



# THE ROAR REPORT

# CHAIRING *the* MADNESS

*by Gary D'Amato*

SPORT UPDATES

FROM SAND TO THE HARDWOOD

MEET THE NEW STAFF

GONE FISHIN'

INTERNATIONAL WATERS:  
PANTHERS SWIM & DIVE  
GOES GLOBAL





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## **SPORT UPDATES**

Men's soccer, women's soccer, volleyball and cross country.

### **FROM SAND TO THE HARDWOOD**

Playing a sport in college takes time, effort, and commitment to honing your craft and skill to perform at a high level – but playing two different sports? That takes a special athlete. Meet Panther Hailey Hutchings, who joined the Milwaukee volleyball team this fall as a graduate student following a four-year career at Grand Canyon University ... as a member of the Antelopes beach volleyball team.

### **NEW STAFF ON THE BLOCK**

Meet the new staff that has been added to the Panthers family and what they like most about being in Milwaukee.

### **CHAIRING THE MADNESS**

Milwaukee Director of Athletic Amanda Braun is set to chair the NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Committee this upcoming season, a prestigious position and a tremendous honor for the Panther leader. Gary D'Amato takes a deeper dive into how Braun got involved and what it all means.

### **GONE FISHIN'**

Members of the Milwaukee men's basketball team found a new shared interest this summer ... fishing. The Roar Report set up a roundtable discussion with the group, discussing every possible topic and all of the fun the team has had with their new adventures on the water.

### **INTERNATIONAL WATERS: PANTHERS SWIM & DIVE GOES GLOBAL**

The Milwaukee swimming & diving program has started to add more and more international student-athletes to the roster. Read up on the current group and what all went into the decisions they made to become a Panther.

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# LIGHT UP THE HYPE

**Fernando Pirry** tied the program record for goals in a game when he scored four times in Milwaukee's 9-1 victory over Chicago State.

The outburst tied the NCAA high for goals in a game for men's soccer this fall and Pirry actually accomplished the feat in the first half alone. He scored in the 21st, 25th, 40th, and 41st minutes as the Panthers rolled to the big win.









# LIGHT UP THE HYPE

Former Panther **AJ Blubaugh**, who was a two-time Horizon League Relief Pitcher of the Year when he competed for Milwaukee from 2020–2022, reached his dream in professional baseball this summer with his Major League debut for the Houston Astros, pitching against the Detroit Tigers on April 30, 2025.

Photo by the MLB via Astros







**NEW  
LOOK  
SAME  
GREAT  
TASTE**







The Milwaukee men's soccer team is off to a 2-2-4 start, but if you dig just a little deeper one can see that the defense has been the star of the show – the Panthers have allowed just seven goals – good for second in the Horizon League. Newcomer **Nic Diana** has played a big role manning the net, recording three shutouts and is currently the only league goalie with a 0.00 goals-against average in league play.

With a 1-0-1 start to conference play, Milwaukee is one of four teams to be unbeaten to open the slate. The offense has been looking for more consistency, yet still ranks second in the league in average shots per game and assists, and is tied for second with its 14 goals.

The offense does have a new look this season, as the top two scorers from last year, as well as three of the top four, either graduated or transferred to different programs. Newcomers **Dominic Zuniga** (9 points on 3G/3A) and **Fernando Pirry** (8 points on

4G) lead the way, with Pirry tying the school record with his four goals against Chicago State. However, Pirry pulled off an unprecedented feat – scoring all four of his goals before halftime to become the first Panther in program history to net four in a half. The outburst also tied for the most goals in a game across the NCAA so far this season (now done three times). The 4-goal outing was the 11th in school history and the first since 2013.

The team is 1-0-3 at home, extending its unbeaten streak at Engelmann Stadium to 13 games (7-0-6 dating back to last season) to tie the program record. The Panthers have not lost at home since the 2023 campaign.





With a daunting non-conference schedule in the rear-view mirror, the Milwaukee women's soccer team opened Horizon League play in impressive fashion, recording shutout victories against both Robert Morris (2-0) and Youngstown State (2-0). The two wins extend the team's unbeaten streak in regular-season conference play to 31 in a row (25-0-6 in that stretch dating back to first game of 2022). Up next is the Horizon League record of 36, set by the Panthers from 2016 through 2020 when the team went 33-0-3.

The Panthers knew the start of the 2025 season was going to be challenging in the non-conference slate. Through the first seven games of the campaign, the Panthers played one of the toughest schedules in the country - battling three teams ranked in the Top 25 when the game was played. The cumulative win-loss record of the seven teams the Panthers played (once the gauntlet was complete) sat at 30-13-5, a winning percentage of .677.

The offense has been balanced all season long – at this point 10 different players have scored goals and 13 total players have recorded points through 10 games. Three Panthers are tied for the team lead with nine points: **Mallory McGuire** (team-best 4G/1A), **Zoey Pagels** (3G/3A), and **Kristina Karlof** (3G/3A). **Emily Petring** (3G/2A) and **Ashlyn Skinner-Barrett** (2G/team-best 4A) are right behind with eight points apiece.

Since a 1-0 victory over regionally-ranked Minnesota Sept. 5, the team has posted four consecutive shutouts and claimed four straight victories. Leading that charge has been newcomer **Bella Hollenbach**, who has recorded a perfect 0.00 goals-against average during the month, posting three shutouts (the shutout of SIUE was shared with Lilly Hanke). Take out the result at nationally-ranked Michigan State, and the team has allowed just 10 goals in the other nine outings.





With a challenging non-conference schedule to open the season, the Milwaukee volleyball team heads into the opening week of Horizon League play still in search of its first win after 13 matches.

The Panthers have faced a pair of top-10 programs, including No. 6 Wisconsin in Madison, and No. 8 Arizona State in Tempe, with the latter serving as their non-conference finale.

Despite the tough schedule, Milwaukee's veterans have achieved notable career milestones. **Natalie Schmitz** became the program's newest member of the 1,000-kill club during the opening match of the Panther Invitational against Iowa State.

**Josie Johnson** also reached a significant milestone, recording her 2,000th career assist against Arizona State. She becomes just the 10th player in program history to hit that mark.

In addition to Wisconsin, Arizona State, and Iowa State, the Panthers also competed against Omaha, South Alabama, James Madison, Marquette, and Pepperdine – all of whom were projected to finish in the top-four of their respective league's preseason polls.

Milwaukee opens Horizon League play against Oakland during the final weekend of September, while also hosting Green Bay on Sept. 30. The team will also host Northern Kentucky (Oct. 10-11), Purdue Fort Wayne (Oct. 31-Nov. 1), and Robert Morris (Nov. 7-8) at the Klotsche Center this season.





Milwaukee cross country has competed in three meets this season, with three events approaching before the anticipated Horizon League Championships taking place on Nov. 1.

**Anelise Egge** has shined while leading the women's team this season. Egge took home the individual crown at the Phoenix Open held in Green Bay, Wis., and recorded two top-10 finishes in the team's outings at the Tom Barry Invitational and Rumble in the Fort.

**Rachel Helm** and **Janiyah Taylor** have also contributed strong performances for the Black and Gold, willing the team to top-5 finishes in their first three meets of the season.

The senior leadership of **Cullen Boyle** and **Sam Schreiber** has stuck out for the Panthers, both recording top-10 individual finishes this season. Boyle crossed the finish line fourth in the team's first meet of the season, and Schreiber recorded an impressive seventh place finish in a loaded pool of conference foes at the Phoenix Open.

The Panthers look ahead to the Joe Paine Invitational hosted by Notre Dame (Oct. 3), the Wisconsin Lutheran Warrior Invitational (Oct. 4), and the Bradley Pink Classic (Oct. 17) before heading to Fort Wayne, Ind. for the Horizon League Championships. The NCAA Great Lakes Regional meet (Nov. 14) will follow and take place in Evansville, Ind.



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# FROM THE SAND TO THE HARDWOOD



Playing a sport in college takes time, effort, and commitment to honing your craft and skill to perform at a high level – but playing two different sports? That takes a special athlete. One who can adapt to different scoring rules, different mechanics, and even a different playing surface.

**Hailey Hutchings** joined the Milwaukee volleyball team this fall as a graduate student, following a four-year career at Grand Canyon University. While some may assume that Hutchings played indoor volleyball in Arizona, she was actually a member of the Antelopes beach volleyball team. Coming to Milwaukee meant more than just pursuing a postgraduate degree – or adjusting to a very different climate – it meant fully immersing herself back into the indoor game.

The staff of The Roar Report caught up with Hailey recently to discuss her start in volleyball, her experience playing beach volleyball at Grand Canyon, and her transition back to the indoor game at Milwaukee.

**Roar Report: “When did you start getting into sports when you were younger, and what sports did you play?”**

Hailey Hutchings: “I’ve been playing sports since I can remember. I started dance when I was four, but switched to softball when I was eight. I didn’t make the switch to indoor [volleyball] until middle school, and I started beach when I was 14!

**RR: “What got you into playing volleyball? Was it a family member, friend?”**

HH: “I started playing for my middle school team. I tried out all the sports my school offered when I was in 7th grade, but volleyball was by far my favorite.”

**RR: “At what point, probably in your high school career, did you realize that playing in college was a realistic possibility?”**

HH: “My high school team won a state championship my sophomore year, and that really solidified that I wanted to continue playing at the Division I level.”

**RR: “Why did you ultimately choose Grand Canyon for your undergraduate studies, and was there any intention on playing indoor volleyball in addition to beach volleyball?”**

HH: “I ended up deciding that I wanted to focus solely on just beach volleyball in college, and I wanted to move to a new state with beautiful, warm weather.”

**RR: “You got to travel with the beach volleyball team to many larger schools, was there a place in particular that you liked visiting the most?”**

HH: “One of my fondest memories was going to nationals in Gulf Shores, Alabama, but my favorite trips were to Hawai’i. We always had so much fun on the beautiful beaches and playing at their facility.”





**RR: "What was your favorite part of playing beach volleyball?"**

HH: "I loved being outside and the vibe, there's always music playing and it's a sport you can play for the rest of your life, whether it's a game of pickup or professionally."

**RR: "After getting your undergraduate degree at GCU, was your goal to return to the indoor game?"**

HH: "I had originally decided to be done with volleyball after my senior year, but once season ended, I knew I wasn't quite done. I had always loved playing indoor and figured it would be a great way to finish my collegiate career."

**RR: "How did getting to Milwaukee reach out to you, and how did the whole recruiting process unfold?"**

HH: "The coaching staff reached out to me after I put myself in the portal when beach season finished in the spring. I was able to visit about a week later and instantly fell in love with the school and city. It moved very quickly, but when you know, you know!"

**RR: "How have you enjoyed re-transitioning to the indoor game, and what have been the easiest and the most difficult parts about the transition?"**

HH: "I've loved the transition to indoor! The easiest part was probably getting back into hitting in the middle. I've missed the quick sets and faster offense. The most difficult part has probably been the extra care and attention to how my body feels. Sand is much more forgiving on the body!"

**RR: "What are your goals following the season? Will volleyball continue to be a part of your life?"**

HH: "Volleyball will always be a big part in my life, whether I am just a spectator or continue playing. I'll likely keep coaching while I finish up my MBA, but I'll try to get back on the court as much as I can when I start my career."



**MIKE**

# New Staff on the Block



*Milwaukee*



**M**



**James Biedenbender**  
*Communications Assistant*

**What has been your favorite part about being a Panther so far?**

Meeting so many new people that are willing to answer any questions I have.

**What Has Been Your Favorite Spot Around the City of Milwaukee?**

My favorite spot around Milwaukee is probably Colectivo Coffee Shop. I love the drinks there and it is a great spot to get work done.

**What was the Best Thing you did this Past Summer?**

I took a cabin trip to Traverse City, Michigan with my extended family.

**What are you Most Looking Forward to This Upcoming Season?**

I am excited to meet more student-athletes and see what they accomplish this season.



**Ethan Britt**  
*Assistant Coach, Strength & Conditioning*

**What has been your favorite part about being a Panther so far?**

Getting to work with such a great group of staff and athletes.

**What Has Been Your Favorite Spot Around the City of Milwaukee?**

I've been enjoying going on runs near the marina and Pierhead Lighthouse.

**What was the Best Thing you did this Past Summer?**

Coaching at Campbell College football camp was probably my favorite thing I did this summer.

**What are you Most Looking Forward to This Upcoming Season?**

I'm looking forward to watching athletes improve in the weight room and succeed in their games/meets!







## **Wyatt Johnson**

*Director of Marketing & Fan Engagement*

### **What has been your favorite part about being a Panther so far?**

The community atmosphere! Everyone has been extremely welcoming and helpful over my first week.

### **What Has Been Your Favorite Spot Around the City of Milwaukee?**

So far Lakefront Brewery has been my favorite spot in Milwaukee (mainly due to their cheese curds).

### **What was the Best Thing you did this Past Summer?**

The best thing I did this summer was spend some time up in Grand Marais, Minnesota, hiking and checking out some local spots.

### **What are you Most Looking Forward to This Upcoming Season?**

I'm looking forward to the start of the basketball season and getting into Horizon League play!



## **Logan Langseth**

*Assistant Coach, Women's Soccer*

### **What has been your favorite part about being a Panther so far?**

The Milwaukee women's soccer team of course but also my fellow colleagues. Everyone has been welcoming and more than helpful. Very family-esque.

### **What Has Been Your Favorite Spot Around the City of Milwaukee?**

The beach, Shorewood farmers markets, and the food but of course UW-Milwaukee.

### **What was the Best Thing you did this Past Summer?**

Was hired here at Milwaukee.

### **What are you Most Looking Forward to This Upcoming Season?**

A new experience in a new role.





### **John Pfaff**

*Associate Head Coach, Women's Basketball*

**What has been your favorite part about being a Panther so far?**

Meeting and getting to know our team members.

**What Has Been Your Favorite Spot Around the City of Milwaukee?**

Besides the OHOW? The Summerfest grounds!

**What was the Best Thing you did this Past Summer?**

Family vacation in Northern Wisconsin.

**What are you Most Looking Forward to This Upcoming Season?**

Seeing our team grow to become a cohesive unit while working hard to achieve our team goals.



### **Priscilla Schultz**

*Associate Head Coach, Cross Country & Assistant Coach, Track & Field*

**What has been your favorite part about being a Panther so far?**

The community! Everyone has been so welcoming and supportive.

**What Has Been Your Favorite Spot Around the City of Milwaukee?**

Colectivo by the Lakefront.

**What was the Best Thing you did this Past Summer?**

Visited Hermosa beach in California and caught the Weeknd concert in Los Angeles with my daughters.

**What are you Most Looking Forward to This Upcoming Season?**

I am looking forward to the leaves changing and enjoying the Fall and Winter weather. I also can't wait to catch some other Milwaukee sporting events!

Milwaukee





### **Julian Swartz**

*Special Assistant to the Head Coach, Men's Basketball*

**What has been your favorite part about being a Panther so far?**

I love being back home in Wisconsin and getting to do what I love.

**What Has Been Your Favorite Spot Around the City of Milwaukee?**

Milwaukee Public Market

**What was the Best Thing you did this Past Summer?**

Swimming at Devil's Lake State Park

**What are you Most Looking Forward to This Upcoming Season?**

Competing to win a Horizon Championship.



### **Hannah Whitish**

*Assistant Coach, Women's Basketball*

**What has been your favorite part about being a Panther so far?**

The people in athletics being so welcoming!

**What Has Been Your Favorite Spot Around the City of Milwaukee?**

Historic Third Ward

**What was the Best Thing you did this Past Summer?**

Travel with the AAU program I was coaching with.

**What are you Most Looking Forward to This Upcoming Season?**

Watching all the hard work the student-athletes are putting in translate into games.

**Go Panthers!**

**MKE**

**M**



## **Lanyce Williams**

*Assistant Coach, Women's Basketball*

### **What has been your favorite part about being a Panther so far?**

The sense of community within the Athletic Department! Everyone is so supporting of each other!

### **What Has Been Your Favorite Spot Around the City of Milwaukee?**

Bradford Beach!

### **What was the Best Thing you did this Past Summer?**

Moving here to Milwaukee!

### **What are you Most Looking Forward to This Upcoming Season?**

I'm looking forward to competing. We've been putting in the work, and I can't wait to see how that translates into games!



## **Gabe Zuniga**

*Assistant Coach, Strength & Conditioning*

### **What has been your favorite part about being a Panther so far?**

My favorite part has been the strong sense of community and the social life at UW-Milwaukee. I've really enjoyed connecting with new people, building friendships, and feeling like I'm part of something bigger on campus.

### **What Has Been Your Favorite Spot Around the City of Milwaukee?**

My favorite spots in Milwaukee are the beaches near campus and the Third Ward, especially the Public Market. I love being by the lake for the relaxing atmosphere, and the Third Ward has such great energy with plenty of places to explore and enjoy.

### **What was the Best Thing you did this Past Summer?**

The best part of my summer was going to concerts and events at Summerfest and around the city. It was a great way to enjoy live music, spend time with friends, and experience everything Milwaukee has to offer.

### **What are you Most Looking Forward to This Upcoming Season?**

I'm most looking forward to working with the student-athletes and supporting them as they grow and succeed. I'm also excited to watch our teams compete for Horizon League championships and represent Milwaukee at the highest level.





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# CHAIRING *the* MADNESS

*by Gary D'Amato*

In 1995, when **Amanda Braun** was a senior at Siena College, her mother scored tickets to the NCAA Division I Women's Final Four, held at the Target Center in Minneapolis.

She crashed on a couch at a friend's house and witnessed a seminal moment in the history of women's college basketball as the great Rebecca Lobo led unbeaten UConn to the title with a 70-64 victory over Tennessee.

"It was another moment of real elevation in women's basketball," Braun said, "and I just happened to be there."

Twenty-seven years later, in 2022, Braun was back at the Target Center for the Final Four. This time, the director of athletics at Milwaukee was sitting courtside as a first-year member of the NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Committee.

"It was just such a full-circle moment," she said.

Braun now chairs the 12-member Women's Basketball Committee. It's a prestigious position and a tremendous honor, and it illustrates the high regard in which she is held nationally.

"Especially at this time, when (the women's game) has just taken a leap, it's so neat being on this committee," she said. "It means a lot to me personally, and professionally it's a cool opportunity. It's a pretty desirable position, and so I'm really proud to be a part of it."

The committee members are assigned to conferences and will spend the 2025-26 season watching and evaluating teams. Then, from March 11-16, they'll meet in Indianapolis to select, seed and draw up brackets for the 68 teams that will comprise the NCAA DI tournament field.

As one can imagine, it's a mind-numbing grind in which the committee members pore over reams of data in all-day meetings, engage in spirited debate and strive to produce the best possible field and the most equitable seeding and bracketing.

The responsibility weighs heavily on the shoulders of a few.

"We want to get it right for all the teams that work so hard all year," said Braun, who served as the committee's vice chair in 2024-25. "And that's more complicated than what people think. What you ultimately end up doing is comparing teams against one another and you sort of go down who are the one seeds, who are the two seeds ... and it's splitting hairs.

"I really want us to look at the data, because it tells the story. It's pretty sophisticated data — the wins above bubble, the NET ranking. And then we watch the teams, too. That's a big part of it. We share those notes with one another. The biggest concern is that we somehow don't get it right. But we spend so much time on it, I'd be surprised if we didn't get it very close to just right, if not exactly right."

Braun grew up in Brodhead, south of Madison, a self-described gym rat who was known as the kid who walked around town with a basketball under her arm.

At Siena, she was a "highly injured" member of the women's basketball team, scoring exactly 42 points in 42 career games, a statistical symmetry that would have looked much different if she hadn't suffered a significant injury as a sophomore.



"It was basically a hairline fracture in the bone where your hamstring connects," she said. "That's really hard to recover from and I don't think I ever did fully because then I had some compensation-type strains and pulls.

"But what I learned from that experience was, a) how to be a teammate, but also, a little bit of perspective. I'm a better administrator for it because I understand what it feels like to not play. To have to sit there and not participate in the thing that you love so much and have put so much time into ... so I have a lot of empathy for kids who have that experience."

Braun's college coaches, noting her passion and her high basketball IQ, tried to steer her toward coaching, but she was more interested in the administrative side of athletics.

Now in her 13th full year as Milwaukee's AD, she has forged a reputation as one of the best leaders in college sports. In 2023, she was named the NCAA Division I Nike Executive of the Year by Women Leaders in College Sports.

Braun has been a member of numerous NCAA committees during her career; her five-year run on the DI Women's Basketball Committee was





preceded by 5 1/2 years on the NCAA's Competition Oversight Committee.

Over a 32-day span in February and March, she figures she'll be home just five days. Her schedule is a bit crazy, but luckily, the men's Horizon League basketball tournament is scheduled for March 11-15 in Indianapolis, so she'll just have to switch hotels for the Selection Committee meetings, which start the next day.

"I've learned how to manage my own schedule and energy," she said. "And then I have a fantastic executive team with Cathy Rossi, our deputy AD, Kathy Litzau (senior associate AD), and Adam Ahearn (senior associate AD). I don't worry about anything when I'm gone."

After a champion is crowned at the Women's Final Four, to be held April 3 and 5 in Phoenix, Braun's work on the Selection Committee will be done. So what's next?

"I will tell you that I am thrilled and honored and humbled to be a part of this," she said. "But I'll be ready when it's done. I'll take a break from committee work on the NCAA level for just a little while. This will be 10-plus years of being on NCAA committees. It has been an honor. And it's fun. I like challenges and I like doing different things."

"But I'll be ready for a break."



**Gary D'Amato**, a three-time National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association sportswriter of the year in Wisconsin, joined the Milwaukee Panthers as a feature writer for the Roar Report in September 2018.

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# GONE FISHING

Members of the Milwaukee men's basketball team found themselves getting more and more involved in a new hobby this past summer ... fishing!

A group of players, led originally by **Tate Mackenzie** and **Faizon Fields**, found a way to come together and bond through rods and reels, eventually growing the group as the players got a chance to get to know each other this summer.

The staff of the "Roar Report" recently had a roundtable discussion with the fishermen, as Mackenzie and Fields were joined by **John Lovelace, Jr., Ned Renfree, Seth Hubbard**, and **Chandler Jackson** for the fishing chat.

## **Roar Report: So how did this whole fishing thing get started?**

Tate Mackenzie: "I came out here with intentions to fish. On the recruiting trip, actually, Coach Lundy was sending me videos of them catching salmon and stuff on the river before I committed. And then I got a little excited about it. So, I started fishing, and then Faizon hit me up and was like, 'I like to fish too, man'. And then we started fishing a lot, and then we got the whole

gang out there."

Faizon Fields: "And then everybody was fishing. Yeah, that's pretty much how it went. The first time he (Mackenzie) invited me, I fell asleep. I missed it, though [group laughter]. But after that, we did end up going fishing, and then Ned (Renfree) came along. It was just us for a little minute. And after that, everyone else just started asking to come. It was like, 'come on'."

## **Roar Report: So, who has the most experience as a fisherman?**

John Lovelace: "I've been fishing since I was a little kid."

Ned Renfree: "I've been fishing since I was a little kid, but I haven't been tying knots and finding the places. I've just been going with my dad, and he's been doing it for me, and I just throw it in."

John Lovelace: "Yeah, that's what I've been doing too. I didn't learn the rest until, like, COVID, at that time."

## **Roar Report: How did you guys get the other teammates involved? Was everyone looking for stuff to do in the**

**summer, and someone said, 'hey, we're going fishing'?**

Faizon Fields: "It was like people, a couple would go, and then we'd send, like, videos and stuff to our little group chat, and they'd be like, 'oh, I wanna try and go fish'. And then they would just come out next time ... the next time we'd go out."

Chandler Jackson: "I mean, yeah, for, like, the second half of summer, I was hanging out with Faizon a lot. And then one weekend, he was like, 'hey, what are you doing this weekend ... you want to go fishing?' I was like, hey, whatever. I don't have anything else to do."

Ned Renfree: "Tate and Faizon got me into it, like, pretty quick. It was probably, like, the first week I was out here. That first weekend, I was looking for something to do. Tate hit me, and he was like, 'we're going to go fishing. You want to come?' I'm like, 'yeah, sure, let's do it'. And then me and Faizon kind of wiped the floor with Tate ... he didn't catch anything ... and me and Faizon were feeling pretty good."



# FISHING?

Faizon Fields: "We caught, what, like, six or seven?"  
[group laughter]

Seth Hubbard: "For me, it was really just wanting to spend time with the guys. So, I mean, I seen them fishing, so I was like, hey, you know, that's what we do in the South. I know, like, up here they have different types of species and fish. I just wanted to come out there and chill with them, be with them, you know, experience Milwaukee with them. So that's kind of my thing."

**Roar Report: So, you did have plenty of experience fishing before?**

Seth Hubbard: "Yeah, I got plenty of experience, but not, like ... I feel like the 'South fishing' and the 'Midwest fishing' are two totally different things, so I felt like it was a new type of thing for me."

Esyah Pippa-White: "I mean, I've always wanted to fish and my first time I ever go fishing, I got the pole stuck in a tree and never went back. I've always

experienced the outdoors, loved the outdoors, and just wanted to try something new. I saw Tate going and Johnny always went, so I was like, you know, I'll try it."

Faizon Fields: "Didn't you catch one?"

Esyah Pippa-White: "And, you know, I caught one for the first time."

Faizon Fields: "The rest is history. Fell in love with it."

Esyah Pippa-White: "Catch and cook, baby."

**Roar Report: How quickly did the leaders of the group realize this was more than just a one-time thing and that it was pretty serious?**

Faizon Fields: "I mean, pretty quick. When we started having fun catching fish, and then catching fish turned into, let's just cook and clean and, you know, eat them, catch, cook, clean. We started making little ... Tate makes TikTok's about it."

**Roar Report: So, this is the real deal then, not just catch-and-release?**

Tate Mackenzie: "When we

started out, I was thinking that Faizon was just trying to be, like, the older guy, trying to involve me in the situation. I didn't know Faye actually liked fishing for real. I thought he was just trying to be a homie and look out because he knew he was trying to involve something I like doing. And then Faye came out and started catching fish. I was like, 'oh, okay now, he knows what he's doing a little bit.' All right, he actually likes to do this. So then after that, that's kind of when I knew it was serious. And then Ned came along, and Chandler, and Johnny, and Pip, everybody, and Seth. It was a lot of fun."

**Roar Report: What is it about fishing that everyone enjoys it so much, that makes it so much fun, makes it so entertaining?**

Tate Mackenzie: "I just love being outside. Being outside is probably – I'm outside most of my day. I like being in nature, and it's kind of something to do, especially, like, it adds a little competition to it too. When you get other people out, I love competing too. It's like when you got your friends out, it's a friendly competition out there. Everybody likes to compete. Unfortunately, I've been taking a few L's the last couple weeks. But I'm going to come back better





than ever soon here. It's going to be all right."

Seth Hubbard: "For me, it's just, I think, peace of mind. It's a disconnect from the world, no phones, just you and the guys. I feel like you really get to know a person on another level. You know what I'm saying? Like, you're just secluded, and you're just fishing. Like Tate said, competing is just a great experience to get to know somebody."

Ned Renfree: "I think it was – I started with my dad, and that was just a way that we could spend time together. I loved that. But then coming out here, it's been good to get to know everyone, kind of just sitting around and fishing and talking garbage and just, not really having a care in the world while we're fishing. We're just able to do whatever, listen to music."

Chandler Jackson: "I'd say, honestly, before I got here, I hadn't fished, shoot, probably since I was, like, 12 really with my grandpa. So, it's been a long time since I've fished. But I feel like most of the time nowadays I'm usually inside and playing a game or something like that. But it's nice to get outside and hang out with teammates outside the court and, you know, just really get to know somebody on a more personal level and just hang out, have a good time, have some fun, a little competition, catch some dinner."

John Lovelace: "I am not gonna lie, I'm only having fun when I'm catching fish. So, I like to, like, the fight with the fish. I like the thrill of it. When you hook the

fish, you got to fight that. But other than that, I don't know." Esyah Pippa-White: "I mean, kind of to back up what Seth was saying, you get a disconnect from the whole world and just go out there and see nature and see how beautiful the world really is. And what Johnny was saying, you know, I never got in a fight with a big fish. That's the dream come true right there. A big old fish just going back and forth. That'll get you."

Faizon Fields: "I would say just what pretty much all the guys said, you disconnect and it's just peaceful out there. It's relaxing. You know, it's another way to relax instead of sitting at home and just laying down on the couch and stuff. And also, competition, being with the guys, and it's just the thrill. When you do get that bite and you know, it's the thrill of the fight. Other than that, it's just peaceful out there."

**Roar Report: How has this developed? Was it on boats and lakes? Was it the side of riverbanks? Was it on bridges? Charters?**

Faizon Fields: "We've done it all. We've done it all." [group laughter]

Chandler Jackson: "A little bit of everything."

Ned Renfree: "All we need to do now is ice fishing."

Faizon Fields: "Yeah, that's the plan. And we already got it. We got it lined up."

Tate Mackenzie: "We got it lined up. Me and Faye started out on the Milwaukee River kind of like



traversing ... we were trying to figure out spots."

Ned Renfree: "Neck deep in the water!"

Tate Mackenzie: "Yeah, we got some waders. Went neck-deep. That was fun. But, yeah, we ended up getting a charter recently with all the guys. That was fun."

Faizon Fields: "Then we went on a boat, too, out in – where were we? Oh, I forget. It was probably, like, I'd say 45 minutes away. We went out on a boat. And then after that, that's when we got the charter. We've done it all. Next ... ice fishing."

Tate Mackenzie: "Next ... ice fishing, has to be."

Roar Report: How do you guys get ready for trips? Gear, snacks, playlists? Do you listen to music while you're out?

Seth Hubbard: "Oh, yeah. Yeah. Gear, snacks, for sure. You've got to."

Ned Renfree: "You need your rod. You need all your tackle. Bait. But then we get the tunes going. And we just – yeah. Country music, usually. But we enjoy it."

### **Roar Report: Does everyone have their own equipment?**

Esyah Pippa-White: "I am very inexperienced, so I don't bring anything except snacks and sweats." [group laughter]

Faizon Fields: "I would say me and Tate usually know the spot we're going to, or we pick the

spot where we're going. And we just tell the guys what they do need or, like, what they should bring. And then me and Tate have a lot of fishing rods for people, even though some of the guys have their own fishing rods. We usually have everything covered."

Chandler Jackson: "I actually found my fishing rod out in front of my apartment in the grass. And it sat there. I was like, 'is this anybody's fishing rod?' I took it inside. I'm like, oh, I guess nobody wants it, I guess. Let's go."

### **Roar Report: Biggest fish you caught and what was it?**

Faizon Fields: (to Pippa-White) "You probably caught about a five-inch bluegill."

Esyah Pippa-White: "Yeah, how'd you know? Yeah, a little baby bluegill, whatever it's called."

Faizon Fields: "Or a panfish, one of those two."

Esyah Pippa-White: "But, you know, it was a catch. I caught, like, eight. That could have been the same one every time, but it felt like eight."

John Lovelace: "I caught a pretty big channel catfish."

Faizon Fields: "How much did it weigh?"

John Lovelace: "I don't know. Probably, like, I would say a good ten pounds."

Chandler Jackson: "I caught, maybe seven, eight pounds of salmon on the boat."

Ned Renfree: "I probably had a







couple. No, I had one – probably, five- or six-pound salmon."

Ned Renfree: "Dinner!"

Seth Hubbard: "I probably caught one with Pip, you know what I'm saying?"

Faizon Fields: "What would you say that one smallmouth I caught was?"

Ned Renfree: "Still caught one!"

Tate Mackenzie: "That had to be a four. That was a beefy smallmouth."

Faizon Fields: "It's like that one day when nobody caught nothing besides me."

Ned Renfree: "Yeah, that would have been at least four pounds."

Seth Hubbard: "Yeah, nobody caught nothing, you know. I caught something, so I'll take it."

Tate Mackenzie: "I'm saying it was like a four, maybe four and a half."

Tate Mackenzie: "I mean, I'm not going to count the salmon that I didn't even, like, really catch. Them boys caught it. I had to reel it in, on the boat. But I'll just go with, I got, probably a couple, three or four pounds, three-pound smallies. And then I was catching some hog bluegills the other day by myself. Just some massive bluegills. It was probably, 10 inches, 11 inches. Oh, yeah, I was eating them. Frying them up. Right there, coming straight out of the water, frying them up."

Faizon Fields: "That's probably my biggest fish I've caught. Four-pound smallmouth bass."

### **Roar Report: So, the competition is real?**

Seth Hubbard: "I would say there's more competition. I'm just having fun. I just be vibing. There's more."

Chandler Jackson: "Catch and cook!"

Esyah Pippa-White: "As long as I get a little bite, I am happy."

Tate Mackenzie: "Catch and cook!"

Tate Mackenzie: "I'd be acting happy for the other people. I'd be like, 'yeah, good catch, bro'. But I'm mad as hell. I get mad as hell."

Chandler Jackson: "My biggest reward is out-fishing Tate. That's all I'm going to say."

Faizon Fields: "If Tate doesn't catch anything, I'll let him hear it."

Ned Renfree: "Chandler, that's not a reward, everyone out-fishes Tate." [group laughter]

Tate Mackenzie: "All right, all right ... Neddy goes fishing twice on my rod that I set up for you. All right. All right."

### **Roar Report: How do you think fishing has helped everyone get to know each other better?**

Seth Hubbard: "I think it's probably just how to communicate with each other. I feel like that comes onto the court. What type of person he is. So, it's like having different ways to do it. Maybe I may be a little louder with Pip or I may be a little quieter with Tate, but just know how to communicate with each other out there. Because you get excited out there, too, and get competitive. So, it just helps the way we know we communicate with each other on the court, off the court. So, that's what I'll say."

Ned Renfree: "Just spending time with each other. Chemistry. Yeah, chemistry."

You get to know everyone way better than you ever would just hanging out at home playing 'Call of Duty'. You get to know them so much better because you're in person with them, out in nature, and just talking to them. It's great."

Tate Mackenzie: "I feel like there's not many things ... we all come from very different backgrounds – and there's not too many things that we all kind of enjoy doing. So, one guy likes to play video games. One guy likes to be – there's all a million different things, but it seems like everybody kind of had fun fishing, and it was a cool thing we could all do together. That was just relaxing. It wasn't putting any extra stress on our body between practices and stuff. It was just – it was good."

Esyah Pippa-White: "I just feel like when you

connect on a different level outside and build a real relationship, it could help with the basketball court. It just feels like I could talk to you a little differently. All I mean is love by it. Nothing like – don't take it too sensitive or anything. It's just all love. We're trying to get you better."

Faizon Fields: "We got a group of funny guys."

### **Roar Report: Is anybody surprisingly good or hilariously bad at fishing?**

Esyah Pippa-White: "I mean, I'd be throwing that thing out there." [group laughter]

Tate Mackenzie: "No, Faizon's pretty nice at it, I ain't gonna lie. I feel like I do the same thing that he does, but then he just catches more fish, which kind of pisses me off. I watch his technique. I'm like, 'that's exactly what I do'. Why is he catching more fish? Yeah, Faizon's kind of good at it."

Faizon Fields: "Honestly, bro, it's all luck. [laughter] It's all luck. If the fish wants it, then it's going to get it."

Ned Renfree: "If they're hungry, they're going to take it. If not, they're not going to."

Faizon Fields: "We've come to a realization that it's like the fish that are supposed to be eating what we're throwing don't even eat that, and it's like other fish that eat the stuff that – it's all messed up. The fish is hungry ... it's going to eat whatever you throw out there."

Ned Renfree: "That'll happen. Beef jerky."

### **Roar Report: Any final thoughts?**

Faizon Fields: "I'd actually say Seth is better at fishing than what I thought he'd be."

Seth Hubbard: "Yay!" (celebrating) ... [group laughter]

Esyah Pippa-White: "Hey, stay tuned. Fishing channel coming. Awesome."

Ned Renfree: "We've got to vlog one of these! Thanks."



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# INTERNATIONAL WATERS: PANTHERS SWIM & DIVE GOES GLOBAL

From Lerum, Sweden, to Napier, New Zealand, Milwaukee swimming & diving is home to student-athletes who have crossed oceans to compete in NCAA athletics. With eight international competitors hailing from six different countries, the program has become a hotspot for international talent, bringing different languages, cultures, and skillsets to the Milwaukee community. And the one thing that brings these athletes together? Their passion for

swimming and a desire to chase their dreams, both athletic and academic, on the American stage.

Whether the athletes were drawn to Milwaukee by scholarship opportunities, academic offerings, coaching dynamics, or a shot at living an American college lifestyle, each athlete has their own story as to why they call Milwaukee their new home.

## ..... WOMEN'S TEAM .....



**JOHANNA EDGREN**  
Lerum, Sweden,  
Junior  
Finance



**ANIKA JOCELYNE  
SVENNING**  
Bærum, Norway,  
Freshman  
Political Science

## ..... MEN'S TEAM .....



**EMRE ARICAN**  
Turkey,  
Freshman  
Biomedical Engineering



**CALEB CARLISLE**  
Napier, New Zealand,  
Sophomore  
Business



**JOSH CARROLL**  
Palmerston North, New Zealand,  
Freshman  
Kinesiology



**JEAN DUCASTEL**  
Pont-Remy, France  
Junior  
Criminal Justice



## THE BIG DREAM

Some future Panthers had the idea of moving overseas from a young age. "I knew I wanted to do this when I was 13," Arican said. Edgren added, "My mom had always encouraged me and my older sister to go to the United States, since you don't get the same opportunity to combine university with swimming in Sweden. When I saw how much fun my sister had in the U.S. with her teammates and the opportunities she was presented with, there was no doubt about going overseas. After I had a breakout national meet and started looking more into it, I decided that it was what I wanted to do," Carroll stated.

Other student-athletes recognized this opportunity later in their high school years.

"I always thought the idea of traveling overseas to study seemed like a really cool experience, and I realized throughout high school that this was what I wanted to do," said Svenning. Carlisle and Ducastel noted that they, too, knew they were destined for the American college experience within their last few years of high school.

## FINDING MILWAUKEE

A few athletes, including Ducastel and Arican, took initiative and contacted coaches Kyle Clements, Alex Hallam, and Todd Hill directly. Others utilized international recruiting resources to get in touch with the Panther coaching staff. "I joined a recruiter who put me in contact with Coach Alex," said Carroll.

Carlisle added, "My recruiting agent contacted coaches who were interested in me and then put me into contact with those coaches".

Edgren and Svenning had similar experiences. "Through the recruiting process, Milwaukee reached out to me about a year ago in October, and I really liked the program," stated Svenning.

Edgren mentioned, "Alex reached out to me by email".

## WHY THE PANTHERS

Like most international students, none of the six athletes were able to visit Milwaukee before committing. However, that did not stop them from seeing the benefits the program and institution

could provide. For Svenning, location and the team atmosphere were essential in her decision. "Milwaukee separated itself with its location, overall swim program, and the team," she said.

Carlisle agreed, stating that the coaching style and location were driving factors. "It just felt like a good fit," stated Carroll, as he was excited about the direction of the program.

Location continued to be the common denominator among these international athletes when deciding on their college commitment. "Milwaukee had everything I was looking for in location, academics, and the team," added Edgren.

Arican and Ducastel both saw Milwaukee as a vast sea of opportunities. "The opportunities and the team were big factors in my decision-making process," said Arican.

## ADAPTING TO A NEW LIFE

Moving across the world certainly comes with challenges beyond the pool.

"Honestly, your life changes as soon as you get off the plane," stated Edgren. "You need to adapt to being taught in English, to a new social life, and to a different culture."

Language barriers are bound to affect these students entering the U.S. for the first time. Svenning added, "The biggest adjustment has definitely been speaking English at all times, as well as having my education in English".

Arican commented on the variety of different rules that are present in the States. Carlisle and Ducastel even noticed some differences involving food and how this has been a huge adjustment. Carlisle also touched on the differences in clothing styles.

## THE TEAM AS AN ANCHOR

Despite early challenges, each athlete has leaned on the welcoming Panther team atmosphere when making their transition to life in America.

"It's like making over 50 new friends right away," said Edgren. "I was warmly welcomed immediately, and I couldn't ask for anything better. As soon as I was unsure about something, there was always someone on the team that I could talk to."



Svenning echoed this sentiment stating, "The team at Milwaukee has been incredibly welcoming and supportive through this process. Having other international student-athletes as part of the team has made the adjustment a shared and fun experience".

The helpful nature of the Milwaukee community has made these international athletes feel at home. "I feel like I have a family away from home," said Carroll. Carlisle added "Joining the team has helped me make friends and be part of social events around the city".

Ducastel and Arican touched on the same notes, describing how friendly and considerate the Panther family has been.

### **FAVORITE PARTS OF AMERICA**

Adjusting to a new country comes with its challenges, but it also brings exciting discoveries. "The grocery stores are massive," Svenning said. "There are endless food selections!"

Ducastel commented on the friendly nature of everyone, including strangers. "People are so nice, even people that do not know me."

Arican even touched on American freedom and how he can do what he loves freely every day.

Carlisle stated, "My favorite part about life in the United States is competing at sports competitions with the team".

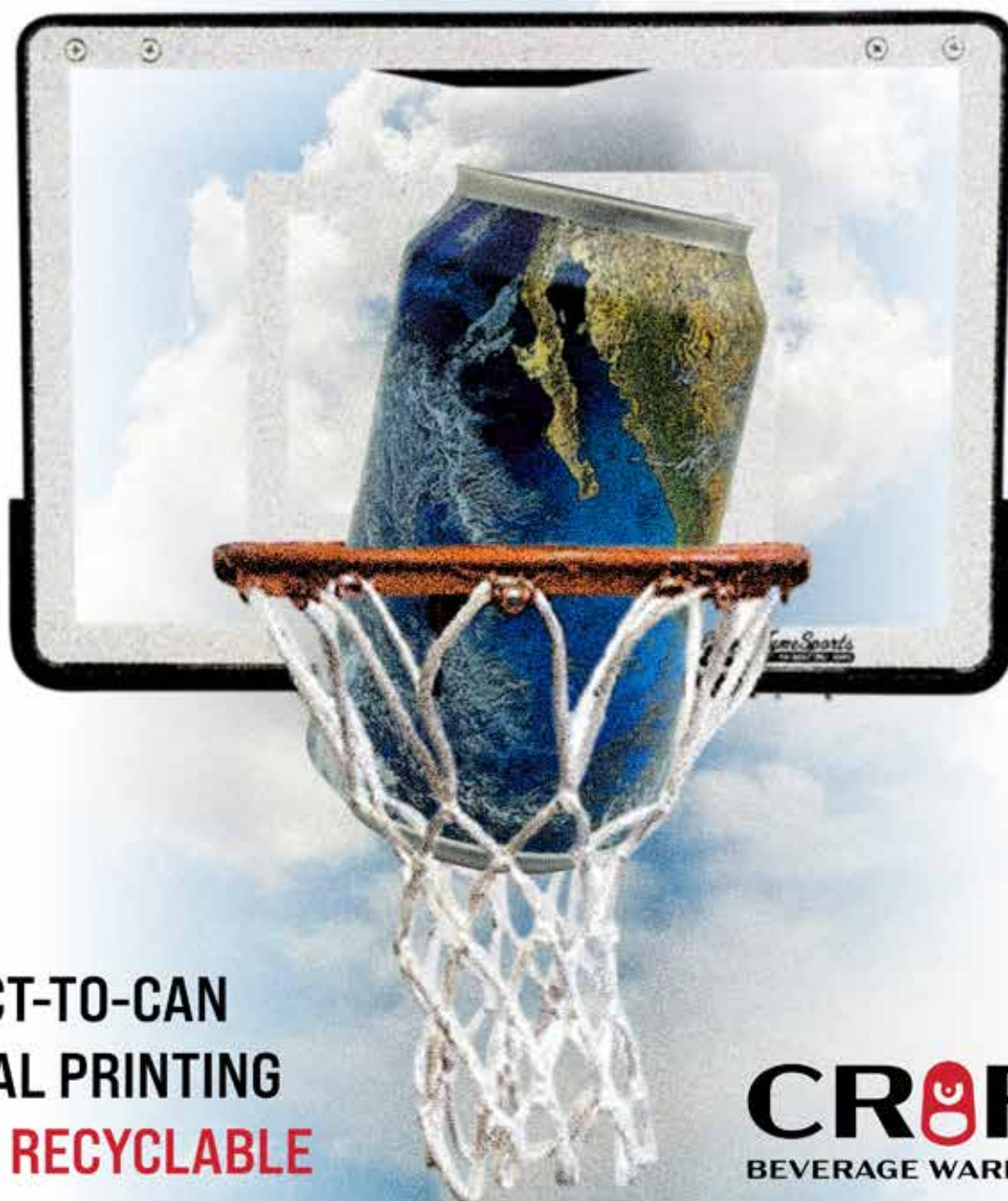
"My friends, free refills at restaurants, and coffee shops," added Edgren. Lastly, Carroll is thankful for the change in scenery that comes with being in a new country.

### **TALENT KNOWS NO BORDERS**

For these six Panthers, swimming brought them to Milwaukee, but it's the culture, opportunities, and relationships that have made it feel like home. As the Milwaukee swim & dive program continues to grow globally, it is clear that talent knows no borders, and the bonds formed here go far beyond the pool.







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# MILWAUKEE ATHLETICS PANTHER EXCELLENCE FUND



Being a part of the Panther Excellence Fund is not only an investment in the athletic program and student-athletes of Milwaukee, it also provides many benefits for you. The Panther Excellence Fund is excited to announce the following benefits for donors who support the Panthers (beginning in the 2023-24 academic year). Benefits will be awarded according to athletics annual gifts and will be available to Panther Excellence Fund members the following sports/academic year.

For more information or to hear about opportunities to get involved with Milwaukee Athletics, please contact Chris Roche (rochec@uwm.edu) or Zach Beaschler (beaschle@uwm.edu).

## 2023-24 PANTHER EXCELLENCE FUND BENEFITS

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### EXAMPLES

Jon Smith makes a donation as part of his two men's basketball season tickets (\$790) and attends the MBB golf outing, it puts him at \$1,090



Carrie attends the WBB golf outing and gives \$250 to the excellence fund, her total giving would be \$450







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