"College athletics is a lot like any other business," he says. "You need money and great leaders to succeed. You start looking around and thinking, 'Why can't Pitt be great? Why can't we do this?' It all came down to people and money. I felt like I could make a difference."

The leadership was already in place, Bickell says. From Chancellor Patrick Gallagher down to the parents of players, he knew that Pitt was special and that the program was ready to make a jump.

And he would be the one to lead the way.



Coach Pat Narduzzi embraced Bickell when the gift was announced

Pitt announced Bickell's gift on Sept. 2, beginning what he calls an "unbelievable" three days back in Oakland. Two days before the team's season-opening victory over UMass, he was invited to watch practice and speak with the team. His emotional speech focused on the deep belief he had in the program and brought tears to the eyes of players, coaches and administrators.

Each player and coach handwrote a thank-you note to Bickell, with more coming from staff and fellow donors—a total of more than 200 letters. Upon returning home, he sat down and read every one.

Bickell spent time with everyone during that weekend—members of the chancellor's senior staff, leaders from the Division of Philanthropic & Alumni Engagement, athletics department staff, trustees and more. His gift not only helps the football program but changes the landscape for Pitt Athletics in its entirety.

"Pitt is a special place," Bickell says. "It's a proud community. It's hard to explain to outsiders how special this place is. There's something about Oakland that is alive. You can graduate

"Pitt is a special place. It's a proud community. It's hard to explain to outsiders how special this place is. There's something about Oakland that is alive. You can graduate from here and take the lessons you learned into life."

—Chris Bickell

from here and take the lessons you learned into life."

During the 51-7 victory over UMass, Bickell was honored on the field with a jersey presentation. It included an unforeseen present—a hug and kiss on the cheek from head coach Pat Narduzzi, with whom Bickell has developed a special friendship over the years.

"We believe in the same things," Bickell says: "in gaining inches when no one is looking, working hard when no one is around. You don't have to

be a five star. I wasn't a five star; I trained and worked hard. We believe in those things."

Coming from a former student who watched Pitt football through several losing seasons, Bickell's \$20 million commitment jump-started a 2021 campaign that was one of the most successful in program history. Pitt had its first 11-win season since 1981—only the fourth in program history—and won its first ACC Championship.

Call it coincidence, call it fate, call it whatever you want; Bickell and thousands of other Pitt fans put their belief in the football program and were rewarded with the most memorable season in recent memory.

The best part, he says, is that Pitt is just getting started.

"I don't feel like this is about me," he says. "I just wanted to lead the way. I wanted to show everyone that they can make a difference. We have a plan way beyond the \$20 million. It set the foundation for what Pitt football's brand is going to be. This is just the beginning." 📍



From left: Heather Lyke, Bickell, and University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Patrick Gallagher



Pitt 2022
FOOTBALL
SCHEDULE

W WEST VIRGINIA
SEP 1

T TENNESSEE
SEP 10

W @ WESTERN MICHIGAN
SEP 17

RI RHODE ISLAND
SEP 24

GT GEORGIA TECH
OCT 1

VT VIRGINIA TECH
OCT 8

BYE
OCT 15

L @ LOUISVILLE
OCT 22

NC @ NORTH CAROLINA
OCT 29

S SYRACUSE
NOV 5

V @ VIRGINIA
NOV 12

D DUKE
NOV 19

U @ MIAMI
NOV 26

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The Script Society

Members Enjoy Exclusive Benefits

Pictured with Kenny Pickett (center) are Script Society members (from left) Jim and Suzy Broadhurst and Joe and Kathy Guyaux. Below, Roc with Dan Marino

In 2020, the Panther Club launched The Script Society, the exclusive, philanthropic giving society for the University of Pittsburgh Department of Athletics. This group of generous and committed donors provides critical financial support for our student-athletes and band and spirit squad members, helping to enhance their experience at Pitt through philanthropy. Donors commit to making a gift of at least \$50,000 over a five-year period to become members.

The Script Society already has more than 100 members and continues to grow. While the program is philanthropic in nature, members enjoy unique stewardship opportunities and deeper, more meaningful engagement with Pitt Athletics through priority points incentives; exclusive experiences; event invitations; and premium access to athletic administrators, coaches and student-athletes.

This year, members got to spend time with Pitt legend Dan Marino, ACC Commissioner Jim Phillips, and Pitt players and coaches. They attended exclusive events, enjoyed on-field access and more!

For more information about The Script Society, contact Lee Roberts, associate athletic director, philanthropy and engagement, at scriptsociety@athletics.pitt.edu or visit HailToPitt.com.





PITT MEMORIES

Freddie H. Fu, MD

Internationally renowned orthopaedic scientist and surgeon Freddie Fu served as the head team physician for the University of Pittsburgh Department of Athletics for 32 years. He treated many of Pitt's—and the world's—greatest athletes with care, concern and compassion.

Thank you, Dr. Fu.



Memorial contributions may be made to the Fu Family Legacy Fund in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Pittsburgh, P.O. Box 640093, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-0093 or at pi.tt/FuLegacy.

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- 3.16 YOUNGSTOWN STATE
- 3.23 KENT STATE
- 3.25-27 CLEMSON
- 4.1-3 LOUISVILLE
- 4.15-17 VIRGINIA
- 4.19 **WEST VIRGINIA**
- 4.29-5.1 MANHATTAN
- 5.3-4 OAKLAND
- 5.6-8 DUKE
- 5.17 **PENN STATE**
- 5.19-21 GEORGIA TECH

- 3.16 PENN STATE
- 3.18-20 NOTRE DAME
- 3.25-27 VIRGINIA TECH
- 4.6 SAINT FRANCIS
- 4.8-10 CLEMSON
- 4.14-16 BOSTON COLLEGE
- 5.3 ROBERT MORRIS
- 5.11-14 ACC SOFTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

- 2.11 DUQUESNE
- 2.18 SIENA
- 2.20 ST. BONAVENTURE
- 2.24 NORTH CAROLINA
- 3.5 VIRGINIA TECH
- 3.13 BINGHAMTON
- 3.21 NIAGARA
- 3.26 BOSTON COLLEGE
- 3.28 AKRON
- 4.9 LOUISVILLE
- 4.19 GEORGE MASON

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