

THE ROAR REPORT

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SERVICE: GRACE LOMEN'S
NEXT MISSION

THE GOLD STANDARD: ADDING
"BLACK & GOLD" TO THE
"GREEN & GOLD"

THE NEXT STRIDE: PRISCILLA
SCHULTZ LEADS MILWAUKEE'S
DISTANCE PROGRAM

RISING ABOVE THE SETBACKS

SPORT UPDATES

THE GOLD STANDARD: ADDING "BLACK & GOLD" TO THE "GREEN & GOLD"

by Gary D'Amato

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SPORT UPDATES

Men's basketball, women's basketball, tennis, track & field and swimming & diving.

FROM THE HARDWOOD TO SERVICE: GRACE LOMEN'S NEXT MISSION

Grace Lomen is preparing for her journey after basketball, and it starts in a few short months. After wrapping up her senior season with the Milwaukee women's basketball team, the political science major will graduate this May and plans to begin the process of joining the United States Air Force. For Lomen, basketball has always been about more than what happens on the court.

THE GOLD STANDARD: ADDING "BLACK & GOLD" TO THE "GREEN & GOLD"

Wayne Larrivee is one of the more well-known voices across not only the state of Wisconsin, but across the country as well. Larrivee has also done play-by-play for the Milwaukee men's basketball team for home games dating back to the 2017-18 season. Read about how the relationship has grown between the Panthers and Larrivee since that time, in the feature story authored by Gary D'Amato.

THE NEXT STRIDE: PRISCILLA SCHULTZ LEADS MILWAUKEE'S DISTANCE PROGRAM

Priscilla Schultz arrived at Milwaukee as the cross country associate head coach and track & field assistant coach in the summer of 2025, bringing her experience as an elite runner, a passion for athlete development, and a clear vision for the future. Schultz now leads Milwaukee's distance program with a holistic approach centered around both athletic and personal growth.

RISING ABOVE THE SETBACKS

A season that began with high expectations quickly hit major roadblocks as a wave of injuries forced the Milwaukee men's basketball team to constantly reshape its lineup, identity, and approach. Despite losing multiple key contributors and over 100 games to injury, the Panthers remained competitive by embracing a next-man-up mentality and leaning on player development.

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LIGHT UP THE HYPE

The Class of 2025 for the Bud K. Haidet Hall of Fame included **Sarah Teegarden** (women's soccer) and **Louis Bennett** (men's soccer), who were both inducted in a ceremony January 31. Teegarden was a four-time first-team All-Horizon League performer and two-time All-American, while Bennett led the Panthers to five NCAA Tournament appearances and a school-record 135 wins in his 10 seasons.



LIGHT UP THE HOPPE

Sam Lorenz made history for the Milwaukee men's swimming program in February, setting a new Horizon League Championships record in winning the 100 backstroke – punching his ticket to the NCAA Championships in the process. He will become the first male Panther athlete to compete in the event when he heads to Atlanta, Ga., in late March.



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MEN'S BASKETBALL SPORT UPDATE



Expectations were high entering the 2025–26 season for the Milwaukee men's basketball team. Picked first in the Horizon League preseason poll and returning a talented core, the Panthers appeared poised to contend for a conference title and an NCAA Tournament berth. Instead, injuries to key players and inconsistent availability throughout the season derailed that momentum, leaving them with a challenging finish that ultimately fell short of preseason hopes.

Milwaukee wrapped up the year at 12-20 overall and 8-12 in Horizon League play, placing the Panthers in unfamiliar recent territory of an eight-place finish. The team fell to Detroit Mercy in the first round of the Horizon League Tournament.

The injuries to key players started early – in fact, **John Lovelace Jr.** was lost to a leg injury just days before the season opener. **Seth Hubbard** managed to play in just nine games before surgery ended his campaign, **Danilo Jovanovich** was enjoying a breakthrough campaign when his season came to a close 17 games in. Key contributors **Faizon Fields** and **Stevie**

Elam also missed large chunks of the year to injury and **Amar Augillard** was not able to make it the entire season either. For the full story on the injuries, head to page 32 of this edition.

Elam made the most of his first year of collegiate basketball, earning Horizon League All-Freshman accolades after a winter in which he averaged 10.5 points and 4.7 rebounds a night, shooting over 80 percent from the free throw line. **Chandler Jackson** emerged given the opportunities, becoming the team's leading scorer after the calendar turned to 2026. Jackson averaged nearly 17 points and five rebounds from February 1 on, finishing the year at 9.7 points and 2.8 rebounds per game, shooting over 50 percent from the floor and nearly 80 percent from the line. More freshmen got the chance to shine: **Josh Dixon** went for 9.0 points per game and shot 87 percent from the line; **Sekou Konneh** finished with averages of 6.4 points and 4.7 rebounds a night, shooting 55 percent from the floor while finishing in the Top 15 in the Horizon league in rebounds and his team-high 26 blocks.

10 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL SPORT UPDATE



Milwaukee finished the 2025-26 season with an 8-24 record, including a 4-16 mark in Horizon League play. The conference record placed the Panthers 10th in the league standings, earning a home Play-In Round game against Detroit Mercy.

Despite being the first NCAA Division I Women's postseason game across the country, the Panthers fell by a 69-67 score to the Titans. Detroit Mercy didn't have an answer for **Tierney Madigan**, who scored 22 points on 9-of-11 shooting, while **Jorey Buwalda** capped her impressive campaign with her ninth double-double of the season, recording 19 points and 12 rebounds.

Buwalda was Milwaukee's lone representative on the Horizon All-League teams, earning a spot on the Third Team as she averaged a team-best 12.1 points per game. She also ranked among the conference leaders with 8.7 rebounds per contest to wrap up her junior season.

Grace Lomen had a breakout season in her final collegiate campaign, ending the year with a team-high 48 three-pointers while averaging 10.7 points per contest.

While Lomen is the lone senior departing the program at the end of the season, Milwaukee has plenty of building blocks heading into the 2026-27 season. In addition to Buwalda, the team returns three other starters including **Madison Fitzgibbon**, **Payton Rechlicz**, and **Jada Williams**.

Twelve of 13 players for Milwaukee that dressed this season recorded at least one start. Those 13 returners, along with **Lizzy Favret** and **Olivia Olson** coming off redshirt seasons, are all expected to make contributions to a 2026-27 Panther roster.

11 SWIMMING & DIVING SPORT UPDATE



The Milwaukee swimming & diving teams wrapped up their season at the Horizon League Championships, held Feb. 18-21. The women finished the year with a 4-3 dual meet record and earned a runner-up finish at the conference championships for the third consecutive season. The men concluded their campaign with a 5-2 dual record, placing fourth overall at the league meet.

The Panthers captured nine titles at the Horizon League Championships, highlighted by the first male swimmer in program history to reach the NCAA Championships

In the 100 backstroke, **Sam Lorenz** won the event in convincing fashion, setting a new program record and Horizon League Championships record with his 45.81 effort. With the performance, Lorenz earned an automatic bid to the NCAA Championships held in Atlanta, Ga., from Mar. 25-28. Lorenz also set a Horizon League Championships record in the 200 backstroke with his consolation-winning outing of 1:41.60.

The Milwaukee women claimed eight titles at the Horizon League Championships, highlighted by **Gabrielle LePine's** program-record swim of 22.74 in the 50 freestyle. LePine also secured her second consecutive title in the 100 breaststroke.

Maddi Hayashi added two individual titles, sweeping the butterfly events with winning times of 54.88 in the 100 butterfly and 2:01.71 in the 200 butterfly. **Christiana Brooks** joined the group of champions with a program-record 49.98 to win the 100 freestyle.

Milwaukee also captured three relay titles, with **Mara Freeman**, LePine, Hayashi, and Brooks winning both the 200 and 400 medley relays, while LePine, **Brielle Laube**, Freeman, and Brooks took first in the 200 freestyle relay.

The Black & Gold produced 18 program-record efforts at the championships, headlined by **Gunnar Seversen's** impressive showing (200 freestyle, 500 freestyle, 1650 freestyle, 400 IM). Other Panthers setting new program bests included **Charlie House** (100 freestyle), LePine (50 freestyle), Lorenz (50 freestyle, 200 backstroke), **Andrew Jones** (50 breaststroke, 100 breaststroke), Brooks (100 freestyle), and **Caleb Carlisle** (100 butterfly, 200 butterfly).

Five Milwaukee swimmers earned Horizon League All-Academic honors, with Freeman, Brooks, and **Natalie DiProspero** headlining the women's awards, and Jones and **Alvin Valkki** receiving the nod for the men.

TRACK & FIELD SPORT UPDATE



The Milwaukee track & field teams closed their indoor seasons at the Horizon League Indoor Championships. The men finished runner-up for the third consecutive year, and the women finished runner-up at the meet as well.

After the conclusion of the championships, **Anna Szepieniec** was honored as the Women's Championship Outstanding Performer – Field, while **Nevia Levenhagen** received the Women's Field Freshman of the Year award.

The women earned four individual titles, with Szepieniec winning the long jump (tying the championships record), triple jump, and the pentathlon (setting new championships and program records), and **Olivia VanZeeland** taking the high jump crown.

On the men's side, **Josh Cygan** won the weight throw title, **Ty Bauschelt** finished first in the 400-meter run, and the team of **Karsten Grundahl, Matt**

Scardina, Zac Schmidt, and Bauschelt earned the 4x400-meter relay title.

Szepieniec capped off her standout junior season by earning Alfreda Goff Horizon League Indoor Track & Field Women's Athlete of the Year honors. At the 13th annual Tierney Classic, she set a program record in the long jump with a leap of 6.30 meters. Szepieniec also ranks among Milwaukee's all-time Top 10 in five events: first in the long jump (6.31m) and pentathlon (3,890 points), second in the 60-meter hurdles (8.45), third in the 200-meter dash (24.68), and fifth in the triple jump (12.45m).

The team of **Victoria Evtimov, Taylor Thimmesch, Katie Burns,** and **Leah Handshoe** set a new program-best in the 4x400-meter relay at Notre Dame's Meyo Invitational, beating the previous record set in 2015. The squad bested their own record at the Horizon League Indoor Championships with their 3:48.01 effort.



The Milwaukee women's tennis team checks in at 5-7 overall since the start of the 2026 portion of the schedule, an impressive feat considering the squad has played without numerous key members of the lineup the entire stretch due to injuries.

Highlights include a 4-3 victory over Marquette Feb. 13 and a 4-3 decision over UIC Feb. 20. The win over the Golden Eagles marked the second consecutive season the Panthers have topped their city rival – an impressive achievement considering prior to last winter, the team had never claimed a match in the all-time series dating back to the 1990's. The victory over the Flames was just the program's second-ever, and the first since 2014 – dating back to when UIC was a dynasty in the Horizon League that won every league title from 1997 through 2013.

Individually, **Nel Van Hout** has been stellar ... and tough to beat. So far in 2025-26, the newcomer has recorded a team-best 16 wins (against just three losses), claiming victory in eight

consecutive singles matches at one point while earning Horizon League Player of the Week honors along the way. **Nadiia Konieva** checks in second on the squad with her 13-5 singles ledger.

In doubles play, the team has been strong – going 35-21 as a squad to date. **Sara Simonova** (16-3) and Van Hout (16-6) are tied for the team lead in doubles wins, while the duo of Simonova and Konieva has posted a 13-2 mark, winning Horizon League Doubles Team of the Week earlier this spring. Up next, Horizon League play is set to open March 14 at Oakland.

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FROM THE HARDWOOD TO SERVICE: GRACE LOMEN'S NEXT MISSION

For **Grace Lomen**, basketball has always been about more than what happens on the court.

After wrapping up her senior season with the Milwaukee Panthers women's basketball team, Lomen is preparing for the next step in her journey. The political science major will graduate from UW-Milwaukee in May and plans to begin the process of joining the United States Air Force.

Her path to that moment started long before she arrived on campus.

"I started playing sports when I was really young, probably around four years old," Lomen said. "Growing up, I spent a lot of time in the gym with my mom who coached in the youth program at Mukwonago, along with AAU in the summer. I also played soccer, but basketball quickly became the one I loved the most."

Sports became a major part of her childhood. "Being in a family that valued sports pushed me to stay active and competitive, and it became a big part of my childhood," she said.

Service to the country also runs in the family. Lomen's father served as an officer and combat engineer and completed Airborne School, while her older brother spent eight years in the Navy as an aviation rescue swimmer.

Basketball continued to open opportunities for Lomen throughout high school. "I started focusing on basketball more seriously in middle

school and especially in high school," Lomen said. "Once I started playing competitive AAU basketball and getting attention from colleges, I realized playing at the collegiate level was a real possibility."

Her college career began at Parkside, where she spent two seasons developing her game before eventually transferring to Milwaukee. "My time at Parkside helped me grow a lot as both a player and a person," Lomen said. "I gained confidence, developed my skills, and learned what it takes to compete at the college level."

Eventually, that growth led to a new opportunity. After entering the transfer portal, Lomen heard from Milwaukee head coach **Kyle Rechlicz**, and the process moved quickly. "Coach Rechlicz emailed me at around 9:00 p.m. on a Saturday," Lomen said. "She got me on campus and I committed that Monday."

Lomen went on to become a consistent contributor for Milwaukee while also serving on the team's leadership team.

During her senior season, she played in 31 games with 25 starts, averaging 10.7 points and 3.5 rebounds per contest while shooting 36.1 percent from three-point range. One of the highlights of her season came on Feb. 7

against Robert Morris, when she scored a career-high 30 points. Beyond the numbers, Lomen's role as a leader helped prepare her for what comes next.

"Being part of the leadership team helped me understand how to lead by example," she said. "It taught me how to communicate, support teammates, and keep myself accountable. Those leadership skills will definitely help me as I move into the Air Force."

In many ways, the transition from athletics to the military feels natural to her. "Sports played a huge role in shaping who I am," she said. "Basketball taught me discipline, teamwork, and how to push through challenges. Those lessons are very similar to what the military represents."

One unique moment during her time at Milwaukee helped give her additional perspective. While playing in Puerto Rico, the Panthers faced the United States Air Force Academy, giving Lomen a chance to speak with a member of the coaching staff. "I did have a chance to talk to one of the assistant coaches," she said. "She gave me some advice on how to reach out to recruiters and get my career started."

Although she did not participate in ROTC during college, Lomen

spent time researching different paths into the Air Force and speaking with individuals who have military experience.

Now, with graduation approaching, she is preparing for the next step. "After graduating in May, the next step will be beginning the process of officer training," Lomen said.

The training process will take several months depending on the program she ultimately chooses. One long-term goal stands out. "One of my biggest goals in the Air Force is to hopefully become a pilot," Lomen said. "Flying is something that really interests me, and it would be an incredible opportunity."

As Lomen prepares to close the chapter on her basketball career, she knows the sport helped prepare her for what lies ahead. "Basketball has given me so many opportunities and lessons that I will carry with me into the next chapter of my life," she said. "I am grateful for the coaches, teammates, and family members who supported me along the way."

No matter what comes next, Milwaukee will always hold a special place for her. "Milwaukee will always have my heart."



Anthony (Brother)



Anthony (far right)



Dad



Anthony (red hat)



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CBS 58 THE HOMETOWN TEAM

THE GOLD STANDARD:

ADDING “BLACK & GOLD” TO THE “GREEN & GOLD”

BY GARY D'AMATO

Wayne Larrivee has, at various times throughout a distinguished and well-traveled career, called games on radio or TV for the Kansas City Chiefs, Chicago Bears, Chicago Bulls, Big Ten football and basketball and, of course, the Green Bay Packers.

He's worked with Bob Costas. He helped Kevin Harlan get his first job. He's called Super Bowls and NCAA Tournament games. And — true story — he once called a high school basketball game with none other than Michael Jordan.

If Larrivee works two more years as the radio play-by-play voice of Packers, it will mark his 50th year in the NFL. If he does three more years, it will mark 30 years with the Packers. He and Larry McCarren already are the team's longest-tenured radio team.

Oh, and yes, since 2017 he has done television play-by-play for the Milwaukee Panthers men's basketball team. This past



season, he did seven games on ESPN+ as part of the Horizon League's media package.

The Packers and the Panthers? It would seem, on the surface, to be an odd pairing, but it's an arrangement that works on many levels for Larrivee. He calls only home games at the UW-Milwaukee Panther Arena, an easy commute from his home in Grafton. The work allows him to keep busy in the Packers' offseason, but it's not the what-town-am-I-in-today kind of schedule he once kept.

But the biggest reason? At 70, Larrivee still enjoys the challenge, the preparation, the on-air execution, the rush. It's still fun.

"This job with Milwaukee, I really enjoy it," he said. "For me, it's great because it doesn't involve a lot of time and travel. I can do a game and I'm home by 9:30, in time for the 10 o'clock news.

"The other thing is, the people are good to work with. On the pro level and the upper divisions of college sports, sometimes it's not as easy to talk to people, coaches especially. Sometimes PR people are hit or miss. Around here, people respond, they take your call, they get back to you. There are a lot of good people at this school."

The story of how Larrivee came to call Milwaukee games is serendipitous. In the spring of 2017, he was leaving the WTMJ Radio studio — TMJ had the Packers back then — when he doubled back to talk to **Scott Warras**, then a producer for the station.

"He goes, 'Hey, Scott, who do they have doing the TV for Panther games?'" said Warras, who had just finished his first season as the team's radio voice. "At the time it was a transitional period. I said, 'I'm not sure what the plans are for next season but I would be happy to connect you with the people who make those decisions.'"

Warras introduced Larrivee to **Chris Zills**, Milwaukee's associate athletic director, who then connected Larrivee with **Amanda Braun**, the director of athletics. And the rest is history.

Needless to say, Milwaukee is thrilled to be associated with Larrivee, who brings credibility, professional polish and a familiar voice to the (courtside) table.

"From the very beginning, we knew we were adding one of the most respected and recognizable voices in the state — as well as across the country — but what has stood out even more is the genuine care and enthusiasm he brings to telling our student-athletes' stories," Braun said. "Wayne elevates our broadcasts, strengthens our brand across the state and helps create countless memorable moments for Panther fans.

"We are incredibly grateful for the impact he has had on our program and the professionalism he has brought to our partnership."

Said Warras, who just finished his 10th season calling Panthers games on radio: "To have Wayne Larrivee tied to Panthers athletics every season is such a blessing. I'm so happy for the program



and the athletic department, and it's a personal privilege to call him a friend of Panther athletics and a colleague in the industry."

Larrivee has built strong relationships at Milwaukee. He calls Braun "one of the standouts in her field. She does a great job. I think she has a great eye for coaching talent." Of Panthers head basketball coach **Bart Lundy**, he says, "Three straight years with 20 wins at this level, different rosters every year ... he's a heck of a coach. And I think the program has a lot of potential."

Larrivee's resume is as impressive as it is long. A Massachusetts native and a graduate of Emerson College in Boston, he has called thousands of basketball and football games at every level.

He took a semester off before his senior year at Emerson to call high school football games for KGRO Radio in Pampa, Texas, a town of 24,000 northeast of Amarillo. He missed the phone call offering him the job because he was at a PGA Tour event, running coffee to Chris Schenkel as a gopher for ABC Sports.

"My father took the message and wrote 'Tampa,'" Larrivee said with

a laugh. "I thought, 'Wow, that's a big market.' He got it wrong. It was a 'P,' not a 'T.'"

After college, he took a job with KSTT Radio in Davenport, Iowa, where he called University of Iowa football games and Quad Cities Angels minor-league baseball games. KCMO Radio then hired him to do play-by-play for the Kansas City Chiefs. He was just 23 years old. Later, he helped convince KCMO to hire Harlan, who went on to call more than 500 NFL games on network TV.

"We had a great media group in Kansas City," Larrivee said. "We played touch football on Thursday afternoons in the fall. One of the guys who played with us was a sales guy for the Royals: Rush Limbaugh. He was a huge Steelers fan. He would show up in his black and gold No. 75 'Mean' Joe Green jersey."



In 1985, Larrivee was hired to be the radio voice for the Chicago Bears. He held that position until the end of the 1998 NFL season, and took over as the voice of the Packers the following year. He was the television play-by-play announcer for the Chicago Bulls on WGN-TV for 17 seasons. He worked Big Ten football and basketball games for nearly 25 years and still picks up an occasional Big Ten basketball game for Compass Media Networks when it fits in his schedule.

That one-game partnership with Jordan? It happened when the Tribune Co. hired Larrivee to do the television play-by-play and Jordan the analysis for the championship game of the Tribune-sponsored Chicago City High School Tournament.

"To my knowledge, it was the only time Michael has been an analyst on a basketball game," Larrivee said. "This was around 1988. He was already a megastar, but I didn't know him. I wasn't doing Bulls at the time. We had our production meeting in a latrine in the UIC Pavilion. It was me, my son Scott, who was nine or 10 at the time, and Jordan. He was sitting on

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a toilet seat, eating Kentucky Fried Chicken.

“Three or four years later, I’m doing the Bulls, so we had a natural relationship. He was great to me. He was very gracious.”

Larrivee recalled working a Bulls game in Chicago and NCAA Tournament games in Tampa — with a “T” — on the same weekend. He called Friday night NCAA action, flew commercially to Chicago on Saturday morning and called the Bulls game that night. The network chartered a plane for him Sunday morning and he got back to Tampa in time for the NCAA games that afternoon.

Dizzy yet?

“I don’t know mentally if I could handle it anymore, especially when football crosses over with basketball,” Larrivee said. “I would have a Bulls game in Los Angeles on a Friday night. The next afternoon I had to be in Champaign (Illinois) for a Big Ten football game. I would get out

of the Lakers game, get on the redeye, get to O’Hare, drive down to Champaign, do that game and then the next day pick up the Bears or Packers, whoever I was doing at the time. That was just crazy.”

He has slowed down some, but he still runs circles around people half his age. How long can he keep it up?

“I don’t know,” he said. “People think I’m going to do this stuff for 15 more years. I don’t think so. And I don’t think it will be my decision, either. In this business you never know. ... I go back and look at the games that I do, and if I don’t like the way it sounds, that bothers me. I’m not going to hang on just to hit a number.”

Milwaukee basketball fans should enjoy the ride, for however long it lasts.



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.

ORIGIN OF ‘THE DAGGER’

Wayne Larrivee breaks out his signature call — “And there is your dagger!” — when a late-game score or a defensive stop assures victory for the Packers. He has even used it, on occasion, during wins for the Panthers over the years.

After all, the call has its origins in basketball.

“That’s where it came from,” he said. “When the Bulls would be in a tight game, leading by three, and Michael (Jordan) would come down and hit a

three-pointer — now there’s 10 seconds left and they’re up by six — there’s your dagger.”

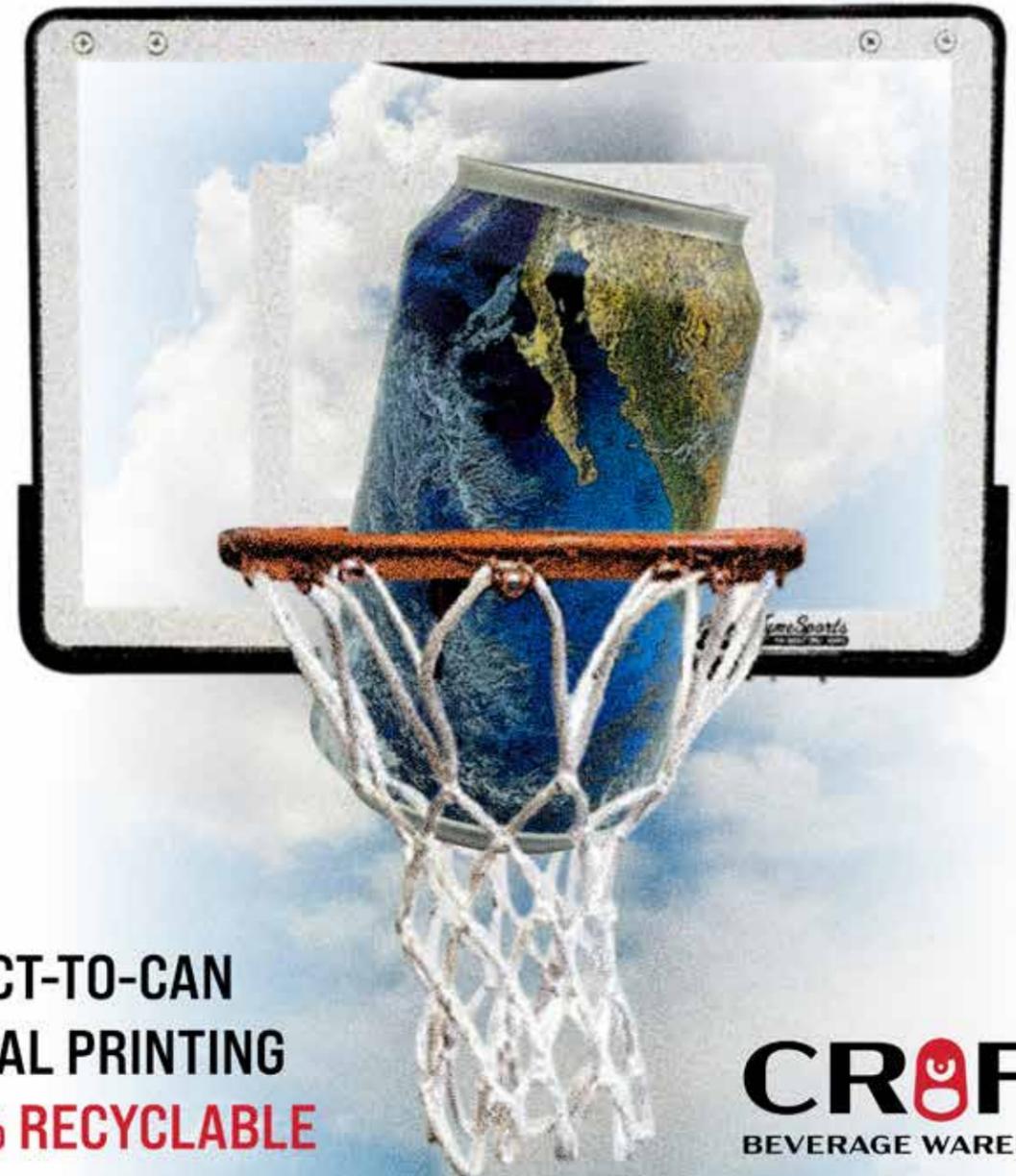
The call made its way into football almost by accident. In October 2001, the night after he called a Bulls game, Larrivee called a Packers game against the Baltimore Ravens, who were the defending Super Bowl champions.

A touchdown pass from Brett Favre to tight end Bubba Franks with 7:03 left in the game put Green Bay ahead, 31-10,

in a game the Packers would win, 31-23.

“I said, ‘And there is your dagger,’ because that touchdown put the Packers up by three scores,” Larrivee said. “I knew there was no way Baltimore was going to score three touchdowns in the last (seven) minutes. I just kind of blurted it out.

“The next week I didn’t say it and people were saying, ‘What play was the dagger?’ It took on a life of its own and really, I never intended that.”



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THE NEXT STRIDE: PRISCILLA SCHULTZ LEADS MILWAUKEE'S DISTANCE PROGRAM

When **Priscilla Schultz** arrived at Milwaukee as the cross country associate head coach and track & field assistant coach this past summer, she brought with her experience as an elite runner, a passion for athlete development, and a clear vision for the future. Schultz, who competed in Olympic Trials and ran at the national level during her career, now leads Milwaukee's distance program with a holistic approach centered around both athletic and personal growth. The Roar Report sat down with Schultz to discuss her new role, her coaching philosophy, and the foundation she hopes to build with the Panthers.

THE OPPORTUNITY

What made Milwaukee the right next step for you in your coaching career?

It is a great opportunity to work with both genders as the head cross country coach. The city itself provides so much, and there is so much happening in the area. It's close to family, so that obviously was an easy move for me. From a coaching perspective, the opportunity to have my own program and coach both men and women was important.

What excites you the most about joining the Panthers and leading the cross-country program?

There's so much opportunity for our team to get better. We have such a great surrounding area to train. Cross country is my second love - obviously I love track - but cross country involves a lot of different training, and Milwaukee is a great place for that. The program has been at a championship level and now are competing against other teams that have risen to that standard, and now we must

raise the bar. That's the challenge, and so that's the exciting part for me.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

How would you describe your coaching philosophy, especially with distance athletes?

It's holistic in that I prioritize not only their physical being, but also their mental being. There are many factors that contribute to becoming a great distance runner in terms of the mental approach and the positive self-talk. My philosophy is to hit all those factors that help build that distance runner but also be their mentor. I feel like they should be able to communicate well with me. Yes, I'm their coach, but I'm helping them become the best personal they can possibly be. My philosophy is progressive, and we continually build off that strong foundation.

As someone who competed at the Olympic Trials and national level, how has your experience as an elite athlete shaped the way you coach?

I received great advice when I first entered coaching from successful colleagues of mine including: "The athlete isn't you". You have to remember that. I try not to say, "I did this", or "you should be able to do this". I know what you're going through in terms of training. Regardless of what level you're at, you're going to go through certain things physically and mentally as a runner and as an athlete.

What do you believe separates a good distance program from a great one?

Having complete buy-in from the athlete's perspective along with coaches instilling belief in them. It goes both ways. Coming into a new program where they don't know who you are and what you're trying to establish, that's always a challenge. So, what establishes a great program? Consistency over time. Years and years and years of time. It's not going to be built the next semester, the next year, but you have to provide the vision. It takes time, but I already think that the Panthers are starting to really believe and see some good progress.

BUILDING AT MILWAUKEE

What are your immediate priorities as you step into this role?

My first priority was getting to know my athletes. You need to know who you're coaching because skill levels differ. I called every single one of them when I was hired just to have a one-on-one conversation. I got to know them well, how they think, and how they operate. I wanted to know their history; I want to know injuries. I just wanted to have some fluid conversation with them. Do they have brothers and sisters? Where are they in the whole process of their career? And then once that was established, the next priority was, who are they competitively?





When recruiting, what qualities do you look for in prospective student-athletes?

I'm recruiting not only an athlete, but a person. They have to be a great person. You want a good teammate, a team player, someone who is coachable, somebody who's going to listen and take direction. Those are the qualities I look at. Not only telling me that you're going to do something but show me you're going to do it in a race. I'm looking for that fierce person.

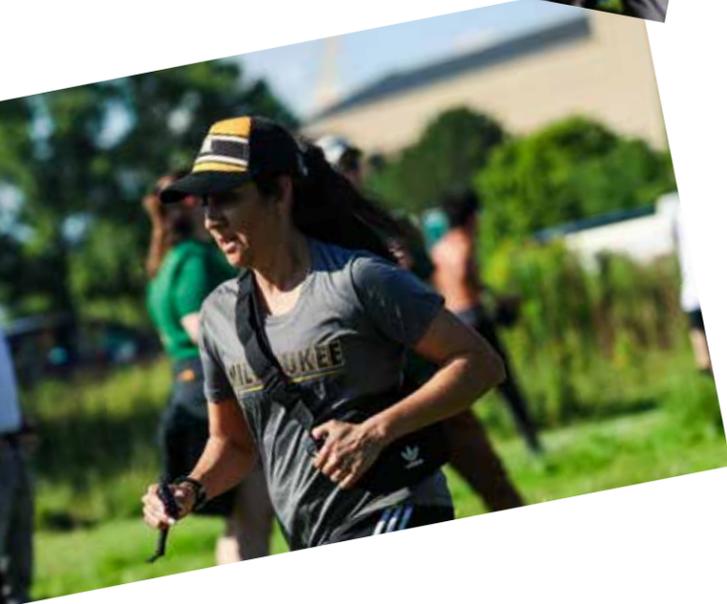
ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

You were an Academic All-American. How important is academic balance in your program?

Academics are absolutely a priority. I told the athletes recently that you can do one thing great. You can do two things pretty well, and really being a student athlete is a priority. Student first, athlete second. I want them to be great at both, and they can do both. It's always when you add that third component, right? It makes it tough. Whether it's obligation to family or work. I want their priority to be on academics. We want them to graduate, get a degree, and be great alumni that come back, visit us, and support us. That's the fun part of seeing your athlete's graduate. It's just heartwarming to see their success.

Distance running is as mental as it is physical. How do you help athletes navigate the highs and lows of a long season?

I think it's important to acknowledge and it's good to let them express their feelings. Obviously, I'm not a professional sports psychologist. I've always offered up our services here at Milwaukee and explain to them that additional support is available. We talk a lot about calming nerves and what to do along with breathing and visualization. We've practiced visualization in some of our practice sessions – having them lay down and actually visualize a race. You should always talk about it.
Personal & Wisconsin Connection



Your husband is a Wisconsin native. What does it mean to you to now coach in this state?

Wisconsin really feels like a second home for me. My husband is from here, and most of his family still lives in the area. Being able to spend more time with family instead of just visiting once a year has been really special. I've actually been visiting Wisconsin since around 2006, so I was already familiar with the state. Now being here full-time makes it even more meaningful.

You previously coached in Arizona. How different is training in Wisconsin's climate compared to the Southwest?

There are definitely differences. In a hot climate, heat will always affect training, but cold brings its own challenges as well. The biggest difference is that in colder weather you can layer up and still manage to train outside, while in extreme heat there is only so much you can do before it becomes unsafe.

In Arizona, you may have ideal training weather in the winter months, but from late spring through fall the heat becomes a major factor. In Wisconsin, we experience all four seasons, so it requires adjusting training based on temperature, humidity, and wind. A lot of it comes down to planning and making sure athletes stay hydrated, adjusting training times, and paying close attention to the weather each day.

LOOKING AHEAD

What does success look like to you in year one with the Panthers?

Success is seeing progress. Are the athletes improving? Are they running faster than they've run before? We track those improvements in races, workouts, and rankings. Even something like seeing an athlete run a workout ten seconds faster per kilometer than earlier in the season shows progress.

Ultimately, success is about the team getting better day by day and week by week while building a strong foundation for the future.





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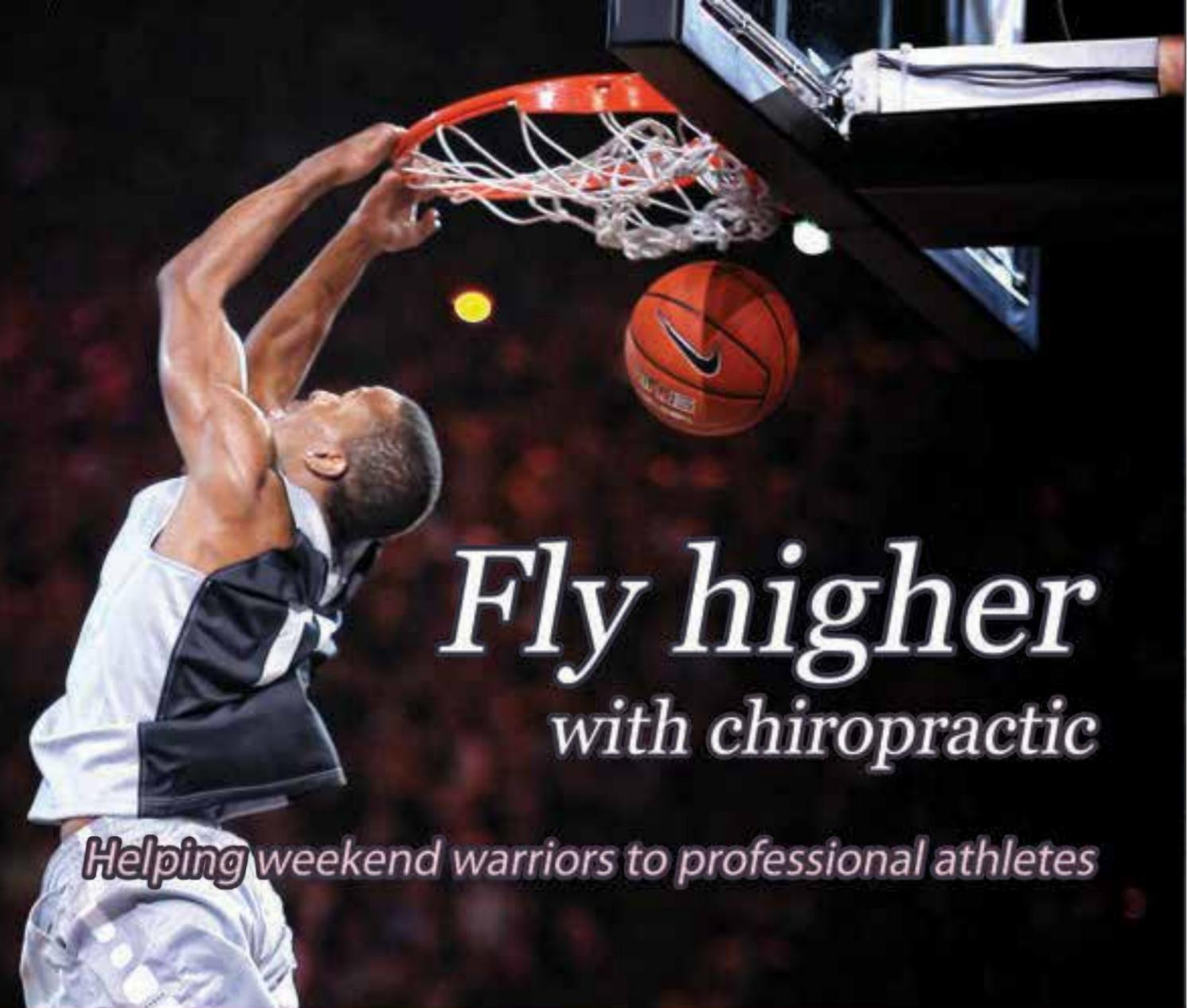


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RISING ABOVE THE SETBACKS

They dressed just eight scholarship players some nights. They shuffled starting lineups more than almost any other team in the country. They had to have members of the coaching staff join practice on the court occasionally because of lack of numbers. And yet through it all, the Milwaukee men's basketball team kept stepping onto the floor, navigating a season defined less by rotations and results and more by resilience.

With three would-be starters sidelined for the year by midseason and two more key contributors each missing six-week stretches – and that's just the "highlights" of the situation – the

Panthers endured one of the most injury-ravaged campaigns in college basketball — forcing a team built on depth and experience to instead rely on grit, growth and next-man-up resolve.

Let's take a step backwards into 2025. After a solid summer of building team chemistry and an off-season in which the team kept rising to the top of those preseason ranking prognostications, the season opener was just around the corner. Expectations were high in Panther Land for late October.

Just 48 hours before tipoff, the first domino dropped. **John**

Lovelace Jr., who was set to head into a senior campaign in which he was primed and ready for a significant role where the sky was the limit – after all, he averaged 17 points in the two preseason exhibition games – his campaign came crashing to a halt before it even had a chance to reach breakthrough status.

It was just a normal practice for the program. Just days before lifting the lid on the new campaign with the home opener against Hampton coming up quickly. What happened next shook everyone in the practice facility that day – a devastating

lower leg injury that ended everything before it even officially began.

"I think Johnny's injury, of all the other injuries, was the most traumatic for me personally and for the team," head coach **Bart Lundy** said. "You know, the way it happened, when it happened, and knowing how hard Johnny had worked and the journey he had been on to get to, what I thought, to become our best player. That was traumatic for me personally. Just to see that and to know that it's heartbreaking for him. And then, just the nature of the injury was really bad."

Lovelace suffered compound fractures in his lower leg. Without even being touched. Some called it a fluke. Just went to jump and then ... wondering what happened as he could see the panic in his teammate's eyes all around him.

"It was really tough," associate coach **Jose Winston** – who has known Lovelace dating back to his youth – said. "Just the injury itself, seeing it. And then I think the biggest thing was just how much work Johnny put into it. He did everything the right way. Everything we told him he needed to improve upon. We

saw the work actually all coming together. In our exhibition games, he was unbelievable. And then for him to have an injury like that, that takes him out for the entire season. It was really, really tough. Not just tough on us as coaches and myself, but it really hurt the boys as well, because Johnny had kind of blossomed into our leader. He was the one guy that just kept everybody together. Everybody loved Johnny."

Lovelace was rushed from the OHOW that day by emergency medical services, but the Panthers still had to prep for





After that trek through the juggernaut of the slate, Horizon League play opened in grand fashion December 6. Milwaukee welcomed Robert Morris – the reigning Horizon League champs and NCAA Tournament participant. The Panthers dug in and came out on top, claiming the 74-72 victory on **Seth Hubbard's** rebound tip-in at the horn. The buzzer-beater went national, earning a spot on ESPN SportsCenter's "Top 10 Plays of the Day".

Hubbard, a transfer into the program, was everything the coaching staff envisioned. Through the first nine games, he was among Horizon League leaders in scoring at 16.6 points per game. A lockdown defender to boot, he was shooting 45 percent from the floor and 76 percent from the line.

Oh yeah ... that memorable game-winner? Turned out to be the last shot he took as a Panther on the season.

Lundy announced Dec. 14 that Hubbard was going to miss the remainder of the season due to a shoulder injury, one that required immediate surgery.

Nine games in. Not even Christmas yet and the Panthers were down a pair of 30-minute-a-night starters who were also valuable on defense.

"Seth's was a little bit out of the blue," Lundy said. "He had been dealing with the shoulder soreness, and then he made the game-winning tip-in. And he's standing on the table [Hubbard

celebrated by jumping on the scorer's table as the fans erupted], and the next day, he can't move his arm. I don't think the players really think about what the impact is going to be, but as a staff, we knew that now John Lovelace, who's 6'7", 6'8", wing, and Seth Hubbard, who's a 6'5", wing, and our two best defensive players, not to mention their scoring ability, were gone, and now your team is completely changed. Your positional size is gone, and you've got a lot of holes to fill."

But, as they say, the show must go on.

"We had to take on the mindset of 'next man up'," Winston said. "But to get hit with the Johnny injury, and then a few weeks later you have Seth who was scoring 16, 17 points a game. We had to go back to the drawing board thinking hopefully someone else can step up and take on that responsibility. But, to lose one guy that you're really counting on throughout the season is a lot. But to lose another guy that plays the way Seth plays defensively – he was a defensive stopper for us. Had the ability to get in there and create his own shot. Had the ability to knock down and open shots. Coach Lundy had someone that, late in games, you can put the ball in his hands and say, 'Hey, go create a shot for yourself or someone else'. Or, 'hey, go grab the best guy on the opposing team'. And to lose that, it was like just having to go all the way back to the drawing board."

Just prior to Hubbard's exit,

freshman **Stevie Elam** went down in the game at Akron Nov. 29 with what looked like a pretty bad ankle sprain. He played through the pain for a few more contests, but the bad luck continued. Diagnosed as a stress fracture, Elam missed the next month-plus of action, right when he was starting to come into his own.

"That week, we were putting Stevie into the starting lineup, and on the Monday, his foot was sore, and by Wednesday, we'd x-rayed it, and it was broken," Lundy said. "At that point, you start to wonder, you know, how many guys can you lose, because they were basically all the same position."

It sounds like a broken record. A few weeks later, **Faizon Fields** went down to an ankle injury of his own at Wright State Jan. 1. In a game where the Panthers dug out of a 20-point hole and were poised for a great comeback win against the first-place Raiders, after Fields hit the deck and hobbled off the court, the comeback effort stalled.

Hold the phone. **Danilo Jovanovich** – who had already missed plenty of time last season with an elbow injury and concussion – fell victim to what was quickly becoming the 'who's-next' part of the equation. His shoulder – which had been an issue for a while – finally hit the point where he could not work through the pain anymore. He played his final game against Northern Kentucky Jan. 9, shutdown shortly after with surgery. This coming after averaging 12.4 points and 6.1

rebounds a game, shooting close to 60 percent from the floor.

"When Faizon goes down, now we've lost almost all of our size, but we're still playing through Danilo" Lundy said. "And then D'Lo goes down. Of all the injuries, offensively, we were playing through D'Lo more than anybody. He possessed the ball for us, he slowed us down, he was passing, he was handling it, he was scoring, and, at that point, not only have you lost all your defensive size and athleticism, but you've also lost your focal point offensively. So, other than just being feeling like we were bewitched, we had to change everything we were doing on both sides of the ball."

It felt top-heavy to be sure. At this point in the season, Lundy was replacing essentially around 120 minutes of would-be production with other spots down the roster. But it didn't stop there. **Chandler Jackson and Simeon Murchison** missed games here and there, as did **Isaiah Dorceus. Tate Mackenzie** fought a knee injury all winter – missing well over 10 games and not 100 percent many

times when he wasn't a scratch.

"You feel like you've almost lost your whole team," Lundy said. "You've lost all of your experienced guys, all of your guys that have had productive careers in NCAA Division I basketball, and I've never experienced anything like it in my career. I don't know that I know many coaches that have seen this level of injury to good players, to your best players."

A look across the NCAA landscape this season shows just what the Panthers were up against. When all was said and done, the team missed well over 100 games to injury – one of the highest totals among the 361 programs playing this season.

"I just keep going back to, like, all right, the basketball gods are teaching us some type of lesson," Winston said about the situation. "I mean, everything you go through, there's a lesson to be learned. I think it has made us better coaches. To be honest, some of these guys have gotten opportunities that may not have gotten as much opportunity when



all these guys were healthy. But, every guy in that locker room we believe in. That's why we recruited them to come to Milwaukee. Obviously, we're having to throw them into the fire. Some of them a little earlier than we expected. But they're growing and they're developing, and down the stretch of this thing, we were hoping to make some type of run. But the one thing I can say is, big props to Coach Lundy, man. He's kept us competing at a very, very high level when most teams would have been folded by now. And that's a testament to his character, who he is as a coach, and who we have leading our program."

The program changed looks over the course of the winter. Had to. Coaches had to see who was available and build game plans for offensive sets and defensive schemes based on what were the new strengths of the next version that was put on the court. Some even had to get out on the court and sweat a little just to get the drills to 10 people for 5-of-5 situations. Even assistant coach **Mike Winans** was not immune to the situation – catching an elbow to the face that caused him to

miss a road trip.

"It's tough because as we're getting ready to prepare for a game, we just didn't know who was available at times," Winston said. "When we were in practices, sometimes we were down to eight or nine guys. But we just tried to stay positive and understand that, when we go into battle, we just had to have our guys prepared and ready to go. And hopefully make enough plays to win the game."

Just when everyone would think 'what can possibly be next?' it continued to happen. Mackenzie found out in late February that he wasn't coming back and was shut down for the season with his knee issue. And the proverbial cherry on top? **Amar Augillard** – who was the highest scorer of the remaining healthy players at 12.6 ppg – went hobbling off the court in the final game of the regular season against Youngstown State Feb. 25 – finding out a few days later that he was done as a Panther in 2025-26 and was just another player to add to the list.

"We also lost Simeon and Tate at

times, and we were starting **Aaron Franklin** at the five, at our center spot, and when everyone was healthy, he was playing the three," Lundy said. "So, you're now at 6'5" and we're maybe the only Division I team in the country with a six-five center. It has changed everything that we've had to do, and we've had to plug guys into different roles and recreate our systems. The guys themselves had to play all different positions, and it may not sound like a big deal to everyone, but you want to play a position and get good at it, and now you're doing something completely different."

There are some silver linings. The depth of the team was tested immensely, and the roster answered the call time and time again. Despite a win-loss record that won't reflect the full truth, the team continued to play hard and battle every night and was in nearly every contest after the calendar turned to 2026. There was a group of three freshmen that, had things stayed injury-free, would not have seen the playing time for growth and development that the eventual situation provided.



Elam averaged 10.5 points and 4.7 rebounds per game, shooting 81 percent from the line on his way to Horizon League All-Freshmen Team accolades. **Josh Dixon** contributed 9.0 points a night and shot 87 percent from the charity stripe and was named Lou Henson Award National Mid-Major Player of the Week back in December when he scored 52 points in back-to-back games. His 28 against Cleveland State Dec. 21 was actually the fourth-most scored in a game by a freshman in school history. **Sekou Konneh** brought energy to every minute on the court, checking in at 6.4 points and 4.7 rebounds a game – including a pair of double-doubles – in just 13.5 minutes on the floor each night. Despite the limited minutes, Konneh ranked in the Top 20 in rebounds in the league and near the Top 10 in blocks.

Lessons to be learned for sure. And in many different ways as well.

"To be thankful for health (laughs)," Winston said when asked what this season taught him. "To be thankful for the opportunity to play the game and to coach the game. But you have to continue to recruit really good players, which we have. Because if we hadn't, then the season would have been a lot worse than what it was. We really did believe that we could beat anybody in the conference when it came to playoff time. So, we were hoping to continue to develop those guys to have enough experience to make a deep postseason run."

The MKE athletic communications staff did the research and ran the data over the course of the season when it came to games missed across the country. The

Panthers finished the year with over 100 games missed by their injured players. Now they may have 'only' finished sixth on the list, but if you look at the other teams ahead of Milwaukee ... the Panthers did reasonably well in the results column compared to others.

Boston University finished as the "winner" on the list with nine of its players combining to miss a whopping 204 games this year. The Terriers somehow found a way to finish a very respectable 17-17, including an unexpected postseason run.

Binghamton was next at 175 missed from 12 players. The Bearcats went 8-23.

LaSalle had 10 players miss 152 games. The results? A 9-23 season.

Delaware was up fourth, with





139 missed from nine players. The Blue Hens went 10-21. Bucknell was also a member of the walking wounded. The Bison saw six players unavailable for 132 contests. A 10-23 campaign followed.

"I don't necessarily think it's about the wins," Winston said. "Like Coach Lundy always says, we just want to make sure we get up every single day and make sure we're at our best. And the one thing I can say about this team is every single day they got up and they competed. They didn't miss practice. They didn't want handouts. They didn't feel sorry for themselves. They got up, they competed. They gave themselves an opportunity to win games. Injuries or not, we still had enough talent, we believed, to make a deep postseason run."

The Panthers followed on the overall list with 108 missed by their group of nine. The 12-20 record included a respectable 8-6 mark at home. For a local comparison, Marquette finished

with an identical 12-20 overall mark despite a healthy roster. So, at the end of the day, MKE's entry produced the second-most victories of the decimated rosters highlighted above.

"I think that the great thing is, even though our record was not what we wanted it to be, we were competitive in almost all the games," Lundy said. "They showed tremendous resiliency and fight, and we had to give guys opportunities, and you've seen growth. We finally had that final group for a few weeks, and you could start to see that they were becoming a team. But you know, it is basically a completely different squad than we had to begin the year."

Maybe this season will never be remembered for what it was supposed to be back in October. Maybe it won't be defined by preseason predictions or the lineup combinations that never quite materialized. Instead, it may be remembered for something far more lasting — the toughness

forged in short-handed practices, the freshmen thrown into bigger roles, the veterans who refused to let the locker room fracture, and a program that never stopped competing. Injuries rewrote the script, but they never changed the standard. And as Milwaukee stepped into March, battered but not beaten, the Panthers carried something no stat sheet can measure — a belief hardened by adversity that they were still hopeful of writing one more chapter.

As it turned out, it was not meant to be. March didn't bring the extended postseason run many expected when the year began. Still, the Panthers' season will be remembered less for who wasn't available and more for how those who were continued to battle — night after night, possession after possession — embodying the kind of perseverance that often defines college basketball at its core, shown in heavy doses by Milwaukee this winter.

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

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

*Please contact Zach Beaschler (beaschle@uwm.edu) if you would like to opt out of having your name acknowledged.



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