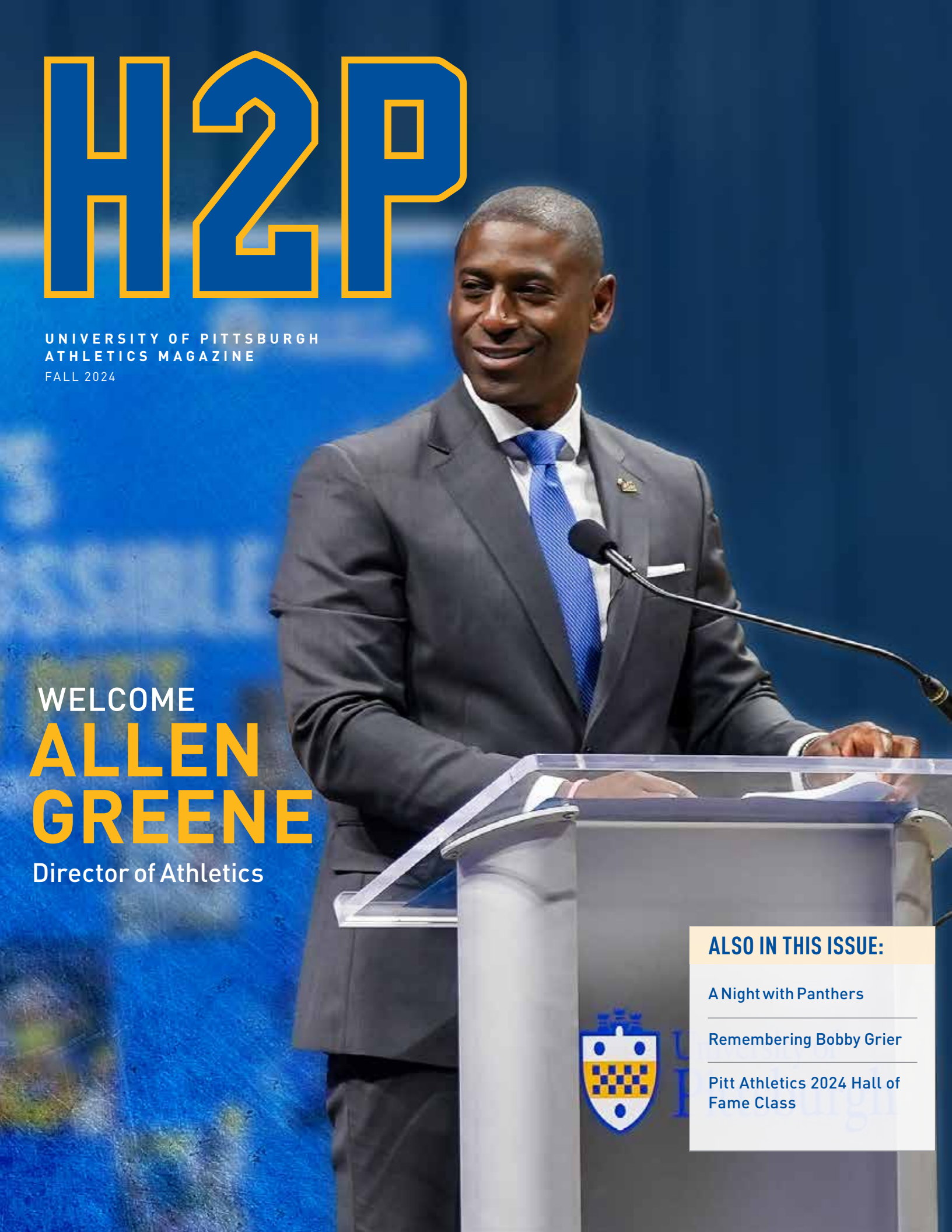
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ATHLETICS MAGAZINE
FALL 2024



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ON THE COVER:

The University of Pittsburgh welcomes its new director of athletics, Allen Greene. See the cover story beginning on page 18.

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University of Pittsburgh



As a senior at the University of Pittsburgh reflecting on my time here, I am filled with gratitude. Looking back at first-year Rachel and comparing her to who I am today, I realize that my growth is a direct result of the incredible mentors, coaches, professors, teammates, family and friends who have supported me along the way. I truly wouldn't be here without all of you.

Pitt volleyball is a special program with an elite coaching staff. Since Fish [Head Coach Dan Fisher] has been at Pitt, every single year, we have achieved more. He and all our coaches lead in a way that inspires. Our team's persistent hard work and passion are true testaments to the lessons we have learned from them.

Over my three years at Pitt, we have made history. My first year, we beat Purdue University to make it to the program's first-ever NCAA semifinals. That memory, that season and that group of people will forever hold a special place in my heart. Thanks to an extra year of eligibility, I had the opportunity to play alongside amazing women such as Kayla Lund, Chinaza Ndee, Kylee Levers and Leketor Member-Meneh. Winning that game and experiencing the dedication of the older players who made history-breaking achievements is something I will always cherish.

Then, my sophomore year, we had another unforgettable season. We were ACC champions for the fourth time in program history, and when the postseason came around, we were ready. This time, our NCAA quarterfinal game was held in Wisconsin, against Wisconsin (the reigning national champions, I might add.) The field house we were in was not our beloved Fitzgerald Field House but rather the UW Field House, filled with relentless, roaring, red-clad fans. After a hard-fought five-setter, we came out on top, and the emotions we felt were indescribable. It was an extraordinary season full of life-changing experiences and people.

Last year, we competed from the preseason through conference play and achieved another ACC title. During the selection show, it was revealed that Pitt would host up until the national semifinals. So, after battling through the first couple of rounds, we met up with the University of Louisville in the Fitzgerald Field House, playing to advance to the final four. Off to a rocky start, we lost the first two sets, and we needed to turn it around. In the next three sets, with a loud crowd willing us through the game, we came back and ended up reverse-sweeping the Cardinals to make it to our third-consecutive final four.

And this season, 2024, we have already made history. We earned our first ever No. 1 AVCA ranking, and thanks to the city of Pittsburgh and the fans of Pitt volleyball, we sold out the Petersen Events Center, setting a new program attendance record with 11,800 supporters filling the stands.

The life lessons and memories I will take away from Pitt will last far beyond my time here. I'm forever grateful for my teammates, coaches and friends; the fans, donors, spirit teams and band; and the community of Pittsburgh.

But we are not done yet. We are not satisfied. I believe that with the support of our fans and the city of Pittsburgh, and with our staff and players, we can bring home a national championship.

Hail to Pitt!
Rachel Fairbanks
#10

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NAME IMAGE & LIKENESS

At a glance...

1,307
TOTAL NIL Transactions

350+
Student-athletes with NIL Transactions

ALL
Programs with NIL Transactions

$4.54 M
TOTAL TRANSACTION VALUE

$3,472
AVERAGE TRANSACTION VALUE

150+
BUSINESSES/COMPANIES PARTNERED WITH PITT STUDENT-ATHLETES

135+
TOTAL VERIFIED LX BUSINESSES/INDIVIDUALS

CONGRATULATIONS
PITT OLYMPIANS



RANDY WALDRUM
NIGERIA

JAYLA PINA
CAPE VERDE

MARCEDES WALKER
AZERBAIJAN

DEBORAH ABIODUN
NIGERIA

“Fantastic” Estate Gift to Benefit Track, Football Programs

Written by Josh Rowntree

As many look toward the future and consider what to do with their finances, the University of Pittsburgh has worked diligently to develop flexible but meaningful ways to leave a legacy within the University community.



Estate giving and planned giving are ways to donate to the University while still leaving the door open for uncertain future life developments.

Through estate giving, the University allows potential donors to set aside a select portion or percentage of their wealth as a gift.

"Very often folks say, 'I'm not wealthy; I don't have an estate,'" says Jim Sismour, Pitt's director of planned giving. "But everyone has an estate. When you die, if you have a bicycle and some food in the fridge, you have an estate.

"What we do is work with people who want to consider making a gift—making a provision, more specifically—for a gift after death. A very large amount of those gifts comes from their will. If they have a living trust, it's a distribution from their trust. You can make a gift like that in your will to the University of Pittsburgh or to any organization or institution or organization you'd like to support."

Essentially, a living trust gives the donor the opportunity to protect their current finances while still allowing for the potential of making a gift when they're able, even if that does not occur until they've passed away.

When a donor has officially documented their estate intentions with Pitt, they are welcomed into the University's 1787 Society. The 1787 Society was founded to recognize those individuals who have made a commitment to Pitt through planned or deferred gifts, regardless of size, through a bequest, annuity, trust, life insurance policy or other planned or deferred gift opportunity. As of early June 2024, the 1787 Society had more than 1,100 members and had cumulatively received nearly $800 million in planned gifts, with received and pledged gifts surpassing $1 billion.







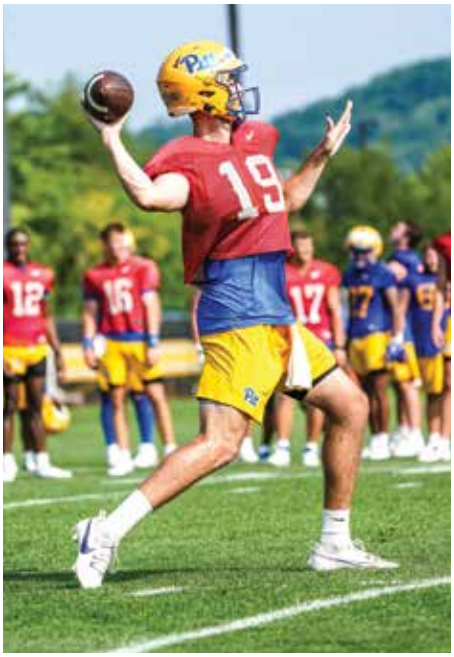
Recently, Pitt's Department of Athletics received a substantial gift when an anonymous donor pledged $1.5 million to endow scholarships for Pitt Football and Track and Field.

"Still investing along with performing some part-time consulting since retiring," the donor says. "Was not ready [to give] right now. Wanted to initiate a planned gift in a responsible and objective manner that would be impactful while honoring the legacy of family members.

"The older you become does not necessarily make your decisions better when you are 85 than when you are 65. When my wife and I initiated our discussions on potential donations, I was in my 50s. By starting early, we felt there was more time to consider various aspects of our philanthropy."

The donor began working with Pitt's major gifts staff in 2016, hoping to formulate a path toward a charitable gift while still acknowledging that conditions could change for them as they enter the later stages of their life.

> "Our goal is for each of the scholarship recipients to graduate and have a similar or better experience than I did," says the donor, and, more importantly, that each recipient is prepared to take the next step in their life and have a successful career."







"You can make this arrangement while you're alive," says Sismour. "It doesn't change your circumstances at all. Right now, if you say that you want to give 10% of your estate to the University, you've made a provision, but obviously it's not going to take effect until some point in the future.

"The gratification for the donor is knowing that they have made this provision. It's been put in place, spelled out, and they don't have to worry about it affecting their current circumstances."

Many potential donors are concerned about their long-term care needs and the rising costs associated with them. But with estate giving, Pitt considers those possible needs.

"They don't know if they're going to have to go into a nursing home," Sismour says. "Long-term care is such a big issue with folks these days, and you just don't know. To prepare for that, unless you have long-term care insurance, you want to hold onto your assets as best as you can, just in case."

For the anonymous donor, there were numerous factors to iron out with Pitt over the last eight years.

After contemplating various giving options, they felt that the best donation approach was to endow scholarships in the sport that he participated in while earning his undergraduate degree from Pitt in the 1970s: track and field. Through time and planning, they settled on five scholarships for the track program, with each being named for members of the donor's family. Another scholarship will be awarded to the Pitt football program and will be named for a family member who played high school football before passing away in a car accident a quarter of a century before the donor was born.

"We went through various considerations and formulated how we wanted to structure our gift," says the donor, who also received two master's degrees from Pitt.

"We invested time in understanding the NCAA scholarship implications coupled with the formation of our own estate goals and objectives. The scholarships represent future ongoing long-term support for a specific purpose."

"The scholarships are for an acknowledgment of the legacy of my family. Each scholarship is a tribute to various individuals in my family."

The donor is an ardent supporter of Pitt Athletics and someone who keeps a keen eye on the department as a whole as well as on individual teams. They were drawn to estate giving thanks, in part, to the successful development of Pitt's athletic programs.

"That was a big plus for us," they say. "During all of our conversations with the major giving team, they were energetic, enthusiastic, had a vision and expressed sincere determination in making all Pitt athletic programs successful."

"Our goal is for each of the scholarship recipients to graduate and have a similar or better experience than I did," says the donor, and, more importantly, that each recipient is prepared to take the next step in their life and have a successful career."

Sismour and his staff will, in time, take that gift and, through the endowment process, invest it into the future, providing scholarships for select students for generations to come.

"These are forever gifts that will always support students at the University of Pittsburgh," Sismour says. "That's an evergreen need of the University. This is just a fantastic gift."

The donor hopes that using their finances to better someone's college experience will better their life and the world and potentially will start a perpetual cycle of similar giving.

"Ideally, somewhere down the road, my wife and I want to help a person who's going to be highly successful," adds the donor, "and that one, two or more of these individuals will one day contemplate undertaking similar types of philanthropy with Pitt."

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For all the details on the Pitt2Pitt Scholarship, visit gradstudies.pitt.edu/pitt2pitt

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SCHOLARSHIP

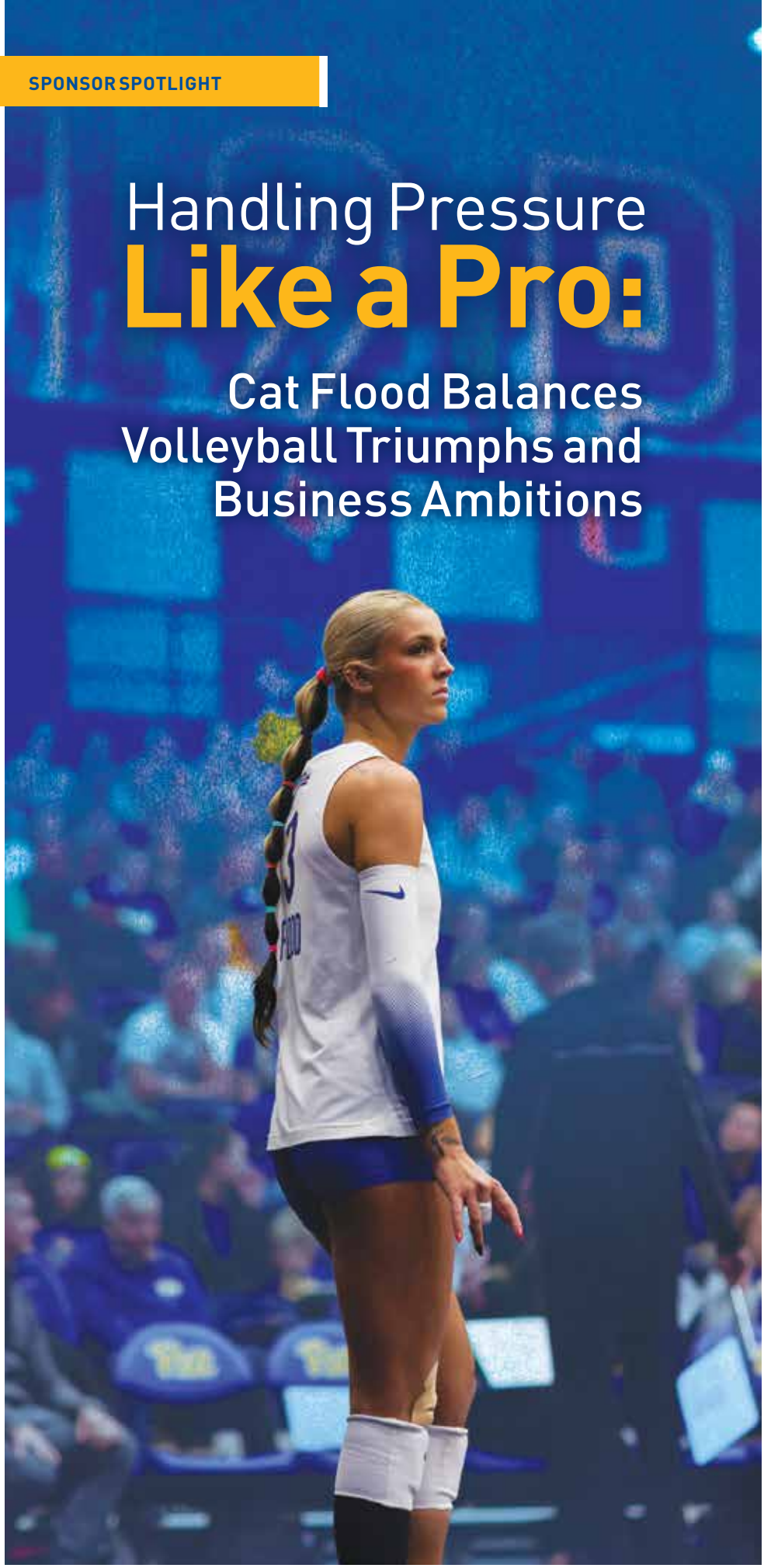
Graduating Pitt undergraduates and alumni can receive up to a $7,500 tuition scholarship per year when they enroll in a participating Pitt graduate or professional program.



University of Pittsburgh | Graduate Studies

Handling Pressure Like a Pro:

Cat Flood Balances Volleyball Triumphs and Business Ambitions



Written by Carole Reinert

By the time an athlete starts playing at the collegiate level, they are usually used to the pressure of competition and how large crowds intensify the pressure.

During the five years that Cat Flood has been on the University of Pittsburgh volleyball team, the team's popularity has grown. Last season, it sold out at the Fitzgerald Field House and the Petersen Events Center. The largest crowd in the program's history—8,865 fans—packed the Pete for the regular season win over Louisville. Former Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger started attending their games, and when they competed in the Final Four, fans from as far away as California came to watch the team play in Tampa, Florida.

When you watch Flood on the court, you see a fierce competitor who doesn't buckle under pressure. But that doesn't mean she doesn't feel it.

"Right before the game starts, I will not be nervous. Then the lights go off and the intro video starts, and I take a moment and think 'Wow,'" says Flood.

Her coaches often talk about the privilege of pressure.

"We are given the opportunity to play on the biggest stage and [in] the biggest moments in front of the biggest crowds. It's a bit unreal," Flood admits. She relies on deep breathing and visualization before games and tells herself, "I am with my best friends; I am with my sisters. I am with my family, and the only pressure I feel is to perform for them, not anybody else."

As the game progresses, so does the pressure.

"It can be a little nerve-wracking because you want to be the person who makes the play at the big moment," she says.

Her ability to stay laser focused and calm under pressure will help her to succeed when she leaves the court and



enters the business world. Luckily, that won't happen for another year.

Flood is spending her fifth year on the team in the Master of Science program in management at Pitt's Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business. Created for those without business experience, this degree will give her the foundations of business—classes in statistical analysis, financial accounting, economic analysis and marketing management—to complement her liberal arts background. Flood also can take a three-credit experience-based learning course and take part in a variety of professional development opportunities.

"I know Katz is a very good school, and I'm extremely grateful for the opportunity," says Flood.

The connection between athletics and business is well known. Sports teach teamwork and time management, and those who play in college learn to adapt to frequent travel. The intense commitment—Flood spends a tremendous amount of time in practice and games—develops a perseverance mindset.

She's twice been named to the All-Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) Academic Team and has helped Pitt to reach three straight Final Four appearances—the only Final Four appearances in program history—and win its second-consecutive ACC championship. Her three aces against Washington State in the regional finals tied a career high.

It's amazing to think that she almost didn't come to Pitt.

Flood always thought she'd follow in her mother's footsteps and attend Duke. That changed when she received an email from Kellen Petrone, Pitt's associate head volleyball coach. At first, she hesitated. But her mother told her that she shouldn't eliminate options. All it took was meeting the team once and she was ready to commit.

"They were just so welcoming. I felt like they really wanted me to be there," remembers Flood. She committed in September 2018.

Looking back at the last four years, this serving specialist and outside hitter has absolutely no regrets. "Our team culture is incredible, the coaching staff is unbelievable and we get tremendous support from the city," says Flood. An only child, she calls her teammates her sisters.

Flood loves that the band and cheerleaders come to their games and enjoys the energy that fans bring to the matches. This is a much-welcomed contrast to her first year on the team. She remembers going to the Elite Eight during the pandemic with only 600 people sitting far apart from each other. "It was strange, how quiet it was," she says.

Growing up in Chicago, Illinois, she began kicking a soccer ball when she was 4 years old, originally thinking she'd pursue collegiate soccer. She played both sports for a while, ultimately deciding to focus just on volleyball as a high school sophomore. Ironically, she thought she was too tall for soccer. When she joined Pitt's volleyball team, she was one of the taller players.

"Now, some of the outside hitters are 6 foot 4 or 6 foot 5, and I am just 6 foot 2. Sometimes in volleyball, two inches can matter," says Flood.

Lacking those two inches certainly hasn't hurt Flood's performance.

While she didn't attend her mother's alma mater, both parents influenced her career aspirations, perhaps without realizing it. Her mother worked in advertising, which Flood found interesting. Her father has been restoring a 1969 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray, which taught her the inner workings of automobiles. She also enjoys watching Formula 1 racing; Charles Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton are her favorite drivers, and she loves the cleverness of their marketing.

Thanks to the undergraduate and graduate programs available at Pitt, she is creating the perfect path to her dream job: becoming an agent for a NASCAR or Formula 1 driver or working on advertising and social media campaigns. Knowing that her end goal was to get a position in the business side of sports, she spent her undergraduate years as a media and professional communications major.

"I thought I'd focus on the more creative side first, then follow through with the business side at the end of my time at Pitt," explains Flood.

Flood graduated in April 2024 with a 3.6 grade point average; a media and professional communications degree; and two certificates, one in sports studies and the other in corporate and community relations. She gained valuable experience as cochair of marketing and communications for the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, where she runs the group's Instagram account. Plus, during an internship with the athletics department's postproduction team, she sat courtside and filmed the men's basketball games.

She managed to do all this while being on the Dean's List, the ACC Academic Honor Roll and the All-ACC Academic Team.

Graduate classes are more intense than undergraduate classes. Flood knows she can juggle it all thanks to Christina "Tilly" Sheets, associate athletic director for academic support services, who she calls the best academic advisor of all time.

"She has saved my life a few times," laughs Flood. "She'll curate the right schedule for us, get us tutors if needed and plan study hall hours."

In addition to having Sheets in her corner, she will continue to rely on her faith to help her succeed.

"I truly think that my purpose was to be here, in Pittsburgh, with my team and receive the highest level of education," adds Flood.

ACC REGULAR SEASON

CHAMPS

ACC DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Casper Svendby

ACC COACH OF THE YEAR
Jay Vidovich

ALL-ACC FIRST TEAM
Guilherme Feitosa
Luis Sahmkow
Casper Svendby

ALL-ACC SECOND TEAM
Casper Grening

THIRD TEAM
Cabral Carter
Jackson Gilman

ACC ALL-FRESHMAN TEAM
Lasse Dahl



FIGHT Pitt FIGHT

PITT ATHLETICS

HALL OF FAME

CLASS OF 2024



Back Row (left to right): Hall of Fame Chairperson Billy Knight; DeJuan Blair; Darrelle Revis; Al Romano; Allison Groat DeStefano, Carol Groat and Tracey Groat Goetz (daughters of Dick Groat) and Jamie Pelusi

Front Row (left to right): Amy Jackson Partridge; Tiffany Bell Lewis, daughter of Steve Lewis; Brianna Kiesel-Acker; Bill Hillgrove; George McLaren, grandson of George McLaren and Executive Associate Athletic Director, Sport Administration Jen Tuscano

The University of Pittsburgh inducted another star-studded Pitt Athletics Hall of Fame class in September. The Pitt Athletics Hall of Fame enshrined 10 new members in its 2024 induction class on September 13, 2024, at the Petersen Events Center.

THE HONOREES ARE:

DeJuan Blair (Men's Basketball)
Dick Groat (Broadcaster; Posthumous)
Bill Hillgrove (Broadcaster)
Amy Jackson (Women's Swimming)
Brianna Kiesel (Women's Basketball)
George McLaren (Football; Posthumous)
Jamie Pelusi (Women's Soccer)
Darrelle Revis (Football)
Al Romano (Football)
Steve Lewis (Track and Field Coach; Posthumous)



From Field to Future:

Preparing Student-Athletes for the Next Play

Written by Craig Meyer

Career consultant meeting with student-athlete

Every year around the NCAA basketball tournaments and the college football bowl season, there's an NCAA commercial that runs on television that's inescapable for any college sports fan. As the 30-second spot comes to an end, a voiceover notes that there are hundreds of thousands of NCAA student-athletes in a given year and that "most of us go pro in something other than sports."

It's a wholesome and necessary reminder that while many of these student-athletes being watched by millions of people come to college with dreams of making it to the professional ranks, there's an overwhelming statistical probability that their years in college will mark the end of their competitive athletic careers before they move on to more conventional, perhaps less thrilling professions beyond a field or court—as legendary Steelers coach Chuck Noll once termed it, their "life's work."

At the University of Pittsburgh, that mission is much more than heartwarming rhetoric to punctuate a public service announcement.

A part of the Cathy and John Pelusi Family Life Skills Program in the University's Department of Athletics, the career development journey is an initiative that works with student-athletes over the course of their time at Pitt to prepare them for the professional world that awaits them after college.

It's quite effective, too, with a 100% job placement rate in the most recent academic year.

"We have those programs where it's the whole team and all the student-athletes, but where we really shine is [that] our programs are so individualized. We have the man- and womanpower to meet with each one of the student-athletes and ask what they want to do," says Raquel Montalvo Perez, a career consultant for student-athletes. "I work with all sports. I work with all student-athletes [who] are getting on my calendar, and I'm able to personalize their path and goals so that it's not just a random job [they're] landing after graduation or a random opportunity. It has actually been thought out by so many people in the life skills area. We are very comprehensive."

Though it has evolved and expanded its reach over time, the program has existed in some form for about two decades.

In the mid-2000s, then Chancellor Mark Nordenberg, believing there to be a need for more student-athlete support, helped to establish a career consultant position to work with student-athletes, a hybrid role that brought together the athletics department and the University's career center. From there, it grew from one individual to a staff of nine that now makes up the life skills program.

The career development journey offers a course that 90% of first-year student-athletes take and for which they receive an elective credit. In it, they learn about what the career development journey and the life skills program offer while receiving initial career consultations and financial literacy instruction, among other services. After getting a taste of what the life skills program can provide to them, student-athletes receive a specific advisor, one who regularly follows up and meets with them every term or once a year, depending on their needs. If nothing else, advisors are there to remind student-athletes that they're around to help and be a resource.

While the program has its goals and methods, it's also extremely flexible. It has to be. Not every student-athlete comes into college with the same understanding of what they want, and because of that, those helping them with the next steps in their life can't follow the same specific path.

"It's a spectrum," says Kelsi Schaer, Pitt's former assistant athletic director, student life. "One of our internal mantras is 'Meet you where you are, figure out where you want to go and build a plan to get there.' We try to individualize that career plan and support. One student-athlete shows up and they're like, 'I'm going to med school. Here's my four-year plan. Can you help me identify shadowing opportunities, community service projects, and how to develop my personal statements? How do I start thinking about that now?' Whereas others show up and they say, 'I have no idea what I want to major in. Here's maybe what I'm thinking about doing. What major should I do in order to achieve an outcome I hope to see?' It's a really dynamic position or approach because it really is catered to each individual student-athlete."



One on one career consultation with a student-athlete

With the career development journey, each staff member has a certain number of student-athletes by sport with whom they work. To best accommodate the student-athletes they advise, they'll meet them at the team's training facility, something that's particularly helpful for football players who practice and train in a facility just across the Monongahela River from campus. In that way, the career development journey literally meets an athlete where they are.

Beyond that on-the-nose embodiment of the initiative's ethos, the career development journey personalizes its approach depending on where a student-athlete is when they enter the program, what professions they want to pursue and how much time they have to work toward those goals. In many cases, life skills staff members are working with an 18-year-old first year who just got to campus and is making sense of this new world in which they've immersed themselves. In other instances, it's a transfer student with only one year of eligibility remaining.

After an exploratory phase, a student-athlete gets more hands-on interactions with their advisor, a time in which the advisor gets a better sense of the person and budding professional with whom they're working. By the time job and internship applications begin, advisors can help them seek out potential opportunities and get in touch with connections at those companies, organizations and agencies. If the student-athlete can negotiate their salary, they get assistance with that, along with advice on benefits being offered.

And that helping hand remains extended after graduation. Alums can seek out the services of the career development journey after their playing careers at Pitt. Montalvo Perez, for example, says that she has recently worked with a former Panthers baseball player who graduated last year and is seeking job opportunities.

For Montalvo Perez, a former student-athlete herself (she played tennis at Eastern Kentucky University), her job provides her with the chance to work with people whose often chaotic lives she deeply understands.

"If you don't understand the time commitment that students have, it's just difficult," she says. Student-athletes just don't have that luxury of having a normal schedule. Understanding that I've gone through it and how student-athletes come out better as people after going through this experience, but also having that support [that] a 'regular student' would have with their career, I think that's 90% of it."

Those at Pitt, well aware of similar offerings at major colleges across the country, see the program as unique, particularly when it comes to its success in one of its primary objectives: helping student-athletes to seamlessly transition into the next phase of their lives.

After a slight dip during the COVID-19 pandemic, when companies were downsizing and job openings weren't particularly plentiful, the career development journey has had a 100% job placement rate. That figure is determined by the percentage of student-athletes no longer seeking a job within six months of graduating with their first degree.

The initiative has taken on an added importance in recent years, with student-athletes now able to earn money from their name, image and likeness. It's no longer about student-athletes building toward a career but rather, depending on their interests, building a personal brand on social media and using those platforms to network.

For those with the career development journey, the shifting landscape of college athletics doesn't change what drives them every day in their work.

"It's seeing student-athletes take a step in their development, whether it's being excited that they got an interview for a job or got their first full-time job offer or they got into grad school or they're going professional," Schaer says. "The long-term goal is [that] whatever that first step post-sport or post-Pitt looks like, they're excited, and they feel like our life skills team helped them in some capacity. At the same time, it's even the tiny steps, like helping a student-athlete open a bank account, and now they feel more confident they know how to manage their money just a tiny bit. It's just one step in their development that they recognize and they appreciate [that] makes every day here worth it."



A Night with Panthers

Head Football Coach Pat Narduzzi and football player Donovan McMillon closed the program talking about the importance of Alliance 412 and auctioning off a charter to an away football game.

Pitt Athletics, in collaboration with its official athletics collective, Alliance 412, hosted "A Night with Panthers" at the Petersen Events Center. The evening featured an engaging program hearing from Coach Narduzzi and Coach Capel, along with insights on the upcoming seasons from current student-athletes Rachel Fairbanks (Volleyball), Jaland Lowe (Men's Basketball), and Donovan McMillon (Football). The event also included both silent and live auctions, with all proceeds directly supporting Pitt student-athletes and their partnership with Alliance 412.



A Night with Panthers provided the opportunity for supporters to connect with head coaches, staff and student-athletes.





Alliance 412 supporters and members of The Script Society, John and Lisa Sieckowski and Jon Urban



Head Men's Basketball Coach Jeff Capel and men's basketball player Jaland Lowe shared thoughts on the resurgence of Pitt basketball before auctioning off the opportunity to travel with the team to the North Carolina game.



Voice of the Panthers Bill Hillgrove shared a few favorite memories and auctioned off the opportunity to spend a game in the radio booth with him and the broadcast team.



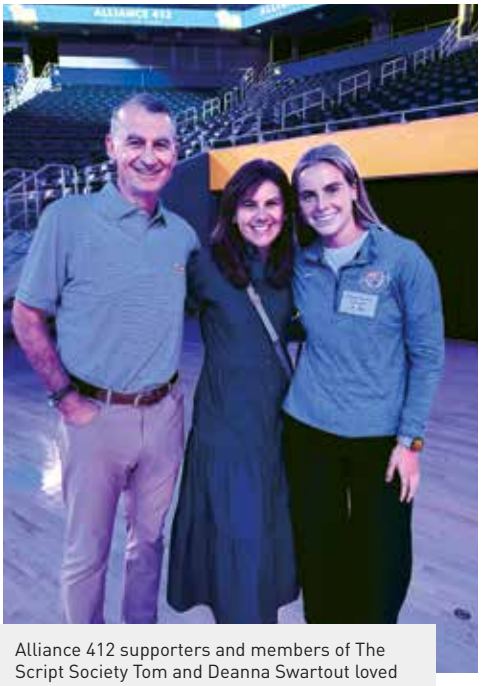
93.7 The Fan Morning Show hosts Dorin Dickerson (former Pitt All-American) and Adam Crowley (WVU fan) played on the Backyard Brawl rivalry for the crowd.



Men's Basketball Player Jorge Diaz Graham



The McKamish Family with football players Branson Taylor, Gavin Bartholomew and Donovan McMillon



Alliance 412 supporters and members of The Script Society Tom and Deanna Swartout loved meeting lacrosse player Gracie Kahoun.





Chancellor Joan Gabel (left) introduces Allen Greene as Pitt's director of athletics at an Oct. 23, 2024, press conference.

Highly accomplished and nationally respected college athletics administrator Allen Greene has been appointed director of athletics at the University of Pittsburgh, Chancellor Joan Gabel announced on Oct. 18. Greene began his role at Pitt on Nov. 1, dividing his time between Pittsburgh and Knoxville to fullfill any outstanding responsibilites at the University of Tennessee.

"Pitt Athletics is the front porch of the University of Pittsburgh, serving as a crucial access point for so many across our campus, our region, our nation and the world," said Chancellor Joan Gabel. "In Allen Greene, we have a proven national leader who exemplifies the Pitt way, and who has all of the experience and intangibles to elevate our athletics program in competition and in the classroom. In my conversations with Allen and with many others who know him well, it is clear that he will lead us successfully into the new world of intercollegiate athletics."

"Chancellor Gabel and the advisory committee deserve great credit for identifying and appointing such an experienced and visionary leader like Allen Greene for our athletics department," said Board of Trustees Chairperson John Verbanac.

"I am tremendously grateful and honored to receive the opportunity from Chancellor Gabel to join the University of Pittsburgh, an institution and athletic tradition I've long admired," said Greene. "It was apparent from my very first conversation with Chancellor Gabel that Pitt has the highest



of aspirations in every endeavor it undertakes. That's tremendously energizing to me and a challenge I fully embrace. I am inspired by the storied history of Pitt Athletics and am fully dedicated to helping our Panthers reach even greater heights in the future. I am looking forward to meeting and working on behalf of Pitt's student-athletes, coaches, staff and campus leaders. The Greene family is incredibly thankful and excited to proudly wear Pitt's blue and gold."

"On behalf of Pitt Athletics, I would like to welcome Allen Greene and his family to the University of Pittsburgh," said Jeff Capel, head coach of Pitt men's basketball, who served on the advisory committee. "I also want to thank and congratulate Chancellor Gabel on an excellent search process. Allen brings to Pitt an outstanding reputation as an innovative leader who is personally invested in the student-athletes and staff under his watch. His impressive administrative experience will be a tremendous asset not only for our athletics department but also the entire University. We greatly look forward to his arrival on campus."

Greene has been a lead figure in the management of name, image and likeness (NIL) programs at three separate Southeastern Conference (SEC) institutions, including most recently at the University of Tennessee, where he has served as senior deputy athletics director since December 2023. He has played an integral role in the athletics department's over 30% increase in annual revenue. Prior to his tenure with the Volunteers, he served a year at the University of Mississippi as senior deputy athletics director for external relations and business development.

From 2018 and 2022, Greene served as director of athletics at Auburn University, where his record of success included eight SEC championships and 47 programs achieving Top 25 finishes in national rankings.

In 2021-22 alone, six Auburn athletic programs finished in the nation's Top 10. During his tenure, the Auburn men's basketball team earned the first No. 1 national ranking in program history and advanced to its first Final Four; the baseball team returned to the College World Series for the first time in 22 years; the equestrian team won two national championships; and student-athlete grade-point averages rose to a combined 3.25. Auburn Athletics also welcomed its four largest individual donations ever, and the Woltosz Football Performance Center—a $92 million football facility that stands as the largest athletics project in Auburn history—was constructed.

Prior to Auburn, Greene served the University at Buffalo as director of athletics from 2015 to 2018. His tenure was distinguished by historic success athletically and academically. In the competitive arena, four Buffalo teams advanced to their respective NCAA championships in a two-year span. The men's and women's basketball teams both won Mid-American Conference (MAC) championships in 2016—the first time that dual feat was achieved in the MAC since 2002—and earned automatic NCAA Tournament berths. The 2017-18 men's basketball team went 27-9 and won its first-ever NCAA Tournament game by upsetting Pac-12 champion Arizona, 89-68.

Under Greene's watch, Buffalo student-athletes earned grade-point averages of 3.0 or better for 11 consecutive semesters, with the football team earning its highest team GPA in program history.

Greene was instrumental in significantly enhancing donor and corporate support for Buffalo Athletics. He also negotiated the department's first multimedia rights agreement.

Greene was a three-year starter for the Irish baseball team at the University of Notre Dame, where he earned a bachelor's degree in finance in 2000. He was a ninth-round selection in the 1998 Major League Baseball draft by the New York Yankees and played three years in the organization's minor league system. He later earned a Master of Business Administration at Indiana University's South Bend campus.

He is highly regarded by his peers, having served on the executive committee of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) and LEAD1 as 1st vice-chair.

He and his wife, Christy, have three children: daughters Rian and Seneca and son Samuel.

NATIONAL PRAISE FOR ALLEN GREENE

"Congratulations to the University of Pittsburgh and Chancellor Gabel on a home run hire! Allen is one of the most innovative, genuine and competitive leaders we have in college athletics. We are sad to lose Allen and his family on Rocky Top, but look forward to seeing their transformative impact at Pitt!"

- Danny White, Vice Chancellor/Director of Athletics, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

"Allen has added so much to our campus while in his leadership role in our Athletics Department, and I look forward to seeing the exceptional leadership he will provide the University of Pittsburgh. We are all aware of the uncertain state of college athletics right now, and I know Allen will also be a leader in that national conversation."

- Donde Plowman, Chancellor, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

"Allen Greene is an outstanding leader; man of great character; and one of the most caring, genuine people that I've worked with in college athletics. He is an excellent listener and will create alignment with coaches, staff, alumni and donors on the direction of the athletics department. Allen is an outstanding hire and will prove to be a great leader for the University of Pittsburgh."

- Lance Leipold, Head Football Coach, University of Kansas

"We look forward to welcoming Allen Greene to the ACC and having him join our outstanding group of athletic directors. As a former student-athlete at one of our league institutions, Allen will be a tremendous advocate for Pitt and the ACC. To be certain, I applaud Chancellor Joan Gabel's leadership, and Allen's experience and skill set will be a tremendous addition to our conference. Collectively, they will continue the strong momentum surrounding the University of Pittsburgh."

- Jim Phillips, Atlantic Coast Conference Commissioner

"Congrats to my friend Allen on this next chapter of what has already been a successful career. I went to work every day at Auburn trying to reward my boss, Allen, for the confidence he showed and the support he provided. He's a loyal and engaged leader with an unwavering commitment to excellence. I couldn't be happier for the Pitt community because they landed a five-star human being!"

- Bruce Pearl, Head Men's Basketball Coach, Auburn University

"Hail to Pitt—Allen Greene is a fantastic hire for the University of Pittsburgh. He is a leader with the utmost integrity. He is a champion for student-athletes. He is a role model to many, and he has a wealth of experience in intercollegiate athletics that will benefit the entire Pitt community. H2P."

- Bubba Cunningham, Director of Athletics, University of North Carolina



Allen Greene addresses the audience at the press conference announcing his appointment as director of athletics.



(left to right) Allen Greene, Chancellor Joan Gabel and Pitt Board of Trustees Chairperson John Verbanac



The Greene family



Pitt's Senior Associate Athletic Director for Major Gifts Pat Bostick (left), Allen Greene (center) and 93.7 The Fan and Pitt Radio Network Reporter Larry Richert.



Legendary Pitt wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald (center) was recognized during Larry Fitzgerald Night at the Oct. 24 football game for his election to the College Football Hall of Fame Class of 2024.

EMBRACE THE LEGACY:

Pitt Athletics' Timeless Traditions

Traditions at the University of Pittsburgh are a vibrant tapestry, woven with threads of history, pride and community and continually expanding through the generations. It all begins with our school colors, royal blue and gold, and our alma mater, setting the stage for a **journey steeped in tradition**.

ROC THE PANTHER

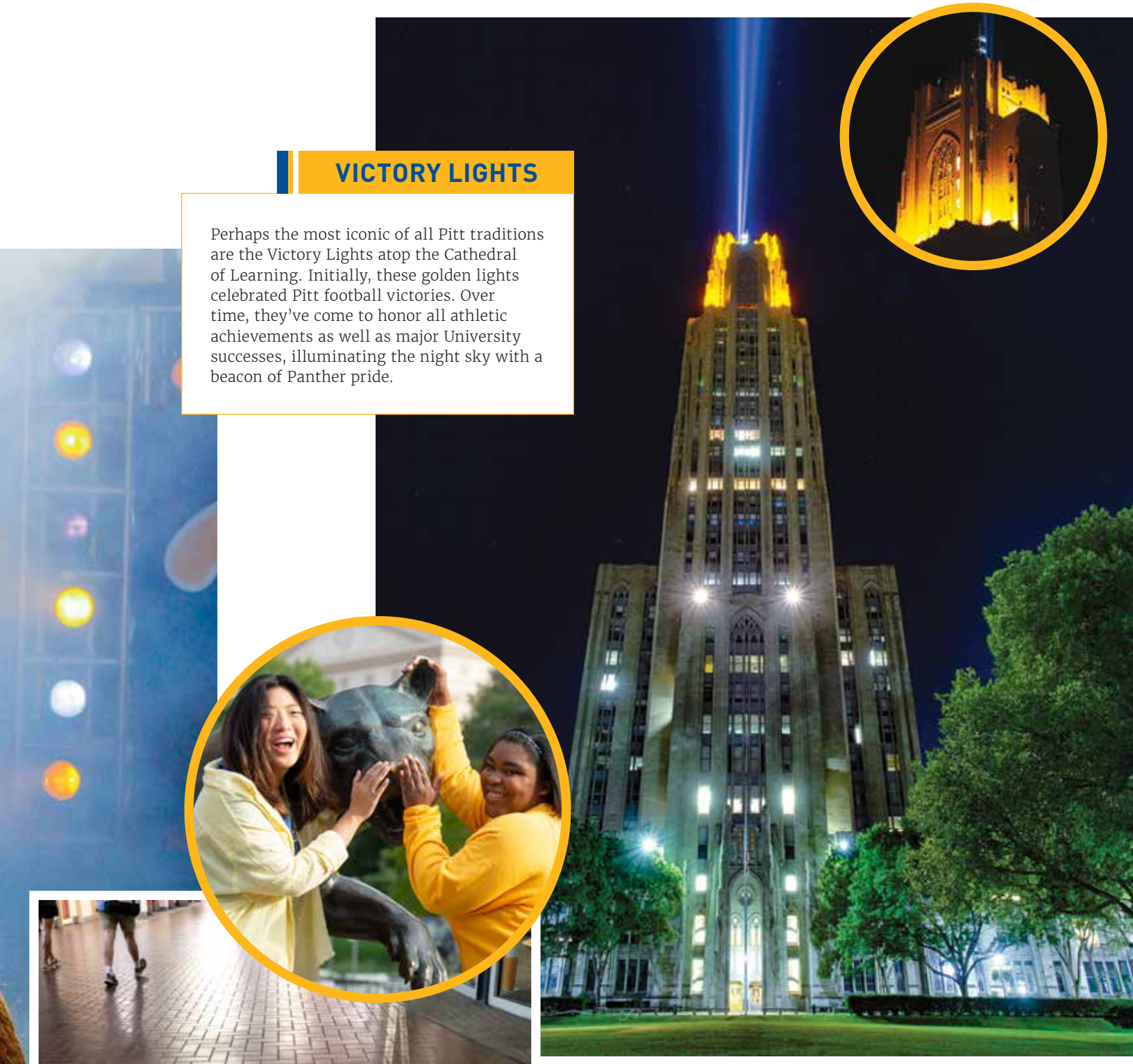
No Pitt experience is complete without encountering our beloved mascot, Roc. His infectious spirit and joy bring the campus to life, rallying students and alumni alike.





HAIL TO PITT

Derived from the University's fight song, this catchphrase has evolved into a universal greeting and a rallying cry, uniting the Pitt community in celebration and solidarity.



VICTORY LIGHTS

Perhaps the most iconic of all Pitt traditions are the Victory Lights atop the Cathedral of Learning. Initially, these golden lights celebrated Pitt football victories. Over time, they've come to honor all athletic achievements as well as major University successes, illuminating the night sky with a beacon of Panther pride.



FORBES FIELD HOME PLATE

Need a little luck for your exams? Pitt students know just where to go. The original home plate from Forbes Field, now located in Wesley W. Posvar Hall, is a cherished spot for a pre-exam jump. And don't forget to rub the nose of any Panther statue on campus for an extra dose of good fortune!

VARSITY WALK

Between the Cathedral of Learning and Heinz Memorial Chapel lies Varsity Walk, where the names of outstanding student-athletes are etched in stone. This walk of fame, conceived in 1950, celebrates athletic excellence and is a lasting tribute to those who have made significant contributions to Pitt athletics.

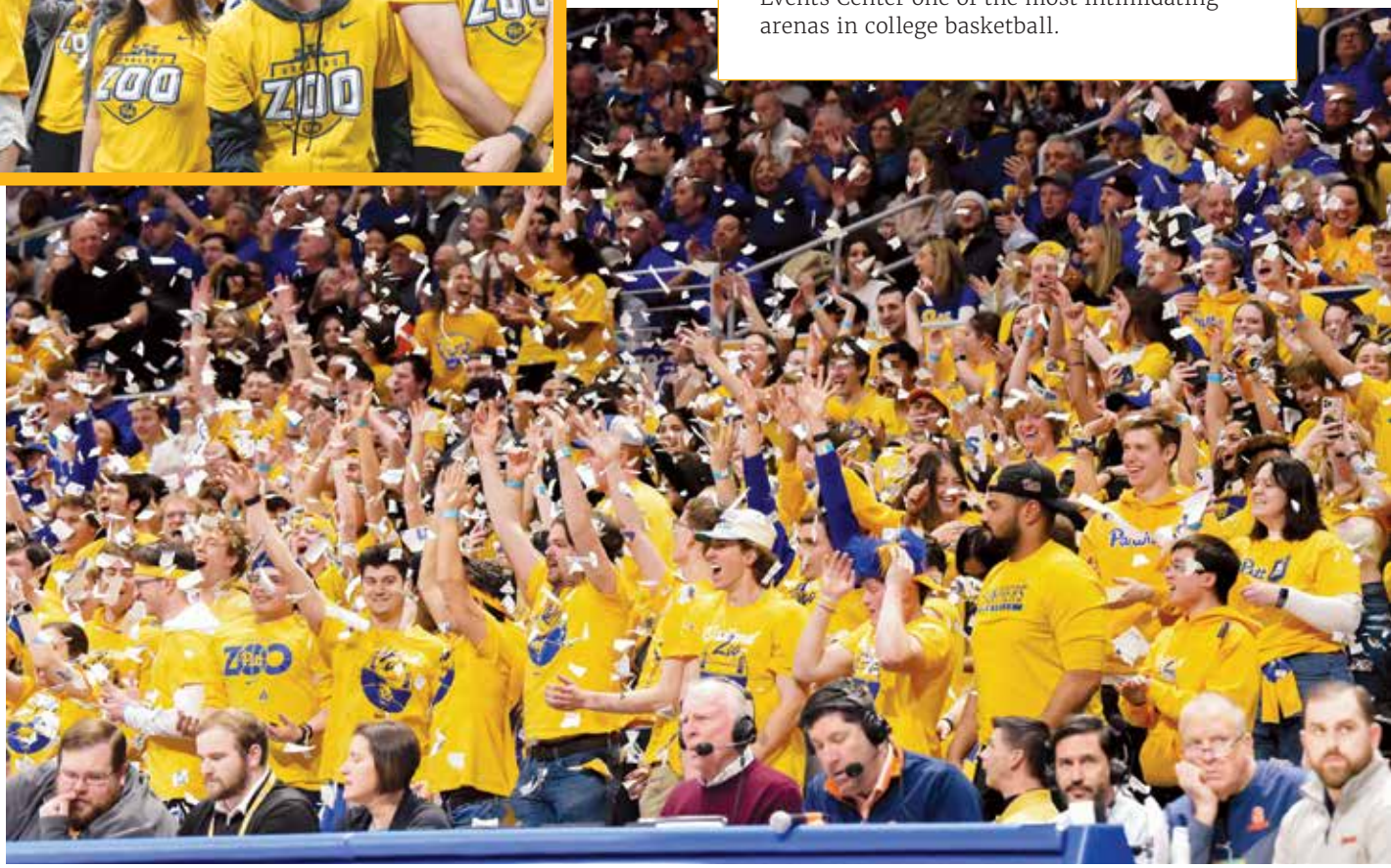




THE OAKLAND ZOO

Since 2001, the Oakland Zoo has transformed Pitt men's basketball games into electrifying events. With about 1,500 roaring students typically dressed in gold T-shirts, the Zoo is a force to be reckoned with, making the Petersen Events Center one of the most intimidating arenas in college basketball.







THE PITT BAND AND THE SNAKE

In 2019, a historic tradition was revived: the Pitt Band's "The Snake, a parade march around campus during homecoming. This spirited procession, once a staple in the 1950s, has reclaimed its place in the Pitt community's heart and even earned a spot on an ESPN broadcast.

HOMECOMING

Every fall, homecoming brings the Pitt community together, culminating in a home football game. It's a time of celebration, reconnection and Panther pride, when traditions old and new converge.







At Pitt, traditions aren't just celebrated, they're lived—passed down from one generation to the next, each adding its own unique chapter to our storied history. Embrace the legacy. Hail to Pitt!

COACHING AND LEADING
Away from the Game

Written by Craig Meyer

Sports can nurture and strengthen certain traits, making what many see as leisurely activities as much of a character-building exercise as a competitive pursuit.

Sports necessitate discipline. They teach structure. They require teamwork, even in more individualized competitions. The lessons learned on a field or court or inside a gym or pool can help to prepare someone for challenges and situations they may face in their life or career.

It's something three former University of Pittsburgh female student-athletes know well. After their time at Pitt, these Panthers have gone from being leaders on their teams to leaders in the world of business, where they have used their ingenuity, determination and drive to help build companies from scratch.

Once standout players, these individuals are now, in some sense, coaches. But rather than standing on a sideline with a whistle draped around their neck, barking instructions to those under their supervision, they're breaking new ground, pursuing their passions and forging a future entirely of their own creation.

Here are some of their stories.



CAROLYNE SAVINI (A&S '04)

After graduating from Pitt in 2004 armed with several school swimming records as well as her diploma, Carolyne Savini carried with her a dream: She wanted to be a college athletic director.

Shortly after getting to Ohio University, where she earned her master's in sports administration, her plans changed. Upon meeting a graduate of the program in which she was enrolled who had an executive search firm, Savini went from being someone who would lead a college athletic department to someone potentially tasked with finding that leader.

"What I thought might be an 18-36-month job for me turned into a career," Savini says.

Today, 20 years after her Pitt graduation, Savini is now her own boss. In April, she officially launched The Catalyst Executive, an executive coaching and leadership development firm that aims to "reimagine how we develop, promote, and support executive talent as they navigate challenges and opportunities in business and life," according to its website.

The firm offers executive coaching, leadership development, succession planning, onboarding support and assessment and leader development programming, among other services. Put more succinctly, Savini says that The Catalyst Executive's goal is "bringing more exceptional leadership into the world."

When it comes to leadership, Savini can speak from experience.

Following a decorated swimming career at Pitt, in which she set several school records and was an honorable mention All-American, and after earning her master's degree, Savini embarked on a lengthy and accomplished career in executive

recruiting. She worked for 12 years with TurnkeyZRG, an executive search firm in the sports and entertainment sphere, before moving on to another firm, Nolan Partners, and eventually ending up at Activision Blizzard, an American video game holding company, where she worked in executive practice and talent management for three and a half years.

Over that time, she worked with the likes of the NBA, Washington Nationals, Milwaukee Bucks, Kansas City Chiefs, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Miami Dolphins, U.S. Tennis Association, National Women's Soccer League and Super Bowl XLVIII host committee.

For all the success she found, she envisioned a different kind of future for herself. Even in her days at Turnkey, she knew that one day she wanted to launch her own business.

"I knew from having worked in a small business that I could do this, too," she says. "It's not rocket science. I had a desire to be an entrepreneur and have my own business. That was percolating in the back of my mind. Quite frankly, while I kind of assumed that someday I would launch my own executive search firm, it's in part because it's what I knew, but not necessarily what I felt like the world needed. Truth be told, my sector of the sports industry doesn't need another executive recruiting firm. There's a ton out there now compared to when I first started doing it."

The need for building great leaders rather than finding and recruiting them was made even more urgent for Savini after her time at Activision, which faced a lawsuit for allegedly fostering a culture of sexual harassment near the end of her time there. Though Savini didn't personally experience any of the misdeeds at the center of the lawsuit, her time at Activision showed her that large companies can have "black holes sucking the life out of what I consider to be great leadership."

"That got me really passionate about, broadly, what makes a great leader and all the things that are wrapped up into it," she says.

Starting a new business can be an onerous endeavor, but it's one that doesn't overwhelm Savini. Her swimming career, complete with 5 a.m. alarms for morning practices, taught her the importance of discipline and time management, particularly at Pitt, where she says she felt "like I came alive."

Her time building up The Catalyst Executive has reinforced something else for Savini: When you're truly passionate about something, even the most rigorous tasks don't feel like work.

"The love for it makes the hard tasks feel different," she says. "What might seem really challenging or really difficult or the thought of why would anyone want to do this—it brings a whole different experience into it."

ALISA SPECTOR ANGELO (A&S '87)

While working toward her MBA at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Alisa Spector Angelo came to a jarring realization.

As rigorous as her program was, and as much as she enjoyed certain facets of it, it was focused overwhelmingly on the numbers and data of business rather than the people who work within the system.

"Unless you're going to be in an organization of one, you need people to help you," she says. "How do you get people aligned, and how do you get people to do the work and execute? There was nothing on communications. How do you message? How do you persuade? How do you get people excited? All those things, whether you're talking internally or to investors or whoever, were completely lacking from the curriculum. There was such a missing space."

Even if she didn't necessarily know it in the moment, that revelation would come to define her professional life.

Spector Angelo is the founder and president of Compass Business Solutions, Inc., a consulting firm that specializes in driving "organizational performance through proven business and people strategies."

"Each one of us at Compass, gets up every morning and is energized by helping clients create workplaces where their people can thrive," Spector Angelo says. "That involves a lot of different things. That includes having the right leadership tools to be strong leaders. That requires the right policies, the right



procedures, helping our teams to perform at their best in training and development. There are all different pieces to that employee experience, and that's what my company does. How do we create these environments that people can perform their best in?"

Years before Compass was born, Spector Angelo grew to understand how genuine, sometimes overlooked, relationships between humans can elevate performance.

Spector Angelo was a gymnast at Pitt in the mid-1980s, earning NCAA All-Region recognition three times over the course of her collegiate career. While there, she forged a strong bond with Donna Sanft, who was her coach for three years before embarking on a trailblazing career in the University's athletic department. They remain close today: Sanft, a Pitt Athletics Hall of Famer, occasionally lends her expertise on consulting projects at Compass.

"Like any great leader, she was able to see what I couldn't see in myself to help me to be my best," Spector Angelo says. "That goes for both inside the gym and in life."

While studying at UMass, she became enamored with her organizational development class. She would take the motivational theories she was taught in the classroom and apply them to her job helping to coach the school's gymnastics team.

As she saw those lessons applied successfully in the real world, the idea behind Compass and Spector Angelo's career was born.

"That was sort of the biggest 'aha' moment: In order to spark people's performance, you really have to understand them individually and as a team," she says.

Compass came from humble origins.

After working in human resources at several companies, Spector Angelo started her business as a single consultant. In 2017, she bought out her partner and became Compass' sole owner. In the years since, the firm has grown considerably, with 15 consultants under its umbrella and offices in Pittsburgh; Los Angeles, California; and Orlando, Florida.

Over the course of its existence, the firm has assisted a broad base of clients, from start-ups to Fortune 500 companies in industries like health care, technology, manufacturing, energy and professional sports. Spector Angelo says that the most rewarding part of that journey had been the feedback from employees at companies that once had "very toxic" internal cultures before being transformed into something more tenable and productive after their work with Compass.



Alisa is surrounded by her dynamic team of business experts, each of whom drive organizational performance and strategic guidance to their clients.

In many ways, Spector Angelo ties her current life as a consultant back to her time as a gymnast. Though she was in a sport in which athletes were judged individually, their scores contributed to the success of a larger team. She understands the dynamics of winning organizations and how seemingly disparate parts must come together to make that success possible. She'll often explain her work that way to executives: Success in business, like in sports, is all about having the right talent and knowing how to harness it.

"All those things that happened at Pitt really did influence many of the things that I think about still today," she says.



SARAH ANDERSON SEWELL (A&S '11)

For Sarah Sewell, a job has never just been a job.

Throughout her professional career, and even before she graduated from Pitt in 2011, she has sought work that is less an occupation and more of a calling.

Her passion for service led her to earning her master's degree in public administration from Bowie State University. Now she's working to help others answer the call to serve their communities, too.

Sewell, a former track and field athlete at Pitt, is the founder and owner of Edit Genie, a company that provides on-demand consulting services to mission-driven professionals—or, as Sewell puts it, her venture helps to "make missions magical."

"A lot of times, folks do mission work, and they're really driven by what they're doing," Sewell (née Anderson) says.

"They're so driven that many of the supports that enable them to do what they're doing—securing grants or contracts, being able to codify agreements with other partners, making sure their organizational documents are together, optimizing for impact—can often go by the wayside when knee-deep in the work. Folks just barrel through much of the time. What I do at Edit Genie is stand up all the infrastructure around those doing mission-guided work so clients can stay focused and leave the administration to me."

Edit Genie offers a valuable service assisting with the kinds of projects with which Sewell has significant experience but that can be daunting for many others. Among other undertakings, it helps with ghostwriting and editing, policy and program revamp, agreement and contract review and grant proposal and report curation.

The company launched earlier this year and is actually Sewell's second business in what's still a relatively young, burgeoning career. From 2015 to 2023, she was the CEO of Lillie Leaf Solutions, a consulting firm that supported environmental stakeholders from grassroots to government (with the name for the firm coming from her middle name, Lillie).

In her time working in the nonprofit sector, which also included stints at American Forests and City Parks Alliance, Sewell picked up a number of valuable skills that she now uses to help others through Edit Genie. For instance, she worked on federal grants, and she helped to author state and national policy, with some of her drafted legislation even finding its way into the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.

During a recent two-year stint working in technology as a workforce program director, her eyes were opened even more to just how valuable a service like Edit Genie could be.

"Things really clicked for me. Some things are just consistent no matter what industry you're in, no matter what sector you represent," she says. "Folks have the same challenges. Everybody needs grant funding. Everybody needs standard operating procedures. Folks are all looking to make change via programs and policies to improve the lives of those they've committed to serving."

Sewell's dedication to helping others and striving for the greater good goes back to her time at Pitt.

A New Jersey native, she arrived at Pitt as a walk-on for the track and field team as a thrower, be it for the hammer throw, discus or shot put. Her hard work and athletic successes ultimately earned her a scholarship for her final two years of college.

While attending Pitt, she volunteered with the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and was elected president her junior and senior years. During her summers, she supervised a recreation program for low-income children in Mount Holly, New Jersey, that provided them with lunch and a snack during a time of year when they were out of school.

In the work she has done since then, Sewell sees a parallel with track and field. While many can mistakenly view it as an individual sport, it's actually a team venture, with



While CEO of Lillie Leaf Solutions, Sewell unveiled a program she developed for client American Forests at the 2018 Partners in Community Forestry Conference. During her three years supporting the Tree Equity: Career Pathways program, she helped raise $4 million to fund it, authored curricula and national policy to sustain it, and led a multimedia communications campaign featuring Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter SZA to spread awareness.

dozens of athletes pitching in however they can to help the squad move in a positive direction. It's something that's continually at the front of her mind as she works to grow Edit Genie in its nascent stage.

"It's yin and yang," Sewell said. "We need each other in order to create a just and harmonious society that works for everyone. Much of my career is closing the gap between current operations and our dreams for the future through realizing present potential. That's the most rewarding part of my job: putting my skill set in service of others' missions to create some magic, and engineering the conditions for future success together."

Though they work in different industries and competed in different sports, Savini, Spector Angelo and Sewell are connected by their shared experiences as student-athletes at Pitt.

For many, college is a formative experience, a time when an unrefined teenager becomes something at least vaguely resembling a functioning adult by the time they graduate. For those tasked with balancing their academic workloads with the rigorous demands of being a Division I athlete, it's an especially instructive period.

The lessons Savini, Spector Angelo and Sewell picked up during their athletic careers with the Panthers are ones that remain with them today. They're all CEOs and proud Pitt alums, two labels that have been inextricably linked while they've achieved the success they've created for themselves.

Staying in the Spotlight with BOSTICK, DICKERSON and WALSH



Dorin Dickerson (left) and Pat Bostick team up each fall Saturday to broadcast Pitt football on 93.7 The Fan.

Written by Josh Rowntree

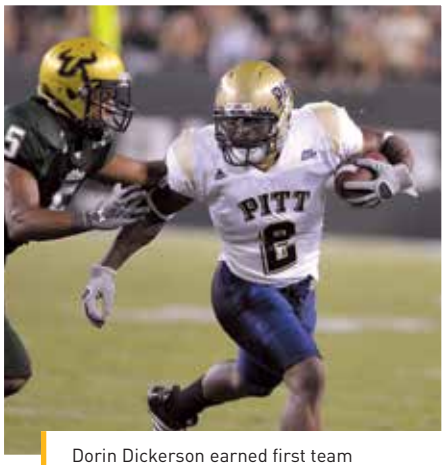
Through the years, Pitt athletes have constructed a storied history of excellence on the playing fields. Now, several athletes are creating a new legacy in the world of sports broadcasting.

Dorin Dickerson never anticipated that his professional life would look like this. But he's certainly not complaining.

As a 15-year-old budding high school star and top recruit at West Allegheny High School, Dickerson finished an interview after a Friday night football game and heard, for the first time, someone suggest to him what to do after his playing days ended.

"Kevin Gorman from the Trib was like, 'You know, whenever you're done playing in the NFL, you should get into broadcasting,'" says Dickerson. "I just looked at him like, 'What?' I was just a kid."

That comment, however, stuck in Dickerson's mind for years. He went on to become one of the most accomplished and versatile WPIAL football players in recent memory, was an All-American tight end at the University of Pittsburgh and had a six-year career in the NFL.



Dorin Dickerson earned first team All-America and All-Big East honors as a Pitt tight end.

But Dickerson tore his Achilles tendon in 2015 while with the Tennessee Titans, effectively ending his playing career. Suddenly, he was left with plenty of uncertainty about what would come next.

"I was sitting around, rehabbing my Achilles, and I got in contact with [KDKA radio host and Pitt football sideline reporter] Larry Richert," he says. "He asked me if I'd ever be interested in getting on the radio. I was like, 'Man,



Pat Bostick calls signals during Pitt's three-overtime win at Notre Dame in 2008.



Dorin Dickerson interviews former Pitt running back James Conner.

I've never even listened to the radio before. But sure, I'll try.'"

He met with the management at 93.7 The Fan the next day and was thrust on the air shortly thereafter. Suddenly, a new career path opened just as one was closing.

"I just kind of fell into it," says Dickerson, who is now cohost of "The Fan Morning Show" alongside Adam Crowley. "I didn't even know that this was a legit thing, to be honest. Now that I'm doing it, I see that there's a whole different side to the media and the sports world.

"It's surreal at times that I get to sit down in the morning, turn the mic on and talk to sports fans here in Pittsburgh."

Pat Bostick (A&S '10, CGS '10, LAW '21) had a similarly unexpected start to his career in the industry.

He was Pitt's starting quarterback in its legendary 13-9 upset win over West Virginia in the 2007 Backyard Brawl and a former teammate of Dickerson's, but the first suggestion that he go into broadcasting came even earlier.

"A career in sports broadcasting would suit Patrick," read a childhood analysis based on his interests.

"I thought I wanted to coach," says Bostick, who now works as Pitt's senior associate athletic director for major gifts. "That was the first thing. But, as a quarterback, you interact with the media a lot. There's some on-the-job training.

"It wasn't until I actually interned as a student-athlete with E.J. Borghetti and Celeste Welsh that I got exposed to all that went into it."

Bostick was asked to do color commentary for the Pitt Spring Game in 2011. Little did he realize that that game would serve as an audition for the radio color commentator role—a position he has occupied since, except for one season.

"I think about it a lot," Bostick says of the uncommon introduction to broadcasting. "It's not something that I ever will take for granted.

"People showed a lot of faith in me, E.J. being most notable. I don't know what I did to deserve that. But I was given an opportunity at 22 years old to start broadcasting with an absolute legend in Bill Hillgrove and call Pitt football games."

Both Dickerson and Bostick rave about the foresight and guiding hand into media that was shown by Borghetti, Pitt's executive associate athletic director for communications. He is one of the University's longest-tenured athletics employees and is responsible for handling the day-to-day media communications of the football team while also overseeing Pitt's athletics department communications.

"That's where it starts and where it ends, with E.J.," says Dickerson. "I'd always meet with him in the offseason, even while [I was] in the NFL, just in case I got cut and it was the last time I ever played football. I did it to prepare myself and say, 'Hey, what can I possibly do next?' He really cares about the University of Pittsburgh, its students and its student-athletes."

Bostick adds, "E.J.'s been ingrained for so long and been around the best to ever do it. He's won awards for how he serves the media from his chair. And he has a front row seat to cultivating and teaching 18- and 19-year-olds how to deal with the press."



Rich Walsh was a standout middle distance runner for Pitt.

While Dickerson and Bostick were natural fits in the football broadcasting world, **Rich Walsh (A&S '00)**'s path to and current role in broadcasting has been a bit different.



From left to right: Rich Walsh on the KDKA-TV set with Charlie Batch and Bob Pompeani.

Currently a sports anchor for KDKA-TV, Walsh grew up in the Pittsburgh suburb of Penn Hills and was a WPIAL champion in track. He had numerous options for where to attend college, but Pitt became the obvious pick when he toured the campus and was offered a full scholarship.

"My dad told me that if I got a full scholarship, he'd buy me a car, so it was a pretty easy decision," says Walsh, who proudly drove his Ford Probe GT to Oakland until he graduated in 2000.

Walsh ran the 800 meters at Pitt and was a team captain, developing a deep love and appreciation for the University and its athletic programs. But his future ambitions changed numerous times along the way.

"I went to school thinking I was going to be a lawyer," he says. "I was prelaw, then political science, then psychology. I didn't know what I was going to do until I ran into [KDKA sports personalities] Bob Pompeani and Sam Nover during Pitt basketball practice, which happened to coincide with the track athletes running laps in the Fitzgerald Field House.

"I kind of did play-by-play during track practice, just sort of as a joke when I was bored. But it piqued my interest, and I was like, 'This is what I want to do.'"

Through the chats with Pompeani and Nover and another connection through his father, who knew a producer at KDKA-TV, Walsh netted an internship with the station.

"It all worked out and I got to learn under Bob," Walsh says of Pompeani, a man he admired as a young man and still does today.

Following the internship, Walsh went on to work as a producer at WPXI; then in Wheeling, West Virginia; and then at Fox Sports Pittsburgh. He went back to WPXI briefly and then found a long-term home at KDKA-TV.

"I had other opportunities, but I just wanted to stay home," he says. "I grew up a huge Pirates fan, and I'm obviously a huge Pitt fan. My family is still in town. Obviously, my wife doesn't want to go anywhere.

"We love the city. It's very uncommon for someone to come back to their hometown and for someone to stay. But being able to stay in Pittsburgh was a goal of mine."

Dickerson, Bostick and Walsh are far from alone when it comes to former Pitt athletes working in broadcasting. There are many of them here in the region and many more across the country at various levels of the industry.

But these three all recognize how special it is that they have been given a chance to work in the city or with the University they care so much about.

"I was blessed with the opportunity for some reason that I'll never know, and I'll never take that for granted," Bostick says. "I'm so grateful for that today."

For Dickerson, it's a chance to relive his playing days and keep alive the passion he has for the sport that opened multiple doors, including his role on the sideline each Saturday.

"That's been way, way more surreal than the talk show in the morning," he says. "It's the absolute closest I could ever get to putting a helmet back on. It's probably the most rewarding feeling a former player can ever get, and I get that feeling every single weekend."

The two former football players draw on their experience to guide their careers now. And all three men—now proud fathers and partners in addition to their unpredicted careers—carry with them the passion needed in an industry that thrives on just that.

"I love Pitt, honestly," says Walsh. "I'm one of the biggest Pitt supporters in the entire media. And it's because Pitt has really shaped me into who I am today."



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PITT FOOTBALL

ON THE ROAD

with

Timothy "Tim" Pecsenye

If Tim Pecsenye (A&S '84, LAW '87) had a theme song, it no doubt would be Willie Nelson's classic "On the Road Again."

Pecsenye's primary residence is Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, yet for the past 40 years he has attended every single Pitt football home, road and postseason game. It's a streak that may very well be unmatched in Panther fan lore.

We recently sat down with Tim to take a walk down memory lane and share some of his 'favorites' while he is ON THE ROAD with the Panthers.

Favorite Road Game Victory: My favorite road win was in a season where it was largely not a great season, but that win made the season ending so sweet. On Dec. 1, 2007, Pitt entered the game 4-7 against the number-two-ranked West Virginia Mountaineers and a 28-point underdog. Pitt went on to win 13-9, and I fondly remember the incredible feeling of the walk out of Mountaineer Stadium (the Mountaineer fans were totally shocked and silent) and the drive back to Pittsburgh as the winner (and ruining West Virginia's national championship aspirations).

A close second favorite road win was on Nov. 13, 2016, in a high-scoring game that went back and forth. Chris Blewitt kicked the winning field goal for Pitt with six seconds left to beat the [Clemson] Tigers 43-42. Clemson was ranked number two in the country at that time and went on to win the national championship.

Favorite Stadium (Aside from Acrisure Stadium): Although [it has been] a very difficult place to win for Pitt over the years, my favorite stadium to watch Pitt play on the road is at Notre Dame. The campus, [the] game-day crowd, the bands, the cheerleaders, the history and traditions make it in my mind the very best college football stadium.

Favorite Bowl Game: My favorite bowl game and probably favorite Pitt game of all time was the 1982 Sugar Bowl played on Jan. 1, 1982, [in New Orleans, Louisiana]. I attended as a member of the Pitt Band and was in heaven when the number eight Panthers defeated the favored Georgia Bulldogs 24-20. I will never forget the fourth-down play where Dan Marino connected with John Brown for a winning touchdown with seconds left in the game. Pitt finished ranked number two in the nation that year!

Best Home Game Memory: Although there were so many great home game wins and memories over the years, the memory that sticks out in my mind was actually quite sad despite culminating in a big win. That memory is of the final home football game played at Pitt Stadium on Nov. 13, 1999. I will never forget Pitt beating the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame 37-27. I started my Pitt fandom as a freshman at Pitt Stadium in 1980, so that final game brought so many memories, emotions and bittersweet tears [after] watching the Panthers play there for 20 seasons.

Best Place to Eat on the Road: My favorite dining spot on the road dates to when Pitt played in the Big East [Conference] for football. And that place was in the hometown of the University of South Florida [USF] Bulls, Bern's Steak House in Tampa, Florida. It was always an incredible meal including a great dessert. I miss that trip every other year, not just because Pitt usually won but [because of] a great steak meal at Bern's.

Because Pitt no longer plays USF, although it is not comparable in taste or quality, I always stop by for a meal at Dinosaur









From left to right: Tim enjoying the Rutgers game with a fellow Pitt alum Anthony Orman. The Pitt band tailgate has become a tradition for Tim at every Pitt home game. Tim with Rick Gradisek and Gary Amelio cheering on the Panthers against the Utah Utes. Tim and Pitt Fan Laurie Hruska at the Pitt vs. Iowa game.

Bar-B-Que when the Panthers are traveling to Syracuse, New York, to play the Orange. Pitt usually wins, and the atmosphere, food and drinks at Dinosaur always make it a great football weekend on the road.

Last Pitt Football Game You Missed: Prior to COVID, the only Pitt home game I missed since 1980 was the first night game played at Pitt Stadium on Aug. 31, 1985. I missed the game because I was the best man in my Pitt roommate's wedding. I still remember watching the game after the wedding on tape: Purdue scored with no time left in the game and decided to go for two for the win. Just as the exciting moment was about to play out, a woman walked into the room and said, "I cannot believe they missed the pass." Despite ruining the dramatic moment, I was delighted to watch Purdue quarterback Jim Everett bounce a pass into the endzone to a wide-open receiver, resulting in [a] failed two-point conversion, and a 31-30 Pitt win!

Favorite Game-day Atmosphere: I think anytime there is a full house and Pitt is playing football is my favorite atmosphere. Sometimes it is when Pitt is at home, and sometimes it is when Pitt is on the road. There is nothing more exciting and energizing that watching a Pitt college football game in a stadium that is packed and loud.

Best Hospitality: Although it was only a onetime visit so far, I believe the best hospitality on the road for visiting fans was from the Nebraska Cornhusker fans. It was amazing how friendly the Nebraska fans were prior to the game and after, offering food [and] drinks and welcoming me to Lincoln. The game itself was bizarre, with Pitt blowing an incredible opportunity to win the game in the closing seconds by missing not one but two field goal attempts (including a bonk off a helmet from the snap).

Pregame Superstitions: I have a regular clothing routine for every Pitt game. I select a particular combination of Pitt clothes that I wear to the game. If Pitt wins, I wear that same combination until they lose. If Pitt loses, I change the Pitt gear combination each game until it results in a win. Rinse and repeat. I also follow the exact same path walking to the stadium prior to each game, which is why I think last season was not great with the Roberto Clemente Bridge closed to foot traffic.

Travel Hiccups That Resulted Almost Missing a Game: I do not recall exactly what year it was, but I nearly missed a road game at Notre Dame in the 2000s. My normal routine for attending a Pitt road game at Notre Dame included flying into Chicago, [Illinois,] for the weekend and taking a commuter train from Chicago to South Bend, [Indiana,] and back for the game. This particular weekend, I slept late, ran to the train station and missed it. The next train would not get me there in time. So, I decided to hail a taxi and made it to South Bend prior to kickoff. After that expensive mistake, I changed my routine and no longer take the train!

Best Halftime Performance from the Pitt Band: My fondest and best memories of halftime shows are from when I was a member of the Pitt Band [1980-84]. Any show that the music was arranged by Joe Campus had particular promise. His arrangements were unique [and] difficult but very timely and contemporary. My favorite shows were either the Blues Brothers or Charlie Daniels shows. Although it was not my favorite show, the game where the Pitt Band received the largest and loudest reaction was from a road game at Michie Stadium versus Army. I believe the year was 1980, possibly 1982. The Pitt Band took the field to perform a halftime show, which drew thunderous applause, cheers and a standing ovation received by the Pitt Band for that show.

Best Person to Watch a Game with at Acrisure Stadium: My Pitt Band alumni crew are always the best people to join to watch the game. Many of us sit together in Section 211 for each home game. We typically all tailgate together prior to each home game as well. Our friendship and shared experiences of Pitt football in many cases date back to 1980, and it would not be the same without them!

Favorite Pitt Tradition: Although it is somewhat modified with the change in stadiums, my favorite tradition is watching the Pitt Band come marching out of the "hole" to start each home game. It was more dramatic at Pitt Stadium, but the tradition continues at Acrisure Stadium and is certainly not to be missed. The continuation of that same tradition is the band playing "Hail to Pitt" and forming the script Pitt on the field.

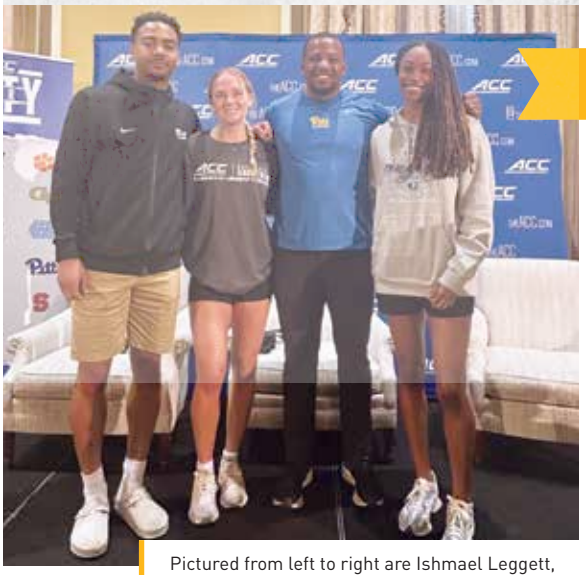
The University of Pittsburgh proudly showcased its commitment to diversity and inclusion through active participation in three pivotal events: the Black Student Athlete Summit, the ACC Unity Tour, and the Athlete Activism Summit. Each event provided Panthers student-athletes and staff with invaluable opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue and drive positive change across collegiate sports.

Black Student-Athlete Summit

The Black Student-Athlete Summit is an annual three-day event that brings together student-athletes, administrators, coaches and faculty members. The 2024 summit was held May 23-26 in Los Angeles, California, at USC. Representing the University of Pittsburgh were Student-Athlete Development Coordinator Dallas Jackson and student-athletes Caleb Williams (football), Kendall Brown (softball), Jordyn Ewing (gymnastics) and Taylor Forbes (track and field). The summit aims to empower, educate and inspire Black student-athletes and staff, fostering opportunities and initiatives that support Black student-athletes beyond the realm of competition.



Pictured from left to right are Taylor Forbes, Kendall Brown, Jordyn Ewing and Caleb Williams



Pictured from left to right are Ishmael Leggett, Haylee Mersereau, Coach Zo and Caleia Johnson

ACC Unity Tour

The ACC Unity Tour is an annual three-day event that unites student-athletes, administrators, coaches and faculty members from Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) institutions. The 2024 tour took place July 11-14 in Charleston, South Carolina. Representing the University of Pittsburgh were Alonzo Webb III, associate head coach and recruiting coordinator for track and field, and student-athletes Jordan Villareal (wrestling), Haylee Mersereau (soccer), Ishmael Leggett (basketball) and Caleia Johnson (track and field). The tour is designed to promote unity, understanding and collaboration among ACC member institutions, highlighting the importance of diversity and inclusion while providing a platform for student-athletes and staff to engage in meaningful discussions and activities.

Athlete Activism Summit

The Athlete Activism Summit is a collaborative three-day event aimed at promoting LGBTQI+ inclusion and allyship within collegiate sports. In partnership with adidas and the University of Louisville, Athlete Ally hosted the 2024 summit June 27-30 in Louisville, Kentucky. The event gathered college athletes, coaches and administrators from across the nation to build community, share knowledge and commit to actionable steps that enhance LGBTQI+ inclusivity on their respective campuses. Representing the University of Pittsburgh were Katie Berry, assistant athletic director of marketing, and Riley Patrick, lacrosse student-athlete. The summit is designed to empower and inspire participants to be proactive allies and advocates for LGBTQI+ communities in the collegiate sports environment.



Riley Patrick (second from right) and attendees from other participant schools celebrate the end of a uniting and empowering summit with a Day of Play to wrap up the event.

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VARSITY LETTER CLUB

JOE PRINCE-WRIGHT

Joe Prince-Wright is currently the lead writer and editor of NBC Sports' Pro Soccer Talk. He graduated with honors from the University of Pittsburgh in April 2011 and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in communication and English writing (journalism track). He began his career as a journalist at age 14 as a weekly columnist for a highly circulated daily paper in England. Joe was a four-year starter for the Pitt Men's Soccer team and named Big East Academic All-Star during his time at Pitt.



Why did you choose Pitt?

Pitt has the perfect combination of athletic and academic excellence. I also love the campus and how connected it is to the community in Oakland and how close it is to everything in the city of Pittsburgh. Coming to Pitt straight from England as a teenager, it was really an incredible experience to explore such a wonderful city that was, and is, being redefined and eager to grow and progress. As a young sports journalist, it was also the perfect university and city to be in to learn my trade in the classroom and with internships as well as playing soccer for such a respected university.

Tell us about your time at Pitt and the impact it had on you.

On the soccer pitch, my experience was extremely fulfilling. At the time, we played in the Big East [Conference], and the competition was so tough. We pushed ourselves to the limit in practice every day because we knew we would play against some of the best Division I college soccer teams in the nation every single game. A personal highlight was an incredible comeback win in my sophomore year that helped us reach the conference playoffs. We were down 2–0 away at Seton Hall in a crucial game late in the season. I scored a header to make it 2–1, then we made it 2–2 and my roommate Justin Boehm then crossed the ball in, and I managed to score an overhead volley to make it 3–2 late in the game. We held on for a crucial win. As a defensive player, I didn't score many, so to score two in the same game and for it to be in such an important game in our season was a really huge moment. It just so happened [that] my parents and sister had flown over from England for a trip to watch that game, too. I remember the final whistle going and celebrating with my teammates in the pouring rain in New Jersey. Most of that team had all arrived at Pitt together the year before, and we had a really close bond. As a young group, to make the playoffs was a big achievement for us. We were a really hardworking team and never gave up, and I felt like that comeback win summed up the spirit we had as a group and the spirit of Pitt.

You're originally from England. Why did you decide to cross the pond and attend Pitt?

It really was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me, and I wanted to explore a new country and culture as well as to study and playing soccer alongside one another. In England, that is tough to do, as you have to dedicate yourself fully to either sport or academics, not both, at a very young age. Pitt was the perfect place for me to continue to play at the highest level possible in my soccer career while also earning a degree and having some incredible experiences with internships, which I was lucky enough to do at TV, radio stations and fantastic sports franchises (my staff writing internship with the Pittsburgh Penguins was awesome!) in the city. My whole idea of coming to the University of Pittsburgh was to get a fully rounded experience from an educational and athletic perspective, and it remains the best decision I've ever made.

What was the biggest adjustment moving from England to the United States?

Actually, quite a lot—many I hadn't even thought about! When I arrived as an 18-year-old in 2007, video calls where only just becoming a thing, so I definitely missed my family and friends a lot early on. I remember going to the pay phone by the team store in the Petersen Events Center and calling home once or twice in the first few months. The weather was a big change for me, as it doesn't get that hot in England in the summer or as a cold as a Pittsburgh winter. It hardly ever snows where I'm from in the south of England!

But I think the biggest adjustment was the education system. It is very different to the schooling system in England, and it took me a little over a year to get the hang of it all. I was so lucky to have great teammates to help me out and also the wonderful support staff in the athletics department at Pitt who spent so many extra hours with me going over what was expected in the classroom. It took me about 18 months to properly feel like I had a good idea about what to expect, day in, day out, about attending a university in America. Also, my accent was pretty thick when I first arrived in America, and there were plenty of terms I would use that nobody understood, but my transatlantic accent is spot on now!

Where did you find the best fish and chips in Pittsburgh? Is there any?

Oh yes. Definitely go to Piper's Pub on East Carson Street on the South Side. That was my go-to spot in Pittsburgh to get food that reminded me of home. I'd often go there on a Saturday or Sunday morning during the winter months when we had time off from the soccer season and watch all of the soccer games from back home in England and grab some food. Piper's Pub is a very authentic British restaurant. I love it there and always try to go back when I'm in Pittsburgh.

How did your time as a student-athlete set you up for success in your career?

It was really helpful in terms of knowing the time you have to put in if you want to make a success of your chosen career. Time management has been so important for me in my career. We had such busy schedules as student-athletes, so it meant that you really had to spend your time wisely, whether it be with classes, practices, studying on the way to games, completing internships late at night or making sure you could be the best version of yourself every day. Being a student-athlete at Pitt definitely helped me so much with the high levels of focus and organization I need in order to do my job every single day.



Prince-Wright (# 8) playing against Robert Morris, against Villanova (#22)

Tell us what you have been doing since leaving Pitt.

After graduating from Pitt in 2011, I worked at Major League Soccer in New York City for one year as an editorial assistant and worked for the likes of The Guardian, ESPN and NBC Sports in freelance roles. I then moved back to the United Kingdom in 2012 to continue to play soccer, playing in the Scottish leagues.

After that, I took a full-time position with NBC Sports as the lead soccer writer and editor of their soccer website, Pro Soccer Talk, when they acquired the rights to show the English Premier League soccer games on TV in the USA. Over the last decade, I've been so fortunate to be working at Premier League games in stadiums across England and Wales, interviewing world-class players and managers, attending some of the biggest events in world soccer across the globe and getting to call it my job. This is exactly the kind of job I dreamed of when I arrived at the University of Pittsburgh nearly 20 years ago.

How did you decide to go into journalism, and what do you enjoy most about your career?

It is something that I always wanted to do. I started writing columns on soccer for my local newspaper in Southampton, [England,] when I was 14 and kept going back there and absolutely loved it. As much as I loved playing soccer, writing and talking about it is my true passion. I love being able to dig deeper on analysis and explaining why something has happened, and I'm fortunate that I now get to interview some of the best players and managers in the soccer world to discuss all of this with. I enjoy that every single day is different. There is always a new piece of news, a crazy game or an exciting project to work on, and I'm very grateful to all of my wonderful colleagues at NBC Sports, because I work with so many talented people in a great team, and I learn so much all of the time.

Describe your experience as a Pitt student-athlete.

It was such an influential experience in my life. I grew up massively in my four years at Pitt. I was lucky that some incredible people who worked at the athletics department and certain academic departments really went out of their way to help me out—people like the head soccer coach at the time, Joe Luxbacher; Penny Semaia, John Gareis in the communication department, Jen Tuscano in academics. And EJ Borghetti, was really key in helping me get on the road to working as a journalist after I graduated from Pitt. EJ is someone I really admire and personifies what Pitt is all about.

There were so many wonderful people who went above and beyond to help me every single day, and I will be forever grateful for that.

It was also a huge help that most of my teammates were from the Pittsburgh or Pennsylvania region, and they really took me under their wing and helped me adapt to life in the USA, and I truly feel like Pittsburgh is my second home to this day. It was hard being a student-athlete at times, but pushing myself to my limits academically and athletically meant it was such an enriching experience I wouldn't change it for the world, and graduating with honors is something I'm very proud of.

What were some of your favorite places on campus during your time as a student-athlete? Do you have any new favorite places now?

So many! I'd hang out in the Cathedral of Learning a lot, as my classes were mostly there, plus Hillman Library (Club Hillman!), and would often have a wander around Schenley Park. Obviously, I spent a lot of time in the [Fitzgerald] Field House and at the Pete, and I really got into watching as many American sports as possible and became hooked on basketball. In terms of food, I went to The Original Hot Dog Shop, Primanti's, Joe Mama's, Fuel and Fuddle and Lulu's Noodles a lot, while in my senior year, I enjoyed going to Bootleggers, Hemingway's and Peter's Pub for the occasional pint. I haven't been back to Pittsburgh in a few years, but the last time I visited—with my wife, who is a Pitt grad (we met in class in the Cathedral of Learning and now live in England together and just celebrated our 10-year wedding anniversary!) —it was great to go to Pamela's on Forbes Avenue.

What does being a Forever Panther mean to you?

Pride. When you say you played a sport at Pitt, people are not only impressed, but there is a high level of respect you receive because they understand that the University of Pittsburgh does things the right way. It is a very special place full of people who really care about you and want you to succeed. And I want everyone connected with Pitt—past, present and future—to succeed, too. Because of everything I mentioned about my experience as a Pitt student-athlete, I will always be so grateful that I had the opportunity to attend the University of Pittsburgh and become part of the Forever Panther family.

Have you been following the success of the Pitt men's soccer team and kept in touch with the coaches, players and alumni?

I have! I was lucky enough to meet briefly with [Head] Coach Jay Vidovich and his staff a few years ago on my last trip to Pittsburgh, and he has done a wonderful job to elevate the program to be among the best in college soccer in the USA. I am so proud to see all of the wonderful players who have passed through the program over the last few years and watch as many games as I can from over here in England. One day, I'd love to come back and watch a game at the beautiful stadium, as I only played in it once, as it was completed at the end of my senior year. I do keep in touch with a lot of alumni who are close friends. Living back in England, it is tough to see former teammates that often, but in just the last year, I've met up with so many former teammates in London, [in] Europe and across the USA, and that bond of representing the soccer team and the University of Pittsburgh will always be there. We have so many great stories and memories, and it is so much fun to meet up with former teammates whenever I can. It really is a special bond.

What professional accomplishment have you earned that has made you proud?

I have received some Sports Emmy nominations for my work with NBC Sports on our Premier League coverage, and that is something I'm really proud of. It feels great to be part of such a talented and hardworking team, and I'm happy and proud to contribute any way I can.

What is one piece of advice that you would give a current student-athlete?

Be positive in everything that comes your way. Some days it may seem like practice, games and classes are tough and everything is getting on top of you, but just step back and take a minute to focus on how lucky you are to be in this position, to represent such a great university and [to] have experiences competing against the best collegiate athletes in the USA. In years to come, you'll look back on these years with such fondness, so try your best to enjoy it while you're in the moment, too.

Who is the best player you've ever seen play in person?

Well, I'm really lucky to get to see so many wonderful players, and having seen both Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo live on multiple occasions, I have to say them, as they're probably the two best players to ever play soccer in history. Also, a shoutout to Harry Kane, England's all-time leading goal scorer, who I've been lucky enough to interview; he's a lovely bloke as well as a very special player.



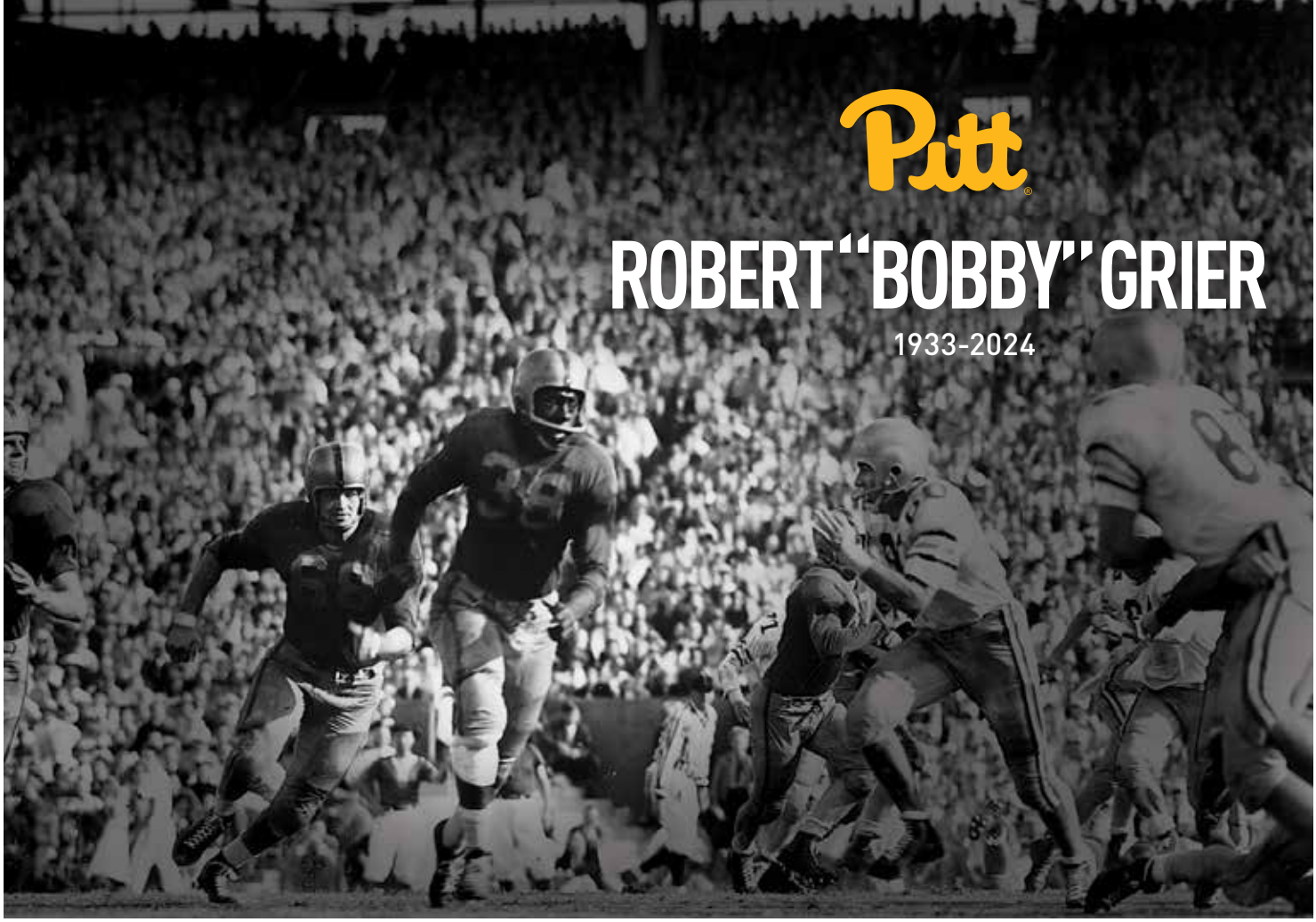
Prince-Wright conducts an interview in his role for NBC Sports on location at a Premier League stadium.

What is your favorite stadium in terms of atmosphere?

Oh, that is tough. It has to be Anfield; Liverpool's home stadium is just different. The passion, the pride and the history there just can't really be beaten, and I've been lucky enough to go there a lot over the last few years when they've had such a great manager and team. But in all honestly, I enjoy the atmosphere at basically every game I go to because I'm a soccer fanatic!

The 2026 FIFA World Cup will be held in the United States. Will you be visiting us, and do you have any predictions for early favorites?

Definitely—I will be there! For me, it will be almost 20 years since I first arrived in the USA, and to think about how far the sport of soccer has come in the USA over the last two decades is remarkable. I wouldn't miss seeing the World Cup on U.S. soil for anything. As for predictions, well, I have to say England are the early favorites. They lost in the final of the last two Euros (UEFA European Football Championships), and I think we're due to win something and have a great group of young players coming through. But Argentina, Spain and France will be right up there. And I'm all for a USA vs. England World Cup final. That would be quite something!



ROBERT "BOBBY" GRIER

1933-2024

Written by E.J. Borghetti and Ervin Dyer

Robert "Bobby" Grier Sr., who as a member of the University of Pittsburgh football team generated national headlines during the Civil Rights era when he became the first Black player in the Sugar Bowl, passed away on June 30 at the age of 91, in Warren, Ohio.

Grier played fullback, linebacker and defensive back for the Panthers, lettering in three consecutive seasons (1953–55).

As a senior, he led the team in interceptions to help Pitt to a 7–3 regular season and receive an invitation to play Georgia Tech in the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans. The governor of Georgia, segregationist Marvin Griffin, vehemently opposed Grier's participation in the game.

The prospect of Grier traveling to the Deep South to break the color barrier of one of college football's highest-profile postseason games sparked nationwide discussion the same month that Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to surrender her bus seat to a white passenger.

However, Grier had the strong support of his teammates and University leadership, who vowed "No Grier, no game."

And so, Grier took the field against Georgia Tech on Jan. 2, 1956, rushing for a game-high 51 yards. Pitt lost 7–0, with a disputed pass interference penalty on Grier looming large in the final result. Photographic evidence later strongly indicated the referee's call was incorrect.

Following the game, the Pitt and Georgia Tech teams were invited to a banquet in New Orleans at the St. Charles Hotel, which served only white patrons. As Grier stepped into the hall, he received the loudest ovation of any of the Sugar Bowl participants. "That made me feel good. Made me feel special," Grier said.

More than six decades later, Grier again stepped onto the Sugar Bowl playing field when he was introduced as a member of the Sugar Bowl Hall of Fame on Jan. 1, 2019.

Grier is a member of the Pitt Athletics Hall of Fame, Western Chapter of the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame and the Wall of Champions at Massillon (Ohio) High School, where he led the Tigers to a pair of state championships.

Grier earned his Bachelor of Business Administration from Pitt in 1957. He served in the Air Force for 12 years, working primarily on radar and missiles, and left as a captain. Grier then worked as a supervisor for U.S. Steel and as an administrator at the Community College of Allegheny County until his 1998 retirement.

In his later years, Grier served the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to help provide caregiving for veterans.

In addition to his daughter, Grier, who was a devoted husband to his late wife, Dorothy, is survived by his son, Rob Jr., and a granddaughter, Camille.

As a tribute to Grier, the Pitt football team will wear a commemorative helmet sticker throughout the 2024 season.

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MEMORIES

Beano Cook

Carroll H. "Beano" Cook, the iconic University of Pittsburgh sports information director who became known as "the pope of college football," was posthumously inducted into the College Sports Communicators Hall of Fame. Cook, who passed away in 2012 at the age of 81, was selected as part of the Veterans Committee nominations. Veterans Committee Hall of Fame inductees represent former sports information professionals of distinction from the past whose professional and personal deeds and accomplishments helped make possible the stature of the athletics communications profession today.

Cook graduated from Pitt in 1954 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. After serving 21 months in the U.S. Army, he returned to campus and served as his alma mater's sports information director from 1956 to 1966 before going on to national prominence with CBS Sports, ABC and ESPN. Cook was inducted at a June 10 ceremony during the 2024 College Sports Communicators annual convention in Las Vegas, Nevada.



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