



UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
ATHLETICS MAGAZINE
WINTER 2023-24

Tales of
TRIUMPH
for TWO
TEAMS

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Ellie Breech: Making Saves
On and Off the Field

Honoring Pitt Trailblazer
Julius Pegues

Hail to Her: Celebrating
Our Female Student-
Athletes' Successes



PANTHER CLUB

MAKE YOUR IMPACT



**DONATIONS TO THE
STUDENT-ATHLETE
SUCCESS FUND
HELP SUPPORT...**



TRAVEL › HEALTH & WELLNESS › SCHOLARSHIPS › NEW TECHNOLOGY › ACADEMIC SUPPORT



FEATURES



8

Giving Back to the Region That Shaped Me



10

Turning an Idea Into a Home run



12

Hail to Her!



34

Julius Pegues

ON THE COVER:

Pitt women are making history. Pitt volleyball claimed their fourth ACC championship and advanced to a third consecutive Final Four. Pitt women's soccer soared to new heights by advancing to the Elite Eight for the first time in program history. See the cover story beginning on page 18

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. ©2024 University of Pittsburgh #114517. H2P magazine accepts no responsibility for unsolicited contributions of artwork, photography or articles.

The University of Pittsburgh is an affirmative action, equal opportunity institution.

Departments

Message From Chlo Minas	2
NCAA Compliance Corner	4
Corporate Connections	10
Panther Profile	16
Panthers United.....	32
Varsity Letter Club.....	33
Pitt Memories	34



Dear Pitt fans,



What an honor it is to contribute to this edition of H2P! As I reflect on the historic season we've just had, I'm constantly reminded of how grateful I am to be a Pitt student-athlete.

I'll be honest with you: We had a lot to live up to this year. In 2022, we had a lot of firsts—first time beating Notre Dame in program history; first time going to the ACC tournament in program history; first time going to the NCAA tournament and making it to the Sweet Sixteen in program history.

The goal for Pitt women's soccer this year was to reach greater heights than we did last year. As I like to say, pressure makes diamonds or it can make coal; you decide how to look at it.

The pressure was a tool we embraced and used to our advantage. This year, we clinched even more historic victories over Wake Forest, Duke, and (maybe most unforgettable of all) UNC in the 2023 ACC tournament. I remember hearing the crowd go silent as we scored our goal in overtime to win the game and our team's cheers echoing

through the UNC stadium after the final whistle blew.

We made it further in both the ACC tournament and the NCAA tournament than ever before. The journey to the Elite Eight was a testament to our growth and to the chemistry between players and coaches. I'll never forget the resilience we showed on the national stage as we fought with passion to take down those in our way. This goes to show that being a Pitt student-athlete means that you are capable of achieving the extraordinary.

I remember going on social media and seeing posts saying that our team kept upsetting other teams. To be honest, that didn't sit well with me because, as our Head Coach Randy Waldrum said, "for me, we didn't upset anybody. We just went and did what we were capable of doing." we are expected to perform, and I absolutely love that. I love having coaches who believe in us as much as our team does; it's very refreshing and enhances our growth.

As president of Pitt's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) and vice chair of the ACC SAAC, I've been able

to see how impactful unity extends on and off the field. Sure, this season had a lot of goals, wins and assists. However, none of that would have happened without a sense of how we are all better together, with each player contributing a unique piece to a powerful collective vision. This truly defines the essence of being a Pitt student-athlete and therefore extends my gratitude for my part in helping to lead this team.

As my senior year concluded, this unique soccer program and my love for Pitt made the decision to stay for a fifth year feel just right. We're ready to work even harder to continue making history. As I said before, pressure makes diamonds and we're excited to reach greater heights for yinz!

To our incredible supporters: You are the best and a big contributor to our success. Your energy fuels us to be better, and we would not be able to do what we do without you. Thank you for believing in us. It means the world.

Hail to Pitt!
Chloe Minas
#15



ON SALE NOW!



SCAN TO PURCHASE NOW

Proceeds will be donated
to **The Corner grassroots**
community outreach program.

OUR PURPOSE

We are here to unite the Pitt Athletics
community and build
a culture of inclusive excellence.



COMPLIANCE CORNER

NIL by the NUMBERS

August 1, 2023 through March 3, 2024

778

TOTAL NIL TRANSACTIONS

225

STUDENT-ATHLETES WITH NIL TRANSACTIONS

100%

TEAMS WITH NIL TRANSACTIONS

\$2.04M
TOTAL TRANSACTION VALUE

\$2,619
AVERAGE TRANSACTION VALUE

\$3,260
LOCAL EXCHANGE TRANSACTION VALUE

85+
TOTAL VERIFIED LX BUSINESSES/INDIVIDUALS

Pitt

NAME
IMAGE &
LIKENESS



SUPPORT **PITT STUDENT-ATHLETES**
JOIN TODAY

42

ALLIANCE 412



PARTNERS

MANSCAPED



PRIMANTI BROS.
RESTAURANT & BAR

BODYARMOR
SuperDrink

bumble

amazon

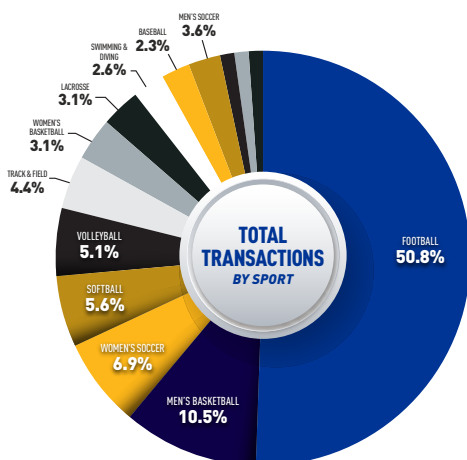
CVS

DUNKIN'

93.7
THE FAN

CELSIUS
LIVE FIT

THE OAKLANDER
HOTEL



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, VISIT PITTSBURGH.PANTHERS.COM/NIL



Game-Changing Giving

Contributions to Dollar Energy Fund are used to provide one-time assistance grants to local families who are struggling to restore or maintain safe utility services due to unexpected circumstances.

You can become a team player and help your neighbors in need this winter by donating to Dollar Energy Fund.

**Find out how your contribution can
produce winning results.**

Visit us online at dollarenergy.org





PRO BIKE+RUN

The official bike and run shop
for **Pitt** Athletics

Shop top run and bike brands with
over 1500 bikes currently in stock!



@probikerun
#probikerun



@pbrBIKE
@pbrRUN

www.probikerun.com

MORE SPIRIT, MORE TEAMWORK, MORE WINS.

Reconnect with more. Delta is proud to support
Pitt Athletics.



Giving Back to the Region that Shaped Me

Written by Josh Rowntree

Derrick Tillman admits that aspects of his younger years weren't exactly easy. But those early hardships came with a silver lining, as they have fueled his professional and personal passions throughout his life. And now, as he raises his own children in the region that shaped him, he's hoping to provide not only them with a better life but many other young people as well.

Growing up in the Pittsburgh region and bouncing around different neighborhoods in Section 8 housing, Tillman gained an appreciation for this area and his communities while also recognizing the hardships due to an imbalanced housing system that negatively impacted many people in the African American community.

"We moved a lot," says Tillman, "and one of those moves was to Oakland. We were neighbors with some Pitt students, and I developed a relationship with a few of the guys, a few African American gentlemen. That always left an imprint."

Tillman and his friends rode their bikes throughout Oakland, including the bustling campus of the University of Pittsburgh. And thus began his initial connection to the school he would one day graduate from and later support.

But the collegiate path for Tillman, a Westinghouse High School graduate, didn't initially begin in the Steel City.

He started college at Clark Atlanta University, an HBCU located in Atlanta, Georgia. But the strain of distance brought him back to Western Pennsylvania and closer to family. He enrolled at Pitt and graduated in 2004 with a bachelor's degree in information science from the School of Computing and Information.

While at Pitt, he connected with a mentor and Pitt alum, Greg Spencer, through a leadership development program at the Coro Center for Civic Leadership and later went to work for him at Randall Enterprises. He helped with board work and

served as a project manager for a small real estate portfolio. That gave Tillman his first real professional taste of the real estate business, an entry into a world that he would make his own in the coming years.

"That was one of my first experiences working in real estate—managing projects, rehabbing houses, things like that," he says. "I always had an interest in entrepreneurship. I always said that I was going to be a corporate executive or the CEO of my own company. My interest grew from that experience and talking to others in the industry. It definitely grew and developed over time."

Tillman's path from there wasn't exactly normal. He got into banking, got his real estate license and worked in nonprofit leadership while coordinating recreational and social activities for seniors and disabled individuals in high-rises in the city of Pittsburgh.

He began to sell residential properties as a real estate agent, helping more than 100 people become first-time home buyers. He developed an investors niche and started to work with athletes, local investors and investors from other states and markets.

He learned what to do right and what people did wrong—all while keeping his desire to help others at the forefront of his mind and at the heart of his professional life.

Tillman began selling and leasing commercial real estate. He got married to his wife, Nykia. And he made one of his biggest professional leaps, going back to Spencer with an idea that combined his growing interest in development



Derrick was appointed to the Governor's Advisory Commission on African American Affairs in August 2023.



Derrick, Nykia and their three children cheering on the Panthers at Acrisure Stadium this past fall.



Derrick joined Mayor Gainey at the Petersen Events Center during ACC Unity Week as he met with our student-athletes.

with a desire to aid those living in circumstances similar to those he experienced.

In 2006, the two men cofounded Bridging the Gap Development, LLC, a real estate development company that produces major rehabilitation and new construction projects throughout the area.

"It was a path for growth," Tillman says, "a trajectory toward the future."

The following year, he and Spencer co-owned a restaurant at Pittsburgh International Airport, something he calls a "detour" in his path. But it was a successful run in the restaurant business, and they owned the restaurant for 10 years before selling in 2017.

Two years after founding Bridging the Gap, Tillman took advantage of the economic market and got into weatherization of homes throughout the area, making them more energy efficient. It became a massively lucrative initiative.

"That weatherization company blossomed from a \$40,000 investment to a million-dollar business in the first year," Tillman says, "and it was a multimillion-dollar company in the next few years."

But around 2012, Tillman says he began to feel "empty" and wanted to get back to his first love, real estate. He sold his interest in the weatherization business, and he and his wife began to invest heavily in real estate, building a sizable portfolio.

At that point, he came to a proverbial fork in the road.

"It was, 'Do we build this portfolio we have amassed into a couple hundred or maybe a couple thousand units and cruise off into the sunset, or do we

get into this heavily political world of development?'" he says.

"I thought about my upbringing, the Section 8 homes and the substandard conditions we lived in. I thought about how development was being done and how people were being displaced, including some of my own family members. I always felt like there was a better way to do it. And I thought about who benefits if I'm just a large landlord versus a developer.

"In development, I had an opportunity to impact entire neighborhoods—neighborhoods I grew up in. I had an opportunity to create opportunity for people and impact an entire industry. And I had a chance to impact the trajectory of neighborhoods for the next 20, 30, 50 years."

He became a member of the advisory board of the Housing Opportunity Fund of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh and of the board of the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania, as well as several other State wide and national boards and commissions.

Suddenly, he had a real outlet to help make sweeping reforms to the housing systems in Western Pennsylvania, and thanks to his success in the business world, an opportunity to aid students at Pitt presented itself.

"With Pitt, it's twofold," explains Tillman, who also serves on and donates to Pitt's African American Alumni Council and is working with the University on ways to increase supplier diversity. "I want to help students like [me] who have similar upbringings. That's the heart of it. Also, I think about how you don't traditionally see younger African Americans really being able to give in these sorts of ways. So as a form

of inspiration, I can see its impact.


"Helping Pitt students is connected to who I am. The name of my company is Bridging the Gap Development, focusing on bridging gaps of opportunity and in development. So I see my philanthropy with Pitt as an extension of that, being able to impact students and the athletics program."

Specifically, Tillman has made a multiyear financial pledge to Pitt's Track and Field Program and Student-Athlete Success Fund—a choice inspired by his three children, who are all youth track athletes. He hopes to work with Pitt in the future on improved facilities for the track program, combining his knowledge in real estate with his backing of the University.

Tillman, who is a men's basketball season ticket holder, also established the Tillman Family Endowed Student Resource Fund, which will provide African American undergraduates interested in community development with nontuition financial support to help with research, travel, books or other educational expenses.

Now the kid who rode his bike around Oakland has become a true Pitt success story and is setting up the next generation to do the same.

"My path—it was not easy," Tillman says. "It's still not easy. But now, being in this position and where we're going, I'm being intentional about helping African American students who have similar passions to impact people, neighborhoods and the built environment and policies that shape the built environment.

"This giving is connected to that passion and vision for how we seek to serve our community." 

Turning an Idea Into a HOME RUN

Written by Craig Meyer

When Brad Rea thinks back to how selling tires became his life's work, he can't help but chuckle.

"It definitely wasn't something that I planned on doing," he said.



W

hat began as an observation while Rea was working for a waste management company has morphed into a successful business. After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh, where he starred on the Panthers baseball team, and following a five-year professional baseball career, Rea founded Champtires, a company that sells high-quality pre-owned tires and is a sponsor of Pitt Athletics.

Rea has built a thriving business from the ground up while leaning on valuable lessons he learned as an athlete.

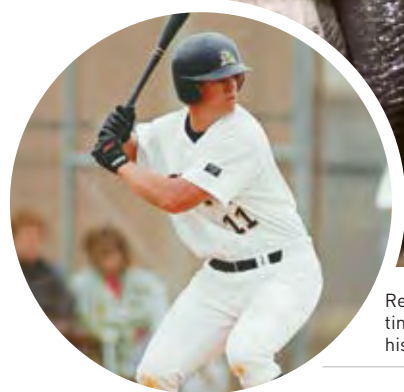
"Playing sports is all about competing, and you're really doing the same thing in business," says Rea, the company's president and CEO. "I think the best business owners are competitive. They want to be better than the competition."

He adds, "Playing baseball, you have to learn how to get along with teammates and how to work together. You're making a lot of jokes between teammates. It's similar to working with people in any business."

A native of Pittsburgh's northern suburbs, Rea graduated from North Allegheny Senior High School, where he played on a baseball team that was nationally ranked at one point. From there, he made his way to Pitt, where he rewrote the program's offensive record book from 1999 through his final season in 2002. More than 20 years after his final at bat, Rea—who describes himself as a confident, aggressive hitter who relished the one-on-one competition of facing a pitcher—is ranked first in program history in career home runs, RBIs and total bases. Additionally, he's tied for sixth in career games and seventh in games started. As a senior, he hit 18 home runs and 66 RBIs, ranking him fifth and third, respectively, in program history for a single season. At the end of that season, he earned All-American honors, becoming just the fourth Panthers baseball player ever to do so.

He parlayed those college accolades into a five-year minor league career, much of which was spent in the Pittsburgh Pirates farm system. It was a cherished opportunity for Rea to continue to play the game he loved, but as he neared the end of that run, he knew that the rest of his life awaited him off the field.

CHAMP TIRES



Rea was a stand-out student-athlete during his time at Pitt and is still ranked first in program history in career home runs, RBIs and total bases.



Rea spoke at Used Car Week 2022 on how car dealers can use Champtires to increase margins on every car.

"Minor league baseball is very different from playing in college," Rea says. "You need to be very committed. You have to really, really love baseball, because you don't really see your friends anymore. You don't see family. You're in small towns. You're on long bus trips. It's really not as glamorous as people think. I got to a point where I think I wanted to explore other opportunities in life."

Rea had no idea how good of an opportunity was right around the corner.

An economics major at Pitt, Rea had known for some time that he wanted to get into a field where he could use his degree. He began working at a waste management firm where, one day, his life changed. Part of the firm's work involved collecting tires that needed to be disposed of, often from clients whose customers hadn't liked the tires for one reason or another and returned them. The company wasn't reselling them, so they would simply get thrown away.

Rea noticed a problem, though: Many of the tires were still in excellent shape or were, Rea says, "pretty much brand new." From there, he came up with an

idea. He began buying those tires and subsequently selling them online.

"It just worked out well on eBay, so I kept buying more and more tires," Rea says. "It grew into a business."

In 2009, that side venture became something more tangible. Rea launched Champtires, providing customers with a safe, affordable and eco-friendly option for tires. Over the past 14 years, the business has grown considerably and is now one of the largest used tire companies in the United States. The company currently has more than 40,000 tires in stock, each of which undergoes a rigorous inspection process. Champtires currently has two Pittsburgh-area locations—one in West Mifflin and another on Washington Boulevard – where services like installations also are offered—as well as a warehouse facility in North Carolina.


Rea already has invested in technologies that would have been hard for him to imagine when he first began selling tires online, like a machine that inventories tires and measures their tread depth. As eager as he is to expand, he wants Champtires to do so

at a manageable pace. In the years to come, for example, he hopes to open a distribution center on the West Coast.

"There's clearly a demand for our product," Rea says. "Any time you can save people money and give them a quality product, you have a chance to have a really good business."

The strides made by his company also have allowed Rea to reconnect with his alma mater in a meaningful way. Given his accomplishments there as a baseball player, Rea already cares deeply for Pitt. In recent years, though, his connection to Pitt has gotten even stronger, particularly as he has established a relationship with baseball coach Mike Bell, whom he describes as a "great guy and great coach."

Rea and his wife, Shilo, also a Pitt alum, have been donating to Pitt for years, but in 2023, their donations took on a more committed form when Champtires became a sponsor of Pitt Athletics.

"The older I get, the more involved I want to get with Pitt," Rea says. "I really want to be involved with the baseball program." 

HAIL TO **HER!**

In honor of Women's History Month, we salute these amazing Pitt women!

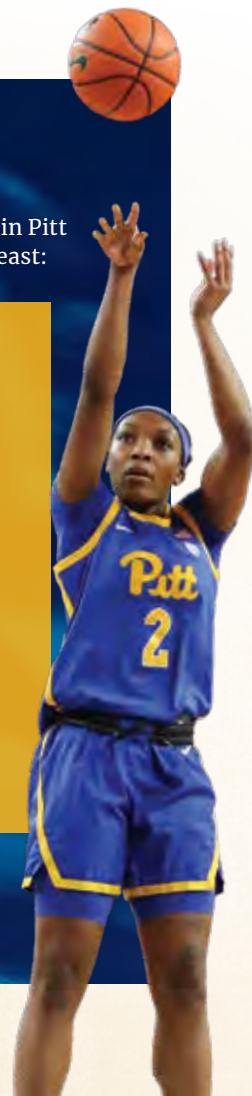


BASKETBALL

LIATU KING
became the fourth player in Pitt program history with at least:

- 1,000 points
- 800 rebounds
- 100 steals
- 100 blocks

She is the **second** player in program history to be named First Team All-ACC and the **first** player in program history to be named ACC Most Improved Player.



SWIMMING & DIVING

KATIE KASPRZAK,

head diving coach, coached Cameron Cash to win the **gold medal** in the 3M and Platform diving competition. She also coached Cameron to earn the **Most Valuable Diver** of the ACC Championships award and coached Dylan Reed to earn the **silver medal** on the 3M and 1M diving competitions.



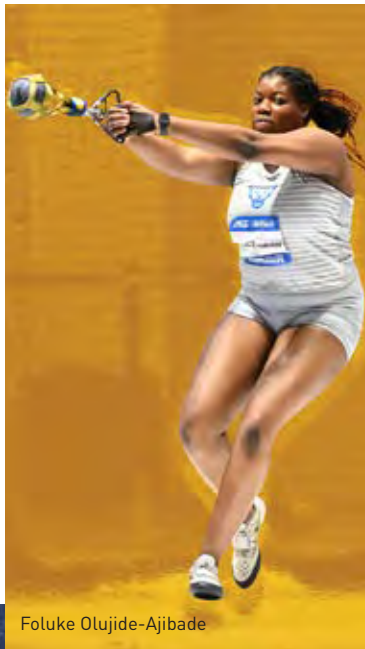
Cameron Cash (left) with Coach Katie Kasprzak

TRACK & FIELD

FOLUKE OLUJIDE-AJIBADE and LYDIA BOTTELIER

earned **Second Team All-America honors** for their efforts at the 2024 NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships. It is the first recognition for both Olujide-Ajibade and Bottelier. The duo became the second and third Second Team All-America selections in Pitt women's indoor track and field history.

Olujide-Ajibade capped her impressive indoor campaign by solidifying herself atop the record book in the weight throw with a program record toss of 21.67m. Bottelier finished off her strong indoor season posting the second best score, 4150, in the pentathlon in program history.



Foluke Olujide-Ajibade



Lydia Bottelier

SOCCER

ELLIE BREECH,

women's soccer goalie, used CPR to help save her father's life after he went into cardiac arrest in December. Inspired by Damar Hamlin, all Pitt student-athletes participated in CPR and AED certification training in 2023. Hamlin and Breech met at the Pitt Men's Basketball game on Feb. 24, where Hamlin, along with the American Heart Association, presented Ellie with the **American Heart Association Heartsaver Hero Award**.



Pictured from left to right between members of Pitt's Spirit Team are Damar Hamlin, Ellie Breech, Ed Breech, Maggie Breech and Fisher Pence, national vice president, American Heart Association.

HAIL TO HER!



On National Girls and Women in Sports Day, Pitt Athletics recognized and celebrated the extraordinary achievements and growth in women's sports. Staff and coaches created Hail As One friendship bracelets with words of empowerment and distributed them as gifts for our female student-athletes.



BREAKING DOWN THE GAME OF REAL ESTATE

Howard Hanna is proud to support Pitt student athletes with over \$50,000 donated to the Student Athlete success fund.

START YOUR GAME PLAN HERE

HowardHanna.com/GoPitt



Real Estate Services



OFFICIAL **REALTOR** OF PITT ATHLETICS

*Getting
to know...*

Abby Thorne

Sport: Lacrosse

Position: Defender

Year in School: Senior

Hometown: Adelaide, South Australia



Abby Thorne is a senior defender hailing from Adelaide, South Australia. Thorne, a second-year captain, joined the Panthers in 2021 competing that spring to prepare for their inaugural season in 2022. In her two seasons, she has started all 35 games that she has played in, recording 58 ground balls and 32 caused turnovers. In addition, Thorne competes internationally for Team Australia and most recently played in the World Championships and The World Games in the summer of 2022.

Why did you choose to attend Pitt, as it is so far away from home?

I knew from a young age I wanted to play college lacrosse. I am from a small city in Australia where most of our culture centered around watching sports. Finding out that Pittsburgh was also a smaller city that revolved around sports really drew me in. I also knew how good of a school Pitt was and that I would have a great opportunity to play in the best college lacrosse conference in the country. Ultimately the reason I committed was Coach Boss [Head Coach Emily Boissonneault]. Her passion and commitment to me and the program were extraordinary. She has fulfilled every promise and commitment she made to me on the day I committed.

What was the biggest adjustment in moving from Australia to the United States?

The biggest adjustment was definitely being so far away from the beach. I loved the beach growing up, and it was a huge part of my weekly routine. I had also never seen real snow before coming to Pittsburgh, and the weather I have experienced especially while playing is something I have never dealt with. I definitely needed to buy a lot more winter clothes when I first arrived.

What is your favorite quote?

"Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love what you are doing or learning to do." I have had this quote from Pele on my bedroom mirror since I was 12 years old.

What might someone be surprised to know about you?

I was born in England, just outside London. My family moved to Australia when I was 6 years old.

Had you been to the United States before coming to school? If so, where? Do you have a favorite place you've visited?

In 2019, I was in Baltimore for a week at Loyola [University Maryland] for a training camp before my U19 World Cup. I think my favorite place so far is Florida; I have been there multiple times. I love the beaches there (although they're not as good as home), and I have made some awesome memories there. I also loved Colorado. It was very different from any place I have been before.

What hobbies do you enjoy in your spare time?

I really love cooking and baking when I have the time. This is something I want to get better at, and I am always looking for new and yummy healthy recipes.

What is your favorite restaurant in Pittsburgh?

I have been to and taken many people to Altius. Not only is the food amazing, but the view of the city is breathtaking.



What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?

It depends what mood I am in, but I am definitely a cookies and cream girl or I'll go for something fruit flavored.

What is your most frequently used or favorite emoji?

I would probably say the blue and yellow hearts because, obviously, H2P!

What is an unusual talent that you have?

I can do the worm [a dance].

Vegemite: Yes or no?

Yes! Everyone has strong opinions about Vegemite, but I would say that 99% of people who hate it aren't doing it right. My recipe recommendation is butter on toast, then a thin layer of Vegemite on top. And if you are feeling fancy, add some avocado or a slice of cheese on top. I make sure that I have a constant supply of Vegemite at my college house.

Do you prefer driving on the left or the right side of the road?

Definitely the left. I haven't driven much since being in the America, and it's probably for the best that I don't.


Has your family visited you in Pittsburgh?

I was lucky enough to have my Mum and Dad and my sister and her partner visit me spring 2023. It was so awesome for them to see me living out my dream, and they had the best time in Pittsburgh.

Tell us about your experience playing lacrosse back home. What does it mean to have represented Australia in lacrosse?

I was fortunate enough to compete in my first Junior World Cup when I was 17 years old, and since then, I played in the 2022 Senior Women's Lacrosse World Cup and competed in the 2022 World Games. It is the most surreal experience. Putting on the green and gold and singing my national anthem is the highest honor. I don't think it will ever become any less special. It's something I dreamt of since I was a little girl, and I am beyond grateful for the people around me who pushed me to that level.

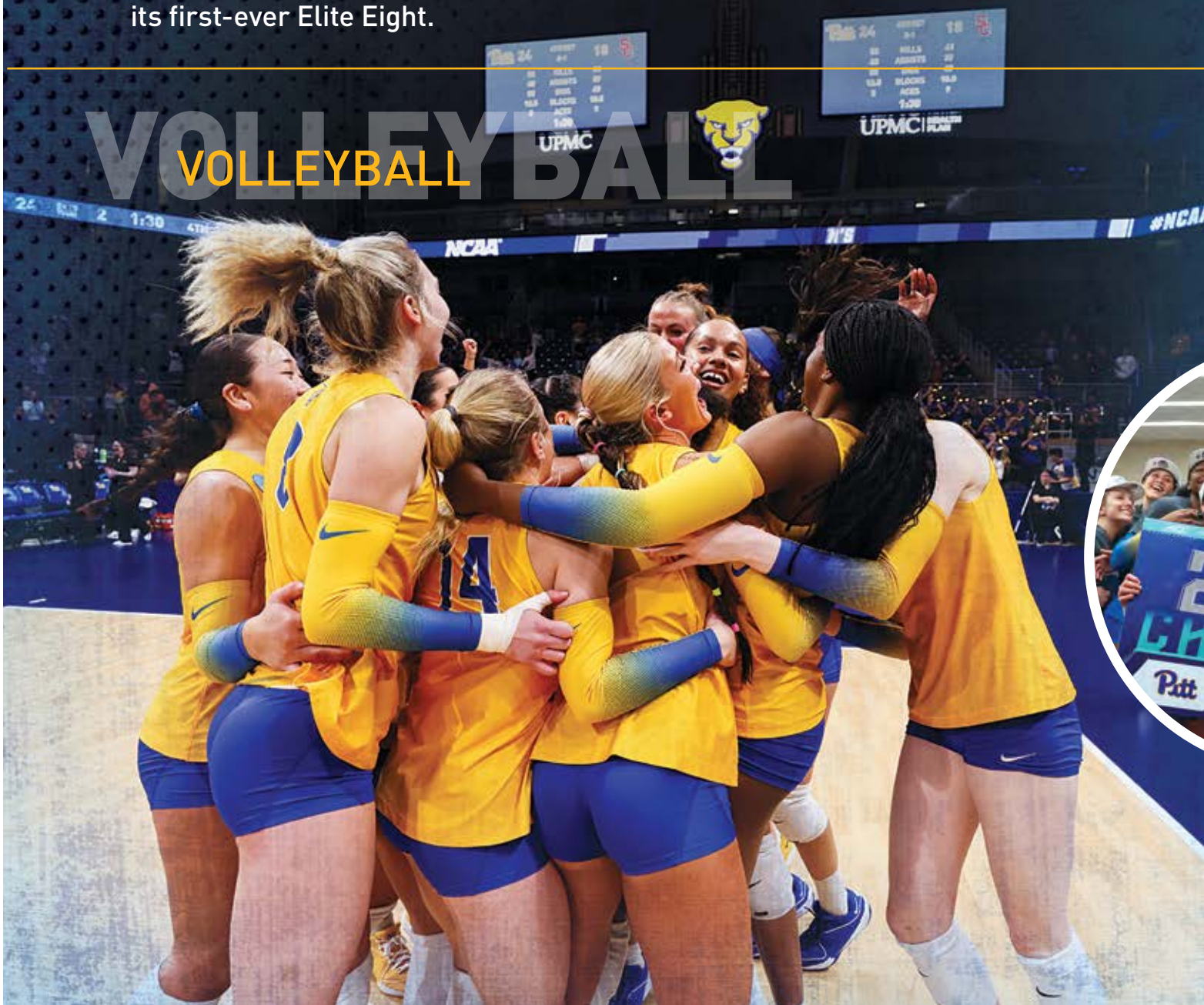
What is your favorite part about playing lacrosse at Pitt?

My favorite part is the team and the culture we have created. Being a part of the inaugural team, I had a real opportunity to make a difference and create a legacy. My teammates and I, especially the original 14, made a mark on history. We love and care about each other like we are family; we respect every staff member and are committed to the development of the program. The memories I have made with my teammates are ones I will cherish forever. 

Tales of Triumph for Two Teams

Written by Josh Rowntree

The year 2023 will be long-remembered as a momentous one for the University of Pittsburgh's fall women's sports programs. Pitt **volleyball** continued its run of national excellence, claiming another ACC title and appearing in a third-consecutive Final Four. On the pitch, Pitt **women's soccer** rose to unknown heights, setting numerous program records and appearing in its first-ever Elite Eight.



With his team facing a two-set deficit and on the brink of elimination against its biggest rival, Pitt volleyball coach Dan Fisher knew that there was a key element firmly on his side. In fact, there were more than 2,800 of them.

Pitt's fans, loud and enthusiastic throughout the NCAA quarterfinal match on Dec. 9, 2023, helped to will the Panthers back for their second reverse sweep of the season over Louisville, punching a ticket to the program's third consecutive Final Four.

The victory put an exclamation point on another remarkable year for Pitt volleyball, which finished with a 29-5 record, a split of the ACC title and a No. 1 seed in the NCAA tournament.

"It was a year that moved our program forward," says Fisher. "We were able to solidify ourselves as one of the best teams in the country, year in and year out. We've done it four years in a row, making deep runs in the tournament. It's really hard, so I'm proud of our consistency. It was a hugely successful season in the eyes of the coaches."



The Panthers celebrate their fifth ACC Championship after sweeping Syracuse.

Not only did Pitt's program become the only one in the nation to be represented in the last three national semifinals, but it did so with a changing cast in each of those years.

When the Panthers first broke through to the Final Four in 2021, they did so with longtime net-front veterans like Kayla Lund and Chinaza Ndee leading the way. In 2022, a key transfer in Courtney Buzzerio paced the Panthers' attack. But this team was led largely by two first-year players, Olivia Babcock and Torrey Stafford, who finished first and second on the team in kills.

The American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) tapped Babcock as its 2023 Freshman of the Year and a First Team All-American. Stafford was named a Third Team All-American and, like Babcock, was named to the 2023 All-ACC First Team.

"It's certainly one of the things that makes the coaches proud," says Fisher. "We've been hard to define. In the early years, we got some internationals and some transfers. Last year, we got some big transfers. This year, we did it mostly with players we developed and freshman players."

In addition to the honors for Babcock and Stafford, senior Rachel Fairbanks was named ACC Setter of the Year and was an AVCA First Team All-American and First Team All-ACC. Libero/defensive specialist Emmy Klika and outside

hitter Valeria Vazquez Gomez were named Second Team All-ACC. Chiamaka Nwokolo and Emma Monks were named Second Team All-ACC and Monks/Klika were named AVCA All-American Honorable Mention. The Panthers had a program-high seven All-ACC performers and five All-Americans.

Next season, Pitt will lose a couple of veteran players in setter Lexis Akeo and middle blocker Chiamaka Nwokolo, who each had five-year runs with the Panthers. But their impact, like other top players who have passed the torch before them, will certainly be remembered.

"The best thing that Lexis and Chia did was model what we do for our younger players," Fisher says. "The mark of a good leader isn't just what they do when they're around, it's what the team does when they're not around anymore. For Chia and



The Panthers raise the Regional Championship trophy after completing the reverse sweep over Louisville in the Elite Eight.



Pitt celebrates a point in the reverse sweep against Louisville in the Petersen Events Center.



Pitt takes its victory photo after defeating Louisville in front of a record-breaking crowd.

Lexis, they did a good job with Babcock and Stafford. Babcock and Stafford know how to do it now, and I'm excited to work with our younger players."

That group of players—as well as Fisher and his staff—haven't just won matches. They've also inspired a healthy contingent of people, particularly young ones, to take an interest in a sport that has gained in popularity over the last couple of years.

"We obviously don't do it for that reason, but it's certainly nice to have people appreciate what you do," says Fisher of the impact his team has made in the burgeoning volleyball community. "It felt this year like we really turned the corner, as a sport, of officially being mainstream."

The numbers back that up. More than 1.1 million people watched (online and on TV) the NCAA semifinals in Tampa, Florida, in which Pitt fell to Nebraska in front of 19,598 fans. The national championship pulled in more than 1.7 million viewers on ABC—going up against a full Sunday of NFL football on television.

"Across the country, we kind of reached this tipping point where there were watch parties, there were people in bars who were asking to put games on," Fisher adds. "There was a general awareness where people wanted to watch the games."

And that was represented locally. Three Pitt volleyball matches were broadcast for the first time on local radio via 93.7 The Fan. TV and streaming numbers were strong throughout the season, and Pitt finished 11th in total attendance in the NCAA. That included the largest crowd in program history (8,865 fans) in Pitt's regular-season win over Louisville in November at the Petersen Events Center.

A month later, the NCAA quarterfinal crowd—which included former Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger—was one of several that packed the Fitzgerald Field House, which continued to be one of the nation's most difficult venues for opponents.

"In the early days, we'd lose recruits because they wanted to go somewhere with a bigger fan base," Fisher says. "We're in awe and appreciative and know it's now a big factor in recruiting and a home advantage. We saw it this year with some big come-from-behind victories. The crowd was certainly a big part of it."

And for Fisher, who has firmly established the program as a national contender, the goal is to continue to build those crowds and the interest and to get better following a season that featured nine wins over nationally ranked opponents.

Pitt will do so with a new arena, part of the Victory Heights project, coming

in 2025. But there are still more needs before and beyond that.

"The name, image and likeness program; the fundraising; the facilities—those are essential now as part of being a top program," Fisher says. "That's helped us get here, and we need to keep pushing to keep us relevant. Everything you see in other sports, like football, that's happening at our level, too."

Fisher's hope is that with an inspired, supportive fan base, his program will be able to continue its trajectory, no matter what the roster looks like.

"Our main jobs, as coaches, is to create a special environment," he says, "one where we can get the most out of each group we have each year."



WOMEN'S SOCCER

Women's SOCCER

The University of Pittsburgh women's soccer program saw its most historic season yet in 2023, setting countless records on its way to its first NCAA tournament Elite Eight and ACC Tournament Semifinal appearances. Its journey this season was beyond extraordinary, as the team propelled itself past five top-25 programs, including three in the top 10.

The Panthers kicked off the season after coming back from their most historic year in 2022 with their highest preseason placement in program history at 14th. Pitt earned a top-25 ranking in eight of the 11 weeks of the United Soccer Coaches top-25 poll. The Panthers also received votes for three out of those 11 weeks of rankings.

This team was something special, and it was able to share these notable moments with its fans. Its time at home at Ambrose Urbanic Field was nothing short of historic.



University of Pittsburgh Women's Soccer team pregame huddle at Ambrose Urbanic Field.



Head coach Randy Waldrum

Ellie Coffield celebrating a monumental goal with assist by Amanda West against UNC in the ACC Championship Quarterfinals.



Anna Bout and Sarah Schupansky celebrate Amanda West post goal at Ambrose Urbanic Field.

The Panthers broke the record for the most home wins with nine on the season, remaining undefeated at home. Pitt saw many historic moments at home, including topping the Duke Blue Devils for the first time in program history, 2-1. And the fans regularly showed up to support their Pitt Panthers, setting the largest average attendance record for the season at 904 fans per game.

As the team's success continued to grow, Head Coach Randy Waldrum continued to ask, "Why not us?" The team went into various games where it felt like the rest of the nation was not on its side—but the team's mindset was on the contrary. Heading into the ACC Quarterfinals against the undefeated North Carolina Tar Heels, the Panthers were ready to prove others wrong. In the first 10-minute allotment of overtime, Amanda West sunk the game-winning goal off Landy Mertz's assist to top the Tar Heels and advance to the ACC Championship Semifinals for the first time in program history—altering the mindsets of those against them.

The team's momentum continued to snowball, as the Panthers secured a

spot in the NCAA Championship Elite Eight for the first time after knocking off Ohio State in the First Round, Arkansas 4-3 in the Second Round, and Memphis 3-0 in the Third Round. Pitt saw its historic season come to an end in the Fourth Round of the NCAA Tournament against the reigning national champions, Florida State.


Up and down the roster were monumental players who together set the tone for this historic season. Fifth years Anna Bout, Ashton Gordon, Mertz and West left their mark on Pitt's history and will be names that fans will never forget.

West truly was the best. She recorded her 50th career goal in the game against Memphis in the NCAA Third Round, keeping her name in all-time scoring records. The forward also has her name in the records for total career assists (31) and total career points (131). West tacked on new accolades this season, adding United Soccer Coaches All-Atlantic Region Second Team and All-ACC Second Team honors to her resume.

Inside the game notes, Sarah Schupansky was named a Super Star, and her time on the pitch proved that

title. The junior totaled 1,633 minutes of play, for which she registered a season program record of 36 points with her 11 goals and 14 assists. The Pittsburgh native was able to place 31 of 65 shots this season, securing three game-winning goals. Schupansky also found herself on the TopDrawerSoccer Best XI Second Team, United Soccer Coaches All-Atlantic Region Second Team and College Sports Communicators Academic All-District Team; earned United Soccer Coaches Scholar All-America accolades; and was named to the All-ACC First Team—becoming the first Panther to receive this honor.

For this record-breaking season, the Pitt women's soccer coaches were named the NCAA Atlantic Staff of the Year. Their direction led the Panthers to set program records for most wins overall (17), ACC wins (6), home wins (9), points (194), goals (64) and assists (66).

The Panthers ended their season the only way they knew how: by making history. The team found itself ranked sixth in the final United Soccer Coaches national ranking—the highest in program history. 



SCAN TO
PURCHASE
TICKETS



PITTSBURGH **Panthers**.com/TICKETS

BASEBALL

APR. 5-7 **GEORGIA TECH***

APR. 12-14 **DUKE***

APR. 26-28 **BRYANT**

APR. 30 **WEST VIRGINIA**

MAY 8 **WRIGHT STATE**

MAY 10-12 **FLORIDA STATE***

MAY 14 **PENN STATE**

LACROSSE

APR. 2 **CENTRAL MICHIGAN**

APR. 9 **ROBERT MORRIS**

APR. 13 **NORTH CAROLINA***

APR. 18 **CLEMSON***

SOFTBALL

APR. 12-14 **NORTH CAROLINA***

APR. 19-21 **SYRACUSE***

APR. 24 **OHIO**

APR. 30 **ROBERT MORRIS**

* DENOTES ACC MATCHUPS

Women's CROSS COUNTRY

Our women's cross country team set numerous records during the 2023 season. The women's squad earned the best ranking in the USTFCCCA Mid-Atlantic Regional poll in program history, peaking at #4. Senior Sadie Carey-Tharp and junior Winnie Incorvaia were the catalysts behind the program's success. Together they led the women's cross country team to a seventh place finish at the NCAA Mid-Atlantic Regional meet, their best team finish at the event since 2017. Carey-Tharp and Incorvaia collected numerous accolades throughout the season. Carey-Tharp earned All-ACC honors for her 17th place performance at the ACC Championships in Tallahassee, Florida. Two weeks later, Carey-Tharp once again finished in 17th place, this time at the NCAA Mid-Atlantic Regional Championship. Her new 20:19.4 personal best in the 6k is the sixth best finish at the regional meet in women's program history. Incorvaia finished just behind Carey-Tharp in 22nd place with a time of 20:31.5. Carey-Tharp and Incorvaia were named All Mid-Atlantic Region for their efforts.

The future is promising for the Panthers, as freshman Camy Kiser was named ACC Freshman of the Week on September 12th. Kiser and fellow freshman Olivia Bufalini finished in 26th and 29th places, respectively, at the NCAA Mid-Atlantic Regional Championship meet. In addition to Kiser and Bufalini, Carey-Tharp and Incorvaia are returning next season and will look to push the Panthers to new heights.



Sadie Carey-Tharp



Winnie Incorvaia

Men's SOCCER

Our men's soccer team earned their fifth straight bid to the NCAA Tournament this season after playing the toughest schedule in the country and earning multiple ranked wins. The Panthers had three All-ACC members including Filip Mirkovic (First Team), Jackson Gilman (Third Team) and Albert Thorsen (All-Freshman Team) while Mirkovic also earned First Team All-South Region honors for the second straight campaign after a strong season that saw him lead the squad with nine assists.



Albert Thorsen

Men's CROSS COUNTRY

Senior Luke Henseler advanced to the NCAA Championship meet for the second consecutive season, finishing in 173rd place. Henseler is the first Panther to compete in the NCAA Championship meet in back-to-back seasons since Keith Dowling in 1989 and 1990. Henseler qualified for the meet by taking 5th place at the NCAA Mid-Atlantic Regional Championship, the best finish at the regional meet in program history. The Coventry, Rhode Island, native ran a personal best time of 29:30.3 in the 10k race, earning All Mid-Atlantic Region honors



Luke Henseler



Jackson Gilman



Filip Mirkovic



Alumni Gathering— The Foundation Stands Strong



Written by Matt Plizga

Pitt celebrated its outstanding basketball history in fine fashion on February 3, 2024 honoring the 1974 and 2009 NCAA Tournament Elite Eight Teams. The Panthers' 1974 squad celebrated the 50th Anniversary of its magical season that closed with a 25-4 record, including a 22-game win streak. The 2009 team was honored on the 15th anniversary of its 31-win season that included the school's first No. 1 ranking in the AP Poll.



25-4
Overall Record

13-0
Home Record

- Pitt's first team to advance to NCAA Elite Eight in the new NCAA format
- All five starters were Pittsburgh natives and were featured in a prominent story in Sports Illustrated
- Set a school record with 25 wins
- Won 22 consecutive games after losing the season opener to West Virginia
- Billy Knight became just the second player in Pitt basketball history to average more than 20.0 points per game in three consecutive seasons
- Averaged 80.8 points per game to its opponents' 65.8 per season
- Extended home win streak to 27 games

“

They were a homegrown team with a homespun coach. They played a defense that few teams could spell and fewer teams could beat. They didn't pay attention to how many games they won. They simply paid attention to each other. And it all worked.”

— Paul Meyer
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The 1973-74 season was a special one in Pitt men's basketball history. The Panthers began the season with an 82-78 loss to West Virginia at the Coliseum, an occurrence that wasn't too surprising considering Pitt's historic struggles on WVU's home court, but the Panthers bounced back to defeat Rutgers, 36-21 in a game that was halted (and forfeited to Pitt) when a group of Rutgers students staged a sit-in demonstration on the court late in the first half. That started an incredible string of 22 straight wins.

Along the way, Pitt defeated the likes of Duquesne (82-65), Florida State (82-60), Connecticut (83-63), Arkansas (91-83), Davidson (90-63), Duke (62-46) and Syracuse (71-56). Pitt averaged 80.8 points per game to its opponents' 65.8 that season.

Pitt's tallest player was 6'8" junior center Jim Bolla, who later became the head women's basketball coach at UNLV. Bolla, who passed away in 2022, remembered the season with tremendous pride.

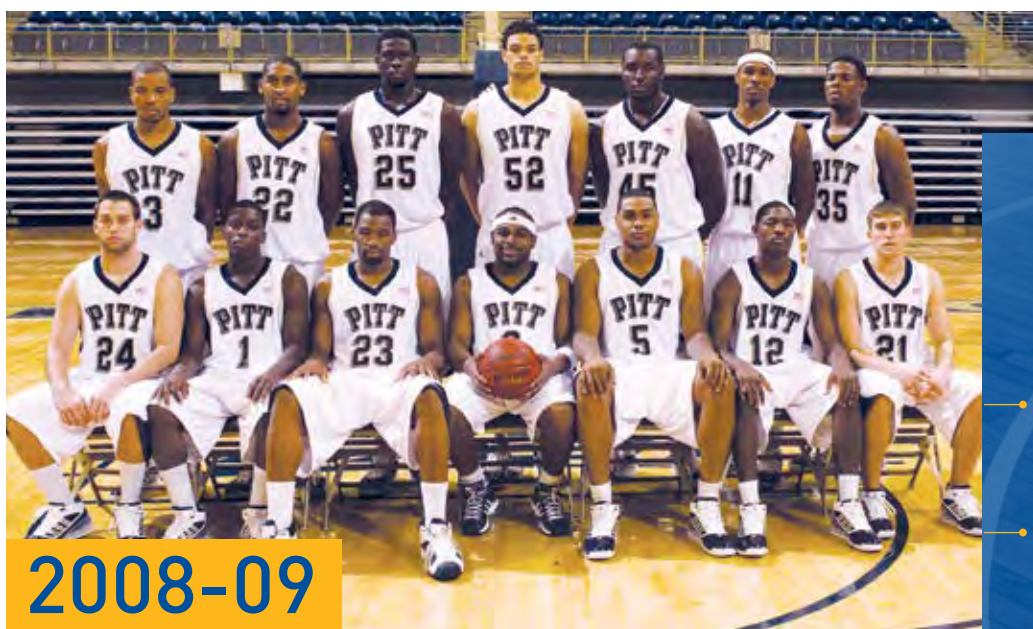
“Everyone liked everybody, and we just played one game at a time,” he said in a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette article several years ago. “We didn’t even keep track of how many games we’d won. We just came and played every day and had fun. Everyone liked each other and respected each other.”

Everyone liked Billy Knight, one of only three players in Pitt history—Don Hennon and Larry Harris being the others—to average more than 20 points per game in three consecutive seasons.

Pittsburgh’s 22-game win streak ended abruptly and dramatically at Penn State’s Recreation Building on Saturday, Feb. 23, 1974. With the score tied at 64, Pitt inbounded with seven seconds remaining, but Knight was called for traveling.

Penn State’s Ron Brown swished a jumper from the top of the key as the buzzer sounded, and Pitt was 22–2.

The Panthers received an at-large bid to the 32-team NCAA Tournament and bussed to the WVU Coliseum, where they defeated St. Joseph’s, 54–42 before a largely pro-Pitt crowd. The Panthers’ reward for that win was to travel to Raleigh, North Carolina, for the East Regional, which included North Carolina State, Providence and Pittsburgh’s first-game foe, the Furman Paladins. Knight, who was in the midst of a late-season shooting slump, broke out for 34 points, helping Pitt to an 81–78 victory and setting up an East final against the Wolfpack, which beat Pittsburgh, 100–72.



ALONG THE WAY, Pitt enjoyed several **FIRSTS:**

- Advancing to the NCAA Regional Final and Elite Eight for the first time since the NCAA Tournament expanded to 64 teams
- Earning the program’s first-ever No. 1 seed upon entering the NCAA Tournament
- Ascending to the nation’s consensus No. 1 national ranking for the first time in school history and holding the top spot for three weeks during the season (Jan. 5, Jan. 12 and Feb. 23)
- Defeating the nation’s No. 1 ranked team for the first time in school history (a 76–68 win over Connecticut on Feb. 16), then becoming just the ninth team in NCAA history to defeat a No. 1 ranked team two different times in the same season with a 70–60 home win over Connecticut on March 7

From the season opener’s tipoff to its heartbreaking loss in the NCAA Regional Final, the 2008–09 Pitt men’s basketball team marked a year of incredible achievement.

Pitt set school records for most victories in a season (31–5 record), most Big East Conference regular-season wins (15–3), most home wins (19), total home attendance (212,682 in 19 games) and best average home attendance (11,194 per game). The Panthers also completed their home schedule with an undefeated 19–0 record at the Petersen Events Center, the program’s fourth undefeated home slate in school history. Seniors Tyrell Biggs, Levance Fields and Sam Young set a school record for most victories over a four-year period with a 112–31 record.

Pitt Head Coach Jamie Dixon, the 2009 Naismith National Coach of the Year, set an NCAA Division I college basketball record for most victories over the first six years of a coaching career with his 163–45 record. He surpassed the previous record of 161 wins held by North Carolina State’s Everett Case from 1947–52 and guided Pitt to NCAA Tournament appearances in each of his first six seasons as head coach.

Pitt got off to a 16–0 start to its season. As the nation’s No. 1 ranked team, Pitt registered two home wins over both St. John’s and South Florida, setting up a high-profile matchup at No 20 Louisville that it lost 69–63.

It first defeated Notre Dame, 93–80, behind a 23-point, 22-rebound performance by Blair; notched a nonconference win over Robert Morris; and registered a 28-point win at DePaul that saw Blair score 32 points and Fields match the school’s game assists



Members of the 2009 Elite Eight team were honored on the court during Pitt's win over Notre Dame on Feb. 3. (L-R)—athletic trainer Tony Salesi, academic advisor Mike Farabaugh, manager Dan O'Brien, Tim Frye, Austin Wallace, Ryan Tiesi, Gilbert Brown, Jermaine Dixon, DeJuan Blair and LeVance Fields.

record with 16. Dominating wins over West Virginia and Cincinnati set up a national matchup at No. 1 Connecticut. In a sparkling 76–68 win over the Huskies, Young led all scorers with 25 points, but it was Blair who captured the nation's attention with his second 20–20 performance of the year (22 points, 23 rebounds) and inadvertent flip of UConn's Hasheem Thabeet. A home victory over DePaul, coupled with losses to the nation's No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 ranked teams, gave Pitt the No. 1 ranking for the second time and third week of the year.

After a stunning loss at Providence, Pitt battled back to claim victory over Seton Hall and a come-from-behind win against Marquette. The Marquette win was particularly special, as Pitt found itself trailing by nine points but stormed back with a 21–2 run to claim the win. Prior to the Marquette game, Pitt retired the jersey of assistant coach and former All-American Brandin Knight.

The back-to-back wins set up Pitt's regular-season home finale against No. 1 Connecticut. In a much-anticipated rematch on senior day, Young, Fields and Biggs sent the record-setting energized crowd of 12,908 home with a 70–60 win. Young provided the spark, as he scored 31 points and pulled down 10 rebounds in a memorable performance. Fields, who had

suffered an injury during the Marquette game, played the entire contest, scoring 10 points and dishing out 12 assists.

Pitt earned its first-ever No. 1 seed upon entering the NCAA Tournament. The Panthers also were named the nation's No. 2 seed behind Big East champion Louisville and concluded the year with a No. 2 ranking in the rating percentage index.

Pitt advanced to the NCAA Second Round with a first-round victory over East Tennessee State, then defeated a red-hot Oklahoma State team to advance to the NCAA Sweet Sixteen for the fifth time in eight years.

The triumphs sent Pitt to Boston, where it would meet Xavier in NCAA Regional action. A hard-fought, physical game against the Musketeers came down to the last minute, as Fields hit a go-ahead 3–pointer to give Pitt the lead, then converted a steal into a transition layup with 24 seconds left to secure the win.

Pitt advanced to NCAA Regional play for the first time since the tournament expanded to 64 teams. Its opponent in the regional final was Big East rival Villanova. In a game typical of the league's physical play, it all came down to the final play, as Villanova's Scottie Reynolds drove a half-length of the floor and hit a buzzer-beating layup to defeat the Panthers.

DEJUAN BLAIR

- Became first player at Pitt to earn First Team All-America honors from the Associated Press
- Big East Co-Player of the Year
- Consensus First Team All-America honors
- Finished among the nation's top three for the National Player of the Year awards
- Big East Co-Most Valuable Player, consensus All-Region

SAM YOUNG

- Became just the fourth player in school history to earn All-Big East First Team honors in two seasons
- Earned several All-America honors
- Set his own single season scoring record
- Concluded career ranked fourth on Pitt's all-time career scoring list with 1,884 career points

LEVANCE FIELDS

- Set Pitt's single-season assists record
- Led the nation for most of the season in both assists per game (7.5) and assist-to-turnover ratio (3.8)
- All-America, All-Big East and three-time Bob Cousy Award nominee

The journey through the 2008–09 season is the blueprint for Pitt Basketball going forward. Winning with grit, toughness and a blue-collar approach that is quintessentially Pittsburgh is the program's hallmark. The Elite Eight team overcame adversity to exceed expectations and become the team that nobody wanted to face in March. And Pitt Basketball remembers that heartbreak and uses it as motivation to continue its climb to the top of the college basketball world. **P**



**JMI Sports is proud to be the corporate sponsorship
and multimedia rights partner of Pitt Athletics.
Our Pitt Sports Marketing team is ready to work with you
to develop mutually beneficial marketing partnerships
with Pitt Athletics.**

**For more information, please contact:
Mike Meyer, Vice President, Sports Sponsorship Sales
m.meyer@jmisports.com**


Pitt, Duke Partner for Inaugural HOOPS4ALS Games



The Pitt and Duke Men's Basketball programs partnered to play the inaugural Hoops4ALS games on Jan. 9 at the Petersen Events Center and Jan. 20 at Cameron Indoor Stadium.

Hoops4ALS is a group dedicated to uniting basketball coaches, players and fans to raise awareness about amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease; to promote research and advocacy to help those dealing with this fatal disease; and to support those working to find a cure.

The Hoops4ALS committee, made up of Pitt Head Coach Jeff Capel III, Tom Haberstroh, P.J. Murphy, Chuck Haberstroh, Kate Fagan, Adam Wilson, Andy Murphy and Marc J. Spears, has partnered with the ALS Therapy Development Institute (ALS TDI) to support their work to discover and develop effective ALS treatments. As the world's foremost discovery lab focused solely on ALS, ALS TDI collaborates with top researchers from around the world, including those at Duke's ALS Clinic and Pitt's MDA-ALS Center.

In addition to the fundraising initiative, the Pitt and Duke men's basketball programs came together to honor and pay tribute to those fighting ALS and those we have lost to the disease in the basketball community. In 2017, Jeff Capel Jr., a legendary coach in the basketball community and the father of Pitt's head coach, passed away due to complications related to ALS at the age of 64 while Capel III was an assistant coach at Duke. 

The Players' Tribune-The Tree-Jeff Capel, Jr.





The University of Pittsburgh inducted another star-studded Pitt Athletics Hall of Fame class this past fall. Twelve highly accomplished individuals representing seven different sports were enshrined on September 22, 2023 at the Petersen Events Center.



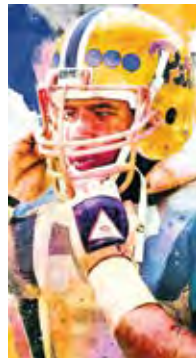
Richard Bradshaw



Ruben Brown



Matt Cavanaugh



Chris Doleman



Larry Fitzgerald



Keith Gavin



Bobby Lewis



Joe Luxbacher



Maureen McCandless



Suzanne Pulley-Klacik



Clive Vaughan



Allison Williams-Murphy



2023 Pitt Athletics Hall of Fame Class

First row, left to right: Evan Doleman (son of the late Chris Doleman), Suzanne Pulley-Klacik (swimming), Toni Doleman (family of the late Chris Doleman), Maureen McCandless (track & field), Allison Williams-Murphy (track & field), Laverne Lewis (accepting for her late-husband, baseball inductee Bobby Lewis), Director of Athletics Heather Lyke, Joe Luxbacher (soccer).


Back row: Basketball great and Hall of Fame chair Billy Knight, Larry Fitzgerald (football), Clive "Clyde" Vaughan (basketball), Ruben Brown (football), Taylor Doleman (daughter of the late Chris Doleman), Richard Bradshaw (swimming & diving), Matt Cavanaugh (football), Keith Gavin (wrestling)

ACC Unity Week

“Hope in the Hill,” an ongoing Pitt Athletics community service project, had its genesis when Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey first spoke to Pitt student-athletes regarding the needs of the neighboring Hill District. “Be more than a role model,” Gainey said. “Be a mentor and expose their minds. Help them find a better way.”

In conjunction with ACC Unity week, student-athletes immediately took action, contributing more than 4,000 hours of community service for the underserved neighboring community. Many efforts focused on the Ammons Community Center, which serves as a safe haven for youth. Additionally, Panthers United and Pitt Athletics' Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee sold t-shirts with all proceeds being donated to The Corner, a community center located in the heart of the district.

Said Ammons Community Center executive director and former Pitt basketball student-athlete Darelle Porter, **“The Pitt athletes have an unbelievable impact on the lives of our youth. They are an inspiration for youth to attend college and provide hope for the future.”**

Hope in the Hill, inspired by Mayor Gainey, has truly been a win-win for all involved. Pitt student-athletes have gained a tremendous sense of pride and responsibility for the greater good. Together, they have built relationships and a foundation that will benefit the Pittsburgh community for years to come and truly make a difference. 



Pictured with Mayor Gainey are student-athlete representatives from each team and Director of Athletics Heather Lyke.



Gainey spoke to student-athlete representatives from each team during ACC Unity Week.

ACC Unite Award

Each year, ACC institutions present the ACC UNITE Award to two individuals who have made an impact in the areas of racial and social justice on their campus. The University of Pittsburgh selected the following individuals for this honor in 2023:

Professor **Sheila Vélez Martínez** is the Jack & Lovell Olender Professor of Asylum, Refugee and Immigration Law at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. She is also the director of clinical programs and the Immigration Law Clinic. She has created meaningful change by addressing issues such as domestic violence, immigration and discrimination both locally and internationally. As the University's faculty athletics representative, Vélez Martínez is a mentor for student-athletes at Pitt and is dedicated to enhancing the student-athlete experience.

Pitt football Forever Panther **Ron Idoko** is the associate director of the Center on Race and Social Problems, founding director of the Racial Equity Consciousness Institute, and research assistant professor at the School of Social Work. Through his commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, Idoko developed the Racial Equity Consciousness Institute, which empowers individuals to reflect on and advance racial equity, personally and collectively.

Thank you, Sheila and Ron, for being champions of racial and social justice. 

**Sheila
Vélez Martínez**



**Ron
Idoko**





VARSITY LETTER CLUB

NO BOWL TEAM Reunion

1963



The 1963 Pitt football team went 9-1, finishing with a No. 3 national ranking.


Members of the 1963 team were honored on the field at the Pitt vs. Louisville game on October 14.



Written by EJ Borghetti

The University of Pittsburgh paid tribute to one of its greatest football teams on October 14 in commemorating the 60th anniversary of the 1963 squad. Forever known in Pitt lore as the “No Bowl Team,” the 1963 Panthers, under the direction of head coach John Michelosen, went 9-1 and ranked as high as No. 3 in the final national polls.

Facing a rugged schedule, the Panthers defeated the likes of Notre Dame, UCLA, Washington, West Virginia, Miami and Penn State. The lone blemish was a loss to Navy, quarterbacked by Heisman Trophy winner Roger Staubach. Despite a sterling record, the Panthers were left out of the bowl picture, largely due to the tragic November 22 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, which postponed a key November 23 matchup with Penn State until December 7.

Although Pitt did not participate in the postseason, the '63 squad is still considered to be one of the Panthers' most accomplished—both on the field and in the classroom. Of the team's 61 members, 57 graduated and an incredible 34 went on to obtain advanced degrees. Included in that total were 15 dentists, five engineers, three physicians and three lawyers. 



MEMORIES

Julius Pegues

A product of the Tulsa (Oklahoma) Public Schools and one of Booker T. Washington High School's proudest alumni, Julius Pegues parlayed a talent for basketball into an engineering degree from the University of Pittsburgh and a career in the aerospace industry.

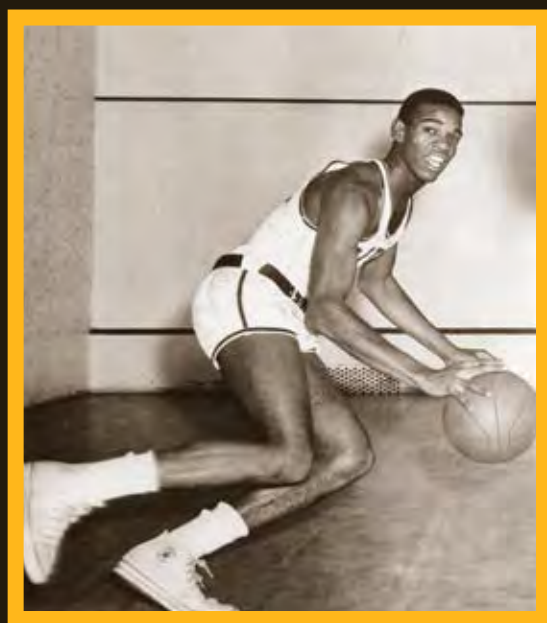
Pegues was a standout on the Pitt freshman team in 1954-55 before earning a scholarship and playing a starring role in the program over his final three seasons. The 6'3" forward went on to start all 77 games of his career, finishing with 1,050 points and 377 rebounds while helping the Panthers to 49 wins and two NCAA Tournament appearances. As a senior, Pegues averaged 17.6 points and 5.2 rebounds per game in helping lead the team to an 18-7 mark and the program's third NCAA Tournament appearance.

Pegues was selected as the 31st overall pick in the 1958 NBA Draft by the St. Louis Hawks but was unable to pursue a professional basketball career due to a five-year postgraduate commitment required by the U.S. Air Force ROTC.

As much as Pegues accomplished during his athletic career at Pitt, he likely accomplished more in his professional career. Pegues graduated from Pitt with a degree in mechanical engineering and studied meteorology at Saint Louis University. He became an Air Force weather forecaster before returning to Tulsa to work for the Douglas Aircraft Company and American Airlines, eventually serving as an advisor to the Federal Aviation Administration.

His commitment to human rights, human relations and equal education opportunities led to his involvement throughout the community. He served on the boards of the Tulsa NAACP chapter, Metropolitan Tulsa Urban League, Morton Comprehensive Health Services, Family & Children's Services, W.L. Hutcherson Family YMCA, Tulsa Housing Authority, and Tulsa Board of Education Human Relations Committee.

Pegues remained a prominent figure in Tulsa until his passing in March 2022 and was best known for his work to memorialize the 1921 Tulsa race massacre and the history and culture of Black Tulsans through the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation, which hosts an annual dinner for Tulsans and sponsors a national symposium on reconciliation and understanding on the massacre's anniversary.



“

Julius Pegues' impact on the game of basketball here at the University of Pittsburgh was immense. The life he lived and the impact he made on the Tulsa community beyond basketball was even more impressive. He was a trailblazer for the Black community and an unquestioned leader. The more I have learned of his impact on the world the more impressed I am with the life and legacy of Julius Pegues.”

– Jeff Capel
Pitt Men's Basketball Head Coach



Pitt's All-Time Home Run Leader Has Disrupted the Tire Industry



Career Records at

Graduation:

- At-Bats (731)
- Hits (237)
- Runs (148)
- Home Runs (46)
- RBIs (198)
- Doubles (44)

Single-Season Records at Graduation:

- Hits (76)
- RBIs (66)

Senior Season Stats:

- Batting Average .369
- 18 home runs
- 43 runs scored

Awards:

- Senior of Distinction
- First Team All-Big East
- All-American

Current Career Records:

- Home Runs (46)
- Total Bases (428)
- RBIs (198)

Brad Rea started all four years during his Pitt baseball career and concluded his time as "the most prolific offensive performer in the history of the Panther program."



Brad Rea
Champtires President and Founder

CHAMP TIRES

Rea has transformed how businesses and consumers spend money on tires:

- One of the largest companies selling premium used tires in the U.S.
- Two retail locations in Pittsburgh-area
- Warehouses along the east coast

www.champtires.com/pitt

Pitt
SEASON TICKETS
ON SALE NOW



PITTSBURGH *Panthers*.com/TICKETS



Department of Athletics

Petersen Events Center
3719 Terrace St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15261



THE SCRIPT SOCIETY REACHES 150 MEMBER MILESTONE

Thank you to the 150 members who have joined **The Script Society** since its launch in September 2020. Members have invested more than **\$54 million** to provide our student-athletes a world-class experience.



• BUILDING CHAMPIONS •

COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE •

BUILDING CHAMPIONS •

COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE •

BE PART OF THE NEXT 150!

Please contact the Panther Club today at

scriptsociety@athletics.pitt.edu