

Gymnastics enroute to Louisiana for Nationals

By Dillon Flanigan
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Contributor

On March 22, the Gymnastics team took eighth place at the Gymnastics East Conference Championships in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with a score of 191.175.

Libby Allen, a senior, brought home the Owl's sole medal with a fourth-place finish on floor. It was an especially encouraging result for Allen, who was returning to competition after sustaining a bone bruise not long before the Championships.

"I was able to come back strong for conference and at least was able to compete floor and ended up doing very well and placed fourth on floor in the whole conference," Allen said. "I think it was a lot of just muscle memory. I was making sure I was conditioning a lot, keeping up my endurance and just staying in shape so I could prepare myself to be ready to go out and compete, even with very little practice."

On bars, freshman Hannah Fitzgerald stood out with the Owl's high score of 9.500, a season and career high for her. Fitzgerald, whose twin sister Haley also competes for the university, said such a high result on bars was not only personally motivating but provided a needed boost for the team.

"When I got that score, I was super excited



The Gymnastics team waits for results after their meet on Feb. 15 against the University of Pennsylvania.

PHOTO | CARLY RUSSELL

because bars were our first event. So, we started on a good note, which is good. So super exciting for the team and we kind of stayed steady on bars, which is what we needed," Fitzgerald said.

Head Coach Jerry Nelson praised Hannah and Haley Fitzgerald and fellow freshman Zoe Axell, for making the lineup for the Championships in their first year. All three contributed to the team's final score at the meet.

Nelson also applauded the entire team's performance on bars, saying it

was the strongest event of the day. Senior Shreya Munshi and sophomore Gabriela Dinisoe both scored a 9.475. The vault and floor were also strong events for the team.

Allen's fourth-place finish on floor was earned with a score of 9.845. Junior Abby Royer and graduate Hanna Zebdi tied for eighth with a 9.750. Junior Ava Kelly scored a 9.700.

On vault, sophomore Kylie Sitty and senior Brianna Dorr scored 9.725 to tie for fifth. Kelly was in eighth with a 9.675.

The team struggled on

the beam, normally one of their best events. Dinisoe scored a 9.575 and Munshi scored a 9.475.

"We had a great meet on vault and a great meet on floor. We did not have a good meet on balance beam and that was our demise," Nelson said. "Now, we're focusing on nationals, but we really hit three of the events the best that we could. So, you know, that's the part I see. That's the part I'm excited about."

The Women's Collegiate Gymnastics National Invitational Championships, the next competition and

final one of the season, will take place from April 11-13 at Centenary College of Louisiana. The Owls will compete as a team, which seniors such as Allen are looking forward to.

"I'm so excited to go out and be able to compete with my whole team and have it as a team event instead of individually," Allen said. "For nationals, there's a chance of qualifying to team finals and so I would love to be able to do that with this team."

Off the competition floor, assistant coach Isabella Antonangeli was

named the GEC assistant coach of the year. Nelson, who previously coached Antonangeli during her own gymnastics career at the university, said the honor is well-deserved.

"I'm very proud of how she's come along as a coach, and I got to see that firsthand," Nelson said. "When I got this job, I said right from the beginning that I'm not going to accept this job if I don't have Bella because she's that instrumental to what goes on. She knew all the athletes. She knew the new systems that go here."

Antonangeli, now in her fifth season as an assistant coach, is key to preparing the athletes for competing, said Nelson. He returned to coaching the Owls this season after being in retirement since 2020.

"When he had asked me to come back this year, it was an easy yes, because together I could see us creating an atmosphere that the team was lacking in the previous years. But also, something the team could just kind of move forward from and someone that they could look at and understand why I had a great college experience," Antonangeli said.

With one more meet remaining in the season, Antonangeli emphasized that while scores are important, she hopes to continue to make the biggest impact off the competition floor.

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LAX sets record for most goals

By Kayla Johnson
Contributor

The Women's Lacrosse team broke the program record for goals in a game with their 27-4 victory over the Caldwell University Cougars.

"I've learned a lot from Chris Leary about how the body reacts to stress and it turns out that back-to-back games aren't as bad as people think," Head Coach Kevin Siedlecki said.

After consulting with Head Athletic Trainer Chris Leary to assess the physical and mental toll of consecutive games, Siedlecki explained that while fatigue can be a factor, playing a weaker opponent in the second game helped minimize its impact.

"Our schedule is tough, and we need to balance it with games we can win. We just set a program record for most goals in a game for the second straight back-to-back, so it's clear our team is handling it well," Siedlecki said.

The Owls wasted no time making their presence known, scoring within the first 50 seconds of the game. Midfielder Amelia Mansfield, a senior, set the tone with the team's first goal, which sparked a six-goal run before the Cougars managed to get on the scoreboard.

A key factor in the Owls' success Thursday night was their execution of a play they call "motion." This strategy, which revolves around continuous passing and cutting, allowed them to maintain possession and create open scoring opportunities.

The Owls showed dominance in draw

controls and ground ball recoveries, giving them a significant advantage throughout the match.

Defensively, the Owls put forth a strong effort, limiting the Cougars to just four goals. Their defensive presence was a key aspect of the game, effectively shutting down Caldwell's offensive efforts and preventing any major momentum shifts.

Notable game leader, midfielder/attacker, Macy Vail, a junior, led the Owls with four goals along with five assists while attacker/midfielder, Maddox Burton, a sophomore, had a goal and four assists of her own. The two were dominant in the first half solidifying the Owls' lead held throughout the game.

"We call it the 'M&M Show,'" Siedlecki said.

From their timing, spacing, and understanding where they will be on the field, Siedlecki was happy with the connection between Maddox and Vail.

As Vail transferred to Southern from the University of Akron, she and Maddox have already formed a connection.

"Macy actually started at midfield, but once she transitioned to attack, everything just clicked. It became so easy for us to work together," Burton said about her connection with Vail.

This victory was especially rewarding for the team after their match-up the previous day against their conference rivals, the University of New Haven Chargers, in a 19-9 loss. Siedlecki acknowledged the challenge of facing a fast-paced UNH team, noting the contrast in play styles.

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Matt Letkowski promoted

By Dillon Flanigan
Sports Editor

On March 10, the Department of Athletics and Recreation announced via a press release, that longtime Associate Athletic Director of Compliance Matt Letkowski was promoted to Deputy Director of Athletics at the University.

"Matt has played an important role in the day-to-day operation of SCSU Athletics, in addition to compliance," Jones said in the press release. "I'm thrilled to promote him to this position with more responsibility in engaging our student-athletes and coaches and look forward to his direction of our staff. His leadership is critical to our success and I look forward to working with him in a greater capacity in the future."

Every university athletic department has a senior leadership team. They consist of a Director of Athletics, then potentially a Deputy Director of Athletics or a senior associate athletic director, then associate athletic directors and then assistant athletic directors.

Letkowski was hired by the university in November of 2012 as the assistant director of compliance. Prior to his hire he served two academic years each at the University of Hartford and Fairfield University.

After joining in 2012, he was promoted to interim associate in 2014 and permanently promoted to the role in 2016. Since then, he has ascended to becoming the senior associate where he has been named interim director of athletics in the Spring 2021 semester and the Fall 2023 semester.

"I achieved the title of senior associate coming out of my first interim role as Interim Director



PHOTO | SCSUOWLS.COM

Matt Letkowski promoted to Deputy Director of Athletics.

"I'm always very humbled when a new Director of Athletics comes in and values the work that I do for the university or the work that I can do for them. Twice now, two different Director of Athletics saw that in me and that vision of me and wanted to instill in me more responsibilities and ultimately move me up in my career path. So, I'm very humbled, very exciting, very thankful that I've had those experiences and opportunities during those two different times."

— New university Deputy Director of Athletics Matt Letkowski

of Athletics when Chris Barker became Director of Athletics and at the time he saw the things that I took on as Director of Athletics in the interim, my job responsibilities at the time and wanted me to take on more of a role in the internal operations," Letkowski said.

According to the press release, Letkowski will maintain his previous responsibility as the

NCAA compliance administrator focusing on engagement with student-athlete experience and professional development for staff, policy management and strategic departmental operations planning. He will also oversee the internal operations of fiscal affairs, facilities and event management, apparel and equipment and sport schedules and travel.

The new second-in-command, Letkowski, will now be the sole liaison from the department working with the university admissions, financial aid, registrar and student account offices while presiding over the department's enrollment plan.

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