

THE PENDULUM

ELONNEWSNETWORK.COM

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2025 | ELON, NORTH CAROLINA

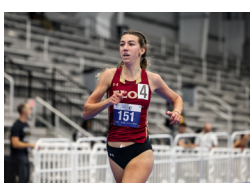
VOLUME 54, EDITION 19

SPRING SPORTS SPECIAL EDITION



2025

Photos by Miles Hayford and Jojo Liebreich



Track & field transfers
break records

PAGE 7 SPORTS



Men's golf looks to finish
strong in tournament

PAGE 12 SPORTS



Campus-wide Information
Technology issues persist

PAGE 14 NEWS

THE **PENDULUM**

A PUBLICATION OF
**ELON NEWS
NETWORK**

ESTABLISHED 1974 | VOLUME 54, EDITION 19

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EDITORIAL POLICY:

ENN seeks to inspire, entertain and inform the Elon community by providing a voice for students and faculty, as well as serve as a forum for the meaningful exchange of ideas.

CORRECTIONS POLICY:

ENN is committed to accurate coverage. When factual errors are made, we correct them promptly and in full, both online and in print. Online corrections state the error and the change at the top of the article. Corrections from the previous week's print edition appear on this page.

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The Pendulum

publishes weekly on Wednesdays

ENN Tonight

broadcasts Monday at 6 p.m.

ENN On Air

uploads Wednesdays

elonnewsnetwork.com

publishes daily



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CORRECTIONS

There are no corrections from the last edition of The Pendulum.

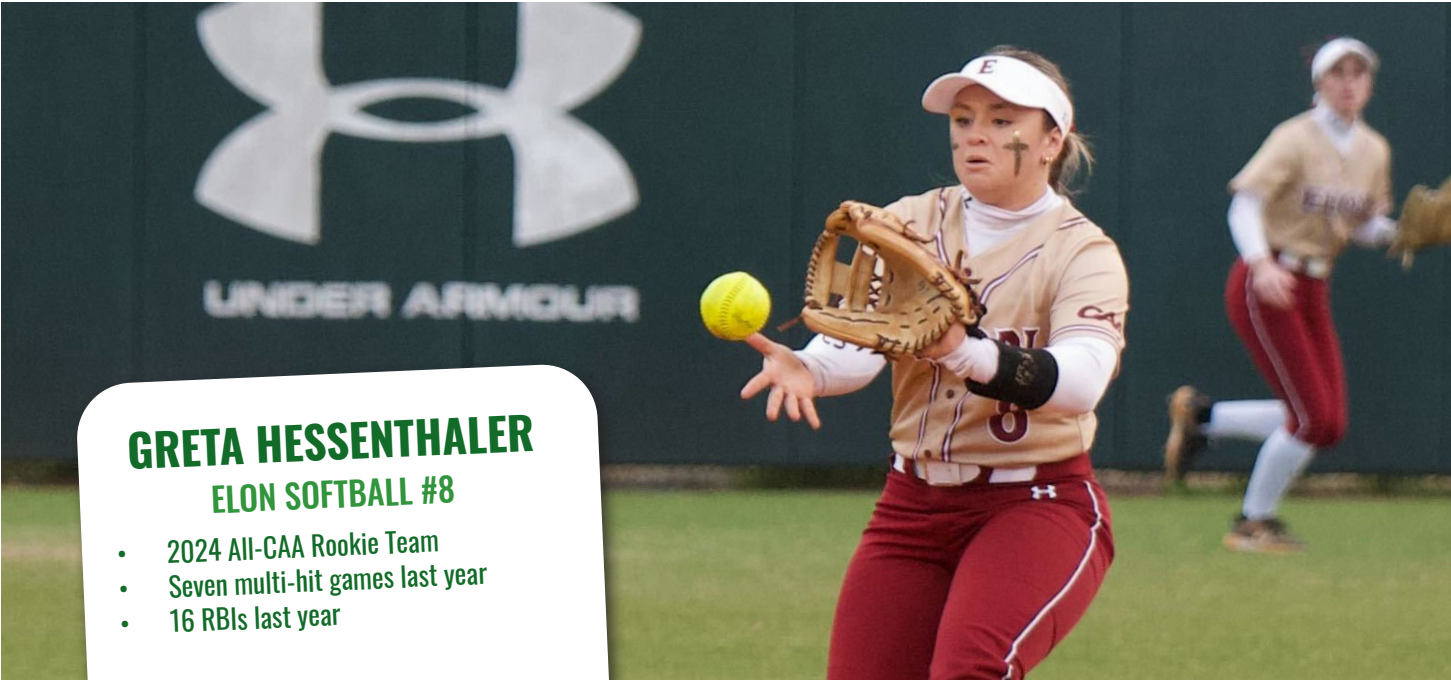
PLAYERS TO WATCH



SAMMY FISHER

ELON LACROSSE #5

- Scored 37 goals last year, 7th most in a single season in program history
- 2025 Preseason All-CAA
- 23 points in eight CAA games last year are the most in conference play in a single-season in program history



GRETA HESSENTHALER

ELON SOFTBALL #8

- 2024 All-CAA Rookie Team
- Seven multi-hit games last year
- 16 RBIs last year



VINCE FATTORE

ELON BASEBALL #11

- Top 10 most home runs in a season by a freshman in program history
- 19 RBIs last year
- Started 32 games out of his 36 appearances



HELEN SARIKULAYA

ELON WOMEN'S TENNIS

- Won 13 singles matches last year
- 2023-24 Most Improved Award (Team Award)
- Won 9 consecutive singles matches last year



Baseball looks to bounce back from 2024 season, rely on offensive weapons

MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Transfer Jackson Alford has been a huge addition to the Phoenix, notching 16 hits so far.

The Phoenix is aiming to have a more successful year after disappointing 21-32 season

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

After starting the season in College Station against the No. 1 ranked team in the country in Texas A&M, the Elon baseball team is ready to compete for a regular season championship. The team has gotten off to a 5-6 start to the season after bouncing back from the A&M series in a big way by beating Presbyterian 16-3, and head coach Mike Kennedy has been impressed with what he's seen so far. Despite not picking up a win against Texas A&M, he was happy with the fight that the team displayed against the 2024 runner-up.

"I learned a lot about our toughness. We competed all weekend," Kennedy said. "We kept fighting and we gave ourselves a chance to win on Friday night. I learned that we had some young guys on Saturday that needed some reps. They need some experience. And, throwing them in that type of environment is very difficult, but they grow from that, they learn from that."

“

IT'S THE FIRST WEEKEND OF THE YEAR, THERE WAS A LOT OF PRESSURE AND NERVES, AND WE HANDLED THAT WELL.

ALEX DUFFEY
ELON BASEBALL PLAYER

Kennedy said it was helpful for the team to react and adjust to the tough environment of A&M because it will get them ready for other high-caliber opponents on their schedule such as Wake Forest. Senior Alex Duffey said the environment helps take away the pressure later in the season.

"Playing in an environment like that is something a lot of us have never done before, so dealing with that against a very good team, and it's the first weekend of the year, there was

a lot of pressure and nerves, and we handled that well," Duffey said. "I think there's a lot of positives because coming back playing other teams here or at other places where the environment's a little bit different, it takes a lot of the pressure away."

The team is coming off a disappointing 21-32 season where it went 4-14 on the road. Kennedy believes poor pitching was at the center of their problems last season.

"We had guys pitching in places that they didn't need to pitch, whether it be someone trying to close or someone trying to start," Kennedy said. "We had a lot of inexperienced guys pitching in innings that they hadn't gotten before, and just weren't ready for that. So we kind of took one on the chin."

However, Kennedy believes this gave experience to young players such as Hudson Narke and Carson Wehner and hopes that this experience will benefit them this year as the team begins to rely on them more. Another reason for the lack of success last year was due to the transfer portal hitting the team hard, particularly on the pitching staff. Between the portal and the MLB Draft, Elon lost pitchers that made up a combination of 271.2 innings pitched in 2023.

Kennedy was more prepared this season, though. A key addition in the transfer portal was infielder Jackson Alford, who came from Gordon State College. Alford has gotten involved immediately, getting a hit in his first career game with the Phoenix and then following it up with 3 hits and 1 RBI on Feb. 18. Kennedy said his athleticism and speed was a big reason why they were attracted to him. His base running skills will allow him to find success even when he doesn't hit the ball hard, according to Kennedy. Kennedy was also impressed by Alford's temperament.

"He's very even keeled. He's not emotional," Kennedy said. "He has a great temperament for this game, and it's almost like he doesn't care, and I think to be a good player, you have to have a lot of that short memory in this game, and he brings a lot of that to the table."

The team will rely heavily on a strong group of starting pitchers, led by junior Justin Mitrovich, who is expected to enter the MLB Draft after this season but the Phoenix are still searching for bullpen depth as their bullpen, or the group of relief pitchers, has had some bumps in the road so far this season. The team is still searching for a closer and more arms in the back end of the bullpen. They will likely be forced to have young guys throw early in the year so they can get the experience they

need before conference play. Kennedy said that so far this season, he has seen a need to improve their ability to throw strikes and said they have walked too many players.

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ONE OF OUR GOALS IS TO START OFF IN CONFERENCE VERY STRONG AND RIDE THAT FOR THE ENTIRE SEASON.

ALEX DUFFEY
ELON BASEBALL PLAYER

Elon's strength lies in its offense and ability to score runs from the top of its lineup, led by seniors Charlie Granatell and Kenny Mallory Jr. Granatell, who recorded 23 multi-hit games last year along with finishing top 10 in the Coastal Athletic Association in doubles. Mallory boasted an impressive .354 batting average — 10th in the CAA. The pair of them combined for 140 hits and 14 home runs last season.

Alongside veteran leaders like Granatell and Mallory, there will be a number of

underclassmen looking to make an impact. Sophomore Vince Fattore will be looking to make a leap after entering the top 10 freshman home run record for Elon. He had 19 RBIs in his freshman campaign, the most on the team by freshman. Kennedy also mentioned freshmen Jake Hajdu, Tommy Mitchell, Hank Krift and Cade Mustard as players that could get involved this year if they can beat out competition posed by upperclassmen on the team.

Getting the offense going early and often will be a main priority, according to Duffey.

"One of our goals is to start off in conference very strong and ride that for the entire season," Duffey said. "Just keep stepping up every week and continuing to put our best foot forward."

Duffey, a veteran catcher who worked in the offseason on increasing the speed he gets the ball to second base, has high expectations for this year and believes the team can compete at a higher level in conference play this year because of a switch in mentality.

"It felt like last year we were just playing. We were always fighting off people and barely sneaking through," Duffey said. "Our goal this year is to attack teams and go right at them, right at their starting pitcher. There's just an energy to this team that is kind of like, 'We're going to come after you with everything we got.' There's a little more aggression in this team."



MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior Kenny Mallory Jr. makes contact with the ball during a game against Binghamton on Feb. 21

MITROVICH'S MINDSET EXECUTION AND EXCELLENCE



MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Junior Justin Mitrovich pitches during Elon's game against Binghamton on Feb. 21. Mitrovich is the Friday night starting pitcher for Elon's baseball team and is a strong contender for the MLB draft this year.

Junior pitcher braces for a new season, focuses on current team amid career growth

Lilly Molina
Elon News Network

When junior Justin Mitrovich stands firm on the mound one word is going through his head: execution. He scans the field and remembers his set plan for every single person on his opponents team. Mitrovich researched and studied the team a few days before and now watches as the team's next hitter took their place at the home base. All he can do now is hope he can execute and perform his job as the Friday night starting pitcher for Elon's baseball team.

Mitrovich fell in love with baseball at the age of 7, when his father taught him how to pitch and swing a bat. He had been playing soccer but didn't enjoy the sport anymore, so instead he picked up baseball and it turned into a lifelong passion.

With a fast ball velocity of low to mid-90s, Mitrovich is a strong contender for the MLB draft this year, which he is automatically eligible for. For head baseball coach Mike Kennedy '90, what stands out to him is Mitrovich's changeup, which Kennedy calls his "elite pitch."

Kennedy has been a head baseball coach at Elon for 29 seasons and has helped 52 players "develop" to the MLB.

"I know what a really good changeup looks like over my time and he is up there with the best of them," Kennedy said.

Standing at 6-foot-3-inches, Mitrovich is slightly above the average height of a professional baseball player, according to the MLB website. His career earned run average stands at 4.04 and he has pitched about 153 innings. He is coming off a year where he was second in the Coastal Athletic Association in strikeouts with 96, the most by an Elon pitcher since current MLB All-Star George Kirby threw 107 in 2019. For Mitrovich his long term goal is to join the likes of Kirby and play professionally, but for now he is solely focused on winning. For him, he plans to start achieving this by focusing game by game.

"You got to just take it one day at a time, just execute it," Mitrovich said. "Just keep building off of each game."

“

HE'S JUST TOTALLY LOCKED IN ON HOW TO GET BETTER. HE HAS A REALLY GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF ALL FACETS OF THE GAME.

MIKE KENNEDY
ELON BASEBALL HEAD COACH

With this comes growth, something Kennedy said he has seen in Mitrovich since freshman year. He's seen Mitrovich apply the mental side of the game, understanding hitters and the metrics of his pitches.

"He's just totally locked in on how to get better," Kennedy said. "He has a really good understanding of all facets of the game."

Kennedy said he "doesn't miss a beat" when it comes to training. He never takes a day off, gets his work done and takes care of himself. Kennedy said Mitrovich also leads by example with his team. For Kennedy, Mitrovich is more stoic in nature and leads by his actions rather than words.

"He really has a good understanding of supporting his teammates and what it takes to be good, and he tries to share that with the younger guys," Kennedy said.

Mitrovich said he feels like the team is in a good spot this year. What stands out to him is the maturity that the team, specifically newcomers, have displayed since the start of this season.

"We had a freshman start their day at shortstop, and looked like he played there for two seasons," Mitrovich said.

Mitrovich has two seasons under his belt, as he started his third season just a few weeks ago as Elon went up against Texas A&M, who was then ranked No. 1 in the country. He started their Friday night game against the Aggies, ultimately losing to them. He racked up another loss against Binghamton on Feb. 21 but had 8 strikeouts before being pulled in the fifth inning. Despite the early season losses, Mitrovich doesn't feel the pressure when he's on the mound. For him it's just another day on the job that he loves.

"You can take your time, you're intentional in everything you do and you just execute," Mitrovich said.



MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

6'3"

Mitrovich's height. The average height of a Major League Baseball player is 6'2"

1.53

Mitrovich's earned run average for the 2025 season through 3 games pitched.

Softball team aims to bounce back after rocky start to the season



Sophomore Lia Miller winds up for a pitch in a game against North Carolina Central on Feb. 8.

MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Softball head coach Kathy Bocock believes tough schedule will translate to improvement

Benjamin Berfield
Elon News Network

With the season underway for the Elon University softball team, the Phoenix has undergone a tough schedule against non-conference teams after starting the season with two non-conference tournaments at Hunt Softball Park. They have a 7-10 record, as of March 3, but head coach Kathy Bocock believes there is still room for growth.

Bocock said Elon's scheduled matchups against tough teams are meant to get the team ready for when they play conference opponents.

"Our conference goal is to chase a championship," Bocock said. "When we're playing the non-conference games, we're trying to get better against great competition so that we are ready for conference play."

Elon kicked off the season with the Elon Softball Classic, where they went 1-4 to start the season. Its early season tournaments have included some tough competition as Elon's opponents throughout the first 17 games involve teams such as Ohio State and University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, whose records are 13-4-1 and 18-3.

Bocock said those types of games will help prepare them and translate to wins as long as the team remains focused.

"We play a very tough non-conference schedule," Bocock said. "Even in some of our losses, we played very well. I think the girls know to keep working hard and trying to get better every game."

To keep improving, everyone must continue progressing, Bocock said. She voiced the importance of the team not becoming

stagnant or taking a step backward.

Bocock said hitting is one particular area where Elon needs to grow going forward. Elon's 12 home runs ranks second in the Coastal Athletic Association; it has had a boom or bust style as the team is sixth in RBIs and second in strikeouts. Senior Kaitlyn Wells leads the team in both home runs with 5 and RBIs with 15.

"Our hitting is going to have to get more consistent," Bocock said. "A lot of times you can hit, but you might not have another for a little bit. We need back-to-back hits and things to fall in place that way."

“OUR HITTING IS GOING TO HAVE TO GET MORE CONSISTENT. A LOT OF TIMES YOU CAN HIT, BUT YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE ANOTHER FOR A LITTLE BIT. WE NEED BACK-TO-BACK HITS AND THINGS TO FALL IN PLACE THAT WAY.”

KATHY BOCOCK
SOFTBALL HEAD COACH

Elon's pitching has been one positive this season. The team is fifth in ERA and fourth in runs among all CAA teams. Senior McKenna McCard and sophomore Lia Miller have been responsible for the production with each of them having a 1.91 and 2.33 earned run average, respectively. The duo has a combined 32 strikeouts so far.

Bocock credited her assistant coaches Carley Davis and Jonathan Lynch for working well together. Davis in her first year has already established a strong rapport with Lynch which is worked in favor of their pitching unit, Bocock said.

Going forward, March will be a key month for the team to prove itself and bounce back from the early season losses as conference play begins in the coming weeks. Bocock said the team's mentality is to continue competing and moving forward during each game.

"They just go get it and they work together," Bocock said. "Whoever's called upon, they're like, next man up, and they're ready to roll."

“WE’RE TRYING TO GET BETTER AGAINST GREAT COMPETITION SO THAT WE ARE READY FOR CONFERENCE PLAY.”

KATHY BOCOCK
SOFTBALL HEAD COACH



Junior Mary Moss Wirt bunts in a game against Ohio State on Feb. 8.

MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

ART OF THE DRAW

Elon Lacrosse draw specialist poised for sophomore leap

After a record-breaking freshman year, MJ Santa Barbara is prepared to improve in her second year

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

She shuffles her feet, lining up at the halfway mark of the field, glances up to see the face of the opposing player, positions her stick horizontally so the back pocket touches her opponent's stick. The referee walks over and places the ball between the two sticks. She waits for the whistle. When the referee gives it, a rapid sequence of events occur. She and her opponent simultaneously quickly pull their sticks away in a swift, upward motion, flinging the ball into the air beyond their reach. She boxes out her opponent and runs toward the ball, along with two of her teammates who were waiting to rush in and help alongside the center circle. A mad scramble for the ball ensues as bodies and sticks tangle and collide, each fighting for control, fighting for possession, fighting for the ball.

That is the life of a draw specialist in women's lacrosse day in and day out. It is a battle sophomore MJ Santa Barbara fights each game for the Elon lacrosse team.

“

I LOVE THE PRESSURE BECAUSE IT CAN TEST YOU, BUT I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO STAY AS COOL AS YOU POSSIBLY CAN. OF COURSE THERE'S A BIT OF PRESSURE, BUT I THINK PRESSURE MAKES DIAMONDS.

MJ SANTA BARBARA
ELON LACROSSE PLAYER

The draw is an important aspect of women's lacrosse as it takes place at the start of each half and after each goal. It occurs after each goal, making it a critical part of the game because as it determines which team gets possession of the ball. A team that wins the draw can dominate a game. They can score at will and maintain possession each time; they control the pace of the game by dominating the possession of the ball. On the other hand, a team that struggles at the draw and consistently loses it, will find a hard time getting opportunities to score or even securing possession of the ball as they have to now exclusively rely on their defense. As Santa Barbara calls it, the draw specialist is akin to a quarterback.

Santa Barbara is coming off a spectacular freshman campaign where she was one of the best draw specialists in the country. She was named the Coastal Athletic Association Rookie of the Year after breaking school and conference records with 151 draw controls on the season. She also broke Elon's single-game draw control record with 15. The Guilford, Connecticut, native was ranked seventh in the country with 8.88 draw controls per game — which was the highest average for a freshman in the country. She was recently named an honorable mention preseason All-American, the first Elon player to earn preseason All-America status since 2018.

Santa Barbara said last season was an incredible experience and enjoyed growing close with her teammates around the center circle that would assist with the draw. She said that it wasn't always possible to win the ball to herself, so she had to rely on the players around the circle.

"I think being connected to the girls on the circle was just a really special thing, and it was just really special all around to see how hard work can just really pay off," Santa Barbara said. "When you go at it every single day and you trust your teammates, it can create something really awesome."

Her position is arguably the most important one on the field as making sure her teammates get the ball trickles down to every aspect of the game, she said. Her position brings more pressure as the entire offense relies on her to get possession of the ball. Santa Barbara, however, relishes the opportunity to take on extra responsibility.

"I just have to know that I'm a leader on the field, and to have that trust that I can

take that big responsibility," Santa Barbara said. "I love the pressure because it can test you, but I think it's important to stay as cool as you possibly can. Of course there's a bit of pressure, but I think pressure makes diamonds."

Assistant coach Kelly Dowd, who works with the draw control group, said some players could crack under that pressure, but Santa Barbara succeeds under it because she makes it a part of her game. Dowd praised Santa Barbara's IQ on the draw but said her passion for it is the primary reason for her consistent success.

"Her passion for it just speaks volumes because if you're not passionate about that position, it's definitely not going to go well," Dowd said. "She's just always hungry for more. She just gets it, and she knows what she's good at, and she just keeps learning. She's just always ready for what's next and she never stands down from something that's tough or challenging her. So then she just keeps leveling up, which is awesome

to see and that's what you want out of a player."

Although Santa Barbara has not played the first several games of the season due to injury, she is expected to return to the circle soon.

"There's definitely an expectation now coming back after my freshman year, but, I just hope to come back better than I was last year, and I just want to continue to work with my teammates and the girls on the circle, to create that same impact and generate more offense for our team," Santa Barbara said.

As a result of her dominance last year, Santa Barbara decided to work on aspects of the draw beyond the fundamentals in the offseason. She said she emphasized working on where anything could be thrown at her, including how to handle the pressure and physicality that it is required to withstand defenders after she wins the draw; in her words, she gets "clobbered" after winning the draw to herself. Dowd said they have worked on trying to create more options for her at the draw, such as getting the ball out to the attacking side.

Santa Barbara being sidelined in the first portion of the season has allowed her to take up a new role: coaching. She has stepped into a coaching role, helping the draw control group scout and read up on the opponent and has helped impart knowledge of her own. Senior Sammy Fisher praised Santa Barbara's ability to adjust and take up a new responsibility.

"She stepped into a different role this year, being hurt, and she's been awesome coaching us up and helping us through that," Fisher said after the team's loss to Virginia Tech on Feb. 18. "It is definitely a change and difficult from last year but she's been great coaching us and helping us through each play."

“

SHE STEPPED INTO A DIFFERENT ROLE THIS YEAR, BEING HURT, AND SHE'S BEEN AWESOME COACHING US UP AND HELPING US THROUGH THAT. IT IS DEFINITELY A CHANGE AND DIFFICULT FROM LAST YEAR BUT SHE'S BEEN GREAT COACHING US AND HELPING US THROUGH EACH PLAY.

SAMMY FISHER
ELON LACROSSE PLAYER

Coaching from the sidelines has allowed Santa Barbara to see the game from a wider lens and has given her a new perspective, but she is primarily focused on getting back on the field.

"Helping my teammates is an awesome thing to do because I'm also learning new things as I'm watching more," Santa Barbara said. "But my entire motivation is just picturing and looking forward to my first game back."

Dowd is excited for Santa Barbara's return, which is expected to be sometime in the next few games. She believes it will provide a huge spark for the team.

"Possession is everything," Dowd said. "So, it's really important and I think that her being back will be huge for us. And I know she's ready."



PAUL BARRETTO | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore MJ Santa Barbara broke Elon's single-game draw control record with 15 last season.

Track & field transfers aims to break records, capitalize on Elon education



Arianna Alexander, left, and Mikayla Jones race in the CAA indoor track and field championships. Both were medalists, Alexander ended in 3rd place in the 60m and Jones ended in 2nd place in the 3,000m.

COURTESY OF ELON ATHLETICS

Arianna Alexander, Mikayla Jones are both looking to set school records in the outdoor season

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

After competing at Catawba College from 2021-24, Mikayla Jones was ready for something new. While looking for universities in North Carolina to transfer to, she was specifically focusing on places where she could find a business analytics program. She discovered Elon University's data analytics program and masters' program and decided to take a visit to the campus with her boyfriend's mom who lived nearby to meet the coaches.

She met up with then head coach Kevin Jermyn and her tour solidified her decision. "As soon as we were on campus, we were like, 'Wow, this is really nice,' and as soon as we talked to the coaches, we were probably halfway through the tour, I knew that this was the place I wanted to come to," Jones said. "It just seemed like I really fit here."

Similarly, Arianna Alexander — a sprinter — was looking for a program to transfer to after spending five years at California State Northridge. Despite Elon offering her a full ride scholarship for her athletic ability, Elon's academics is what really stood out to her and attracted to the university.

"I was really interested in the communication design program because I thought it would go in hand with the marketing education I had already taken on, and I looked at the alumni network and the support system that was here, and it just seemed like a really good opportunity for my last year," Alexander said.

Soon after Jones had committed, Jermyn left for the head coaching job at Duke University, leaving Jones a bit nervous. In her visit to campus she hadn't met any of her teammates and now she didn't even know the coach. But once Jermyn's replacement, Mark Rinker, arrived, she began to feel more comfortable. Jones said Rinker's method of training has vastly improved her abilities as a distance runner.

“

I MOVED MY MILEAGE UP A LITTLE BIT TO 70 MILES A WEEK, AND YOU GOT TO REALLY BUY INTO HIS TRAINING AND JUST PUT FORTH EVERYTHING YOU HAVE INTO IT; YOU GOT TO BE HONEST WITH YOUR EFFORTS.

MIKAYLA JONES
ELON DISTANCE RUNNER

"I moved my mileage up a little bit to 70 miles a week, and you got to really buy into his training and just put forth everything you have into it; you got to be honest with your efforts," Jones said. "He's really good with moving things around. I got sick a couple weeks ago and he said, 'Oh, it's fine. Do this if you can, if not, it's no big deal.' There's no pressure to perform a certain way and he really looks at you as a person."

At first the transition was tough for Jones as she was joining a team of 30 athletes after being part of a nine-member

team at Catawba College, which is a school of only about 1,500 students. She said her first practice was overwhelming but said the team did a good job of welcoming her in.

"Everyone invited me to hang out and do different things, so I got to find my really close friends, but everyone was still nice," Jones said. "On workouts, everyone's always like, 'Oh, great job. You're doing awesome', and I do the same, which is really nice."

The transition was also eased by Jones' roommate and teammate, Mariana Martinez. Martinez is also a transfer student, giving them the ability to relate on the assimilation to the new environment. Jones said they are best friends and do everything together. Alexander said having other transfers on the team helps her feel more "invited" and at home.

The transition was a stark change to Alexander's life because she was a California native who had never lived across the country. She said it has taught her a lot of independence, and said the team was really helpful in welcoming her in. Alexander said teammates showed her around and even offered to drive her to various places so she could buy things that she was unable to pack since she was moving from so far away.

Jones has found success immediately at Elon, recently setting a school record in the 5,000m race with a time of 16:07.51 on Feb. 15. The time is almost 28 seconds faster than any other runner in program history. Jones said she is excited for her and her teammates to continue breaking records and getting personal records.

"I'm excited for just the potential of how far the girls on my team and I can run this year," Jones said. "That was a huge PR, one that we've been so excited about

all week, but I just want to see how fast we can get the whole team to move up. I think everyone wants to PR. Everyone's excited about it and has been running really well."

With the outdoor season coming up for the Phoenix, Jones aims to make the NCAA Regionals at the 5k or 10k races.

“

I LIKE THE CHALLENGE OF BREAKING THE RECORD. IT'S SOMETHING TO SHOOT FOR BECAUSE SOMETIMES IF YOU'RE DOING THIS WITHOUT A GOAL, IT DOESN'T GIVE YOU THAT DRIVE YOU NEED.

ARIANNA ALEXANDER
ELON SPRINTER

Alexander, who set the school record for the 60m at Cal State Northridge, also has her sights set on breaking records. She broke the school's indoor 60m record with a time of 7.51 at the Coastal Athletic Association Indoor Track & Field Championships. She said she hopes to break her personal favorite race, the outdoor 100m race.

"I like the challenge of breaking the record. It's something to shoot for because sometimes if you're doing this without a goal, it doesn't give you that drive you need," Alexander said. "So having those records to look forward to and have as a target, it's been really helpful and I've gotten faster every single indoor meet."

SPRING SPORTS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BASEBALL

- MARCH 5UNCG
6 P.M.
- MARCH 7-9CHARLESTON SOUTHERN
4 P.M. | 2 P.M. | 1 P.M.
- MARCH 11RADFORD
4 P.M.
- MARCH 14-15WOFFORD
4 P.M. | 2 P.M.
- MARCH 16WOFFORD
1 P.M.
- MARCH 18HIGH POINT
4 P.M.
- MARCH 21-23CHARLESTON
6 P.M. | 2 P.M. | 1 P.M.
- MARCH 25WAKE FOREST
4 P.M.
- MARCH 28-30DELAWARE
6 P.M. | 4 P.M. | 1 P.M.
- APRIL 2EAST CAROLINA
6 P.M.
- APRIL 4-6WILLIAM & MARY
6 P.M. | 3 P.M. | 1 P.M.
- APRIL 8NORTH CAROLINA
6 P.M.
- APRIL 11-13TOWSON
6 P.M. | 4 P.M. | 1 P.M.
- APRIL 15UNCG
6 P.M.
- APRIL 18-20MONMOUTH
3 P.M. | 3 P.M. | 1 P.M.
- APRIL 23HIGH POINT
6 P.M.
- APRIL 25-27NC A&T
6 P.M. | 4 P.M. | 1 P.M.
- APRIL 29EAST CAROLINA
6 P.M.
- APRIL 30LONGWOOD
6 P.M.
- MAY 2-4HOFSTRA
2 P.M. | 1 P.M. | NOON
- MAY 9-11CAMPBELL
6 P.M. | 3 P.M. | 2 P.M.
- MAY 15-17UNCW
6 P.M. | 6 P.M. | 1 P.M.
- MAY 21-24CAA TOURNAMENT
TBD

SOFTBALL

- MARCH 7-9HOFSTRA
4:30 P.M. | 2 P.M. | NOON
- MARCH 14-16HAMPTON
TBD | 2 P.M. | TBD
- MARCH 18NC CENTRAL
5 P.M.
- MARCH 21-23MONMOUTH
4:30 P.M. | 2 P.M. | 1 P.M.
- MARCH 25EAST CAROLINA
5 P.M.
- MARCH 28-30DELAWARE
5 P.M. | 3 P.M. | 1 P.M.
- APRIL 4-6CHARLESTON
5 P.M. | 2 P.M. | 1 P.M.
- APRIL 11-13DREXEL
3 P.M. | NOON | 11 A.M.
- APRIL 18-20NC A&T
2 P.M. | 1 P.M. | 1 P.M.
- APRIL 22CHARLOTTE
6 P.M.
- APRIL 25-27UNCW
5 P.M. | 2 P.M. | 1 P.M.
- MAY 1-3CAMPBELL
NOON | NOON | NOON
- MAY 7-10CAA TOURNAMENT
TBD

WOMEN'S GOLF

- MARCH 21-22NC STATE
CITY OF OAKS COLLEGIATE
- MARCH 31-APRIL 1EAST CAROLINA
IRONWOOD INVITATIONAL
- APRIL 7TENNESSEE
TENNESSEE SPRING CHALLENGE
- APRIL 11-13CAA CHAMPIONSHIP
TBD

LACROSSE

- MARCH 8COASTAL CAROLINA
NOON
- MARCH 12HIGH POINT
5 P.M.
- MARCH 15MONMOUTH
NOON
- MARCH 23HOFSTRA
11 A.M.
- MARCH 29CAMPBELL
1 P.M.
- APRIL 4DELAWARE
1 P.M.
- APRIL 11STONY BROOK
5 P.M.
- APRIL 13WILLIAM & MARY
NOON
- APRIL 19TOWSON
NOON
- APRIL 23QUEENS
5 P.M.
- APRIL 26DREXEL
NOON
- MAY 1-3CAA TOURNAMENT
TBD

TRACK & FIELD

- MARCH 14-15NCAA DI INDOOR T&F
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS
- MARCH 14PHOENIX INVITATIONAL
- MARCH 21-22HIGH POINT
HPU TEAM CHALLENGE
- MARCH 27-29NC STATE
RALEIGH RELAYS
- APRIL 4-5HIGH POINT
VERTIKLASSE MEETING
- APRIL 10-12DUKE
DUKE INVITATIONAL
- APRIL 18WAKE FOREST
WAKE FOREST INVITATIONAL
- APRIL 18-19NC A&T
NORTH CAROLINA A&T CLASSIC
- APRIL 25-26CHARLOTTE
CHARLOTTE INVITATIONAL
- APRIL 25-27PENN STATE
PENN RELAYS
- MAY 2-3NC A&T
NORTH CAROLINA A&T INVITATIONAL
- MAY 4DUKE
DUKE TWILIGHT
- MAY 14-15CAA OUTDOOR TRACK & FIELD
CHAMPIONSHIPS
- MAY 28-31NCAA EAST REGION
PRELIMINARY ROUND
- JUNE 11-14NCAA DI OUTDOOR T&F
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

WOMEN'S TENNIS

- MARCH 7WOFFORD
NOON
- MARCH 8GARDNER-WEBB
11 A.M.
- MARCH 12LIU
2 P.M.
- MARCH 15CAMPBELL
1 P.M.
- MARCH 18COASTAL CAROLINA
10 A.M.
- MARCH 29EAST CAROLINA
1 P.M.
- APRIL 2NC A&T
2 P.M.
- APRIL 5CHARLESTON
10 A.M.
- APRIL 9UNCG
2 P.M.
- APRIL 13NORFOLK STATE
NOON
- APRIL 19WILLIAM & MARY
11 A.M.
- APRIL 25-27CAA TOURNAMENT
TBD

MEN'S GOLF

- MARCH 10-11GEORGE MASON
DONALD ROSS COLLEGIATE CLASSIC
- MARCH 16-18KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY
LINGER LONGER
- MARCH 23-25SOUTH CAROLINA
HOOTIE AT BULL'S BAY
- MARCH 31-APRIL 1NORTH TEXAS
MARIDOE INVITATIONAL
- APRIL 20-22CAA CHAMPIONSHIP
TBD

AWAY HOME

MEN'S TENNIS

- MARCH 9CAMPBELL
2 P.M.
- MARCH 11BUCKNELL
2 P.M.
- MARCH 17GARDNER-WEBB
1 P.M.
- MARCH 21UNC ASHEVILLE
1 P.M.
- MARCH 25LIBERTY
2 P.M.
- MARCH 30WILLIAM & MARY
NOON
- APRIL 6PRESBYTERIAN
1 P.M.
- APRIL 11RADFORD
2 P.M.
- APRIL 13NORFOLK STATE
NOON
- APRIL 25-27CAA TOURNAMENT
TBD



Men’s tennis hopes to serve up a strong season

The team looks to do well under first-year head coach Maciek Sykut after retirement of Michael Leonard

Kathan Gandhi
Elon News Network

The last five years for Elon Men’s Tennis has been a span of success. The Phoenix won its first Coastal Athletic Association Championship in 2019. The team has been to three more finals since, including an appearance last year after a 16-8 season. This was all under the guidance of former head coach Michael Leonard, who held the position for 20 years.

But after the conclusion of the 2023-24 season, Leonard decided to retire from collegiate coaching, leaving an opening of no small stature. Following a two-decade coaching legacy, new men’s tennis coach Maciek Sykut has big shoes to fill.

“Previous coaches at Elon have built a great foundation,” Sykut said. “It’s up to me to try to continue on what’s already been built.”

Sykut adds a plethora of experience to the Phoenix team. The former pro played for three years on the Association of Professional Tennis tour, reaching a career high d o u b l e s ranking of 145. After leaving the pro-circuit, Sykut became an assistant for the North Carolina State University and University of Arizona tennis team. In 2020, he joined the staff at Duke University, where the team competed in the NCAA tournament four times during his

SYKUT’S CREDENTIALS
Former world #145 in doubles
Assistant coach at NC State
2022-23 ITA Assistant Coach of the Year at Duke

tenure at Duke.

To kick off Sykut’s first season as head coach, the Phoenix have opened with a 2-5 record. The early season has been headlined by losses against the No. 16 ranked University of Tennessee and a 0-7 sweep against Old Dominion University. However, Elon was able to pick up a 5-2 win against Coastal Carolina on Feb. 28. Sykut has been encouraged by the energy his players bring to the table.

“

PREVIOUS COACHES AT ELON HAVE BUILT A GREAT FOUNDATION. IT’S UP TO ME TO TRY TO CONTINUE ON WHAT’S ALREADY BEEN BUILT.”

MACIEK SYKUT
ELON MEN’S TENNIS HEAD COACH

“We have a great group of kids,” Sykut said. “They’ve been very receptive to working hard and trying to strive for more.”

That group of players has a variety of collegiate experience. Veljko Krstic, a junior, plays at the top of the team’s lineup for the team. Fellow junior Oskar Antinheimo, who was last year’s team MVP, also plays in the Phoenix top three.

While older players with veteran experience still hold high positions, Elon has benefited from younger contributions. Freshman Rafael Ymer, a newcomer to the team, has played well at #2 singles for the Phoenix. Jack Curtis, a sophomore from England, regularly plays at #4 singles.

“They certainly were eager for that challenge,” Sykut said. “They’ve responded to it well.”

Ymer and Curtis have opened the 2025 season strong. Both have won three singles matches so far. However, the young pair share only one doubles win, a trend for the entire team.

Elon currently holds a 4-12 doubles record over six games, with the #1 pairing of Krstic and Antinheimo only achieving one collective win. For the Phoenix, victory on the doubles court is crucial.

This CAA men’s tennis season will conclude at home for the Phoenix, as Elon will host the CAA tournament at the Jimmy

Powell Tennis Center. It’s a moment Elon’s first-year head coach looks forward to.

“It’s obviously a fantastic opportunity,” Sykut said. “We look to take advantage of that.”

Elon last hosted the men’s championship in 2022. It’s an opportunity the team is excited for. Although the start for Elon has not been perfect, Sykut hopes the culture of hard work on-and-off the court he’s been building will pay off.

“We’re building the habits,” Sykut said. “Habits required to do what we need to be victorious in the end.”

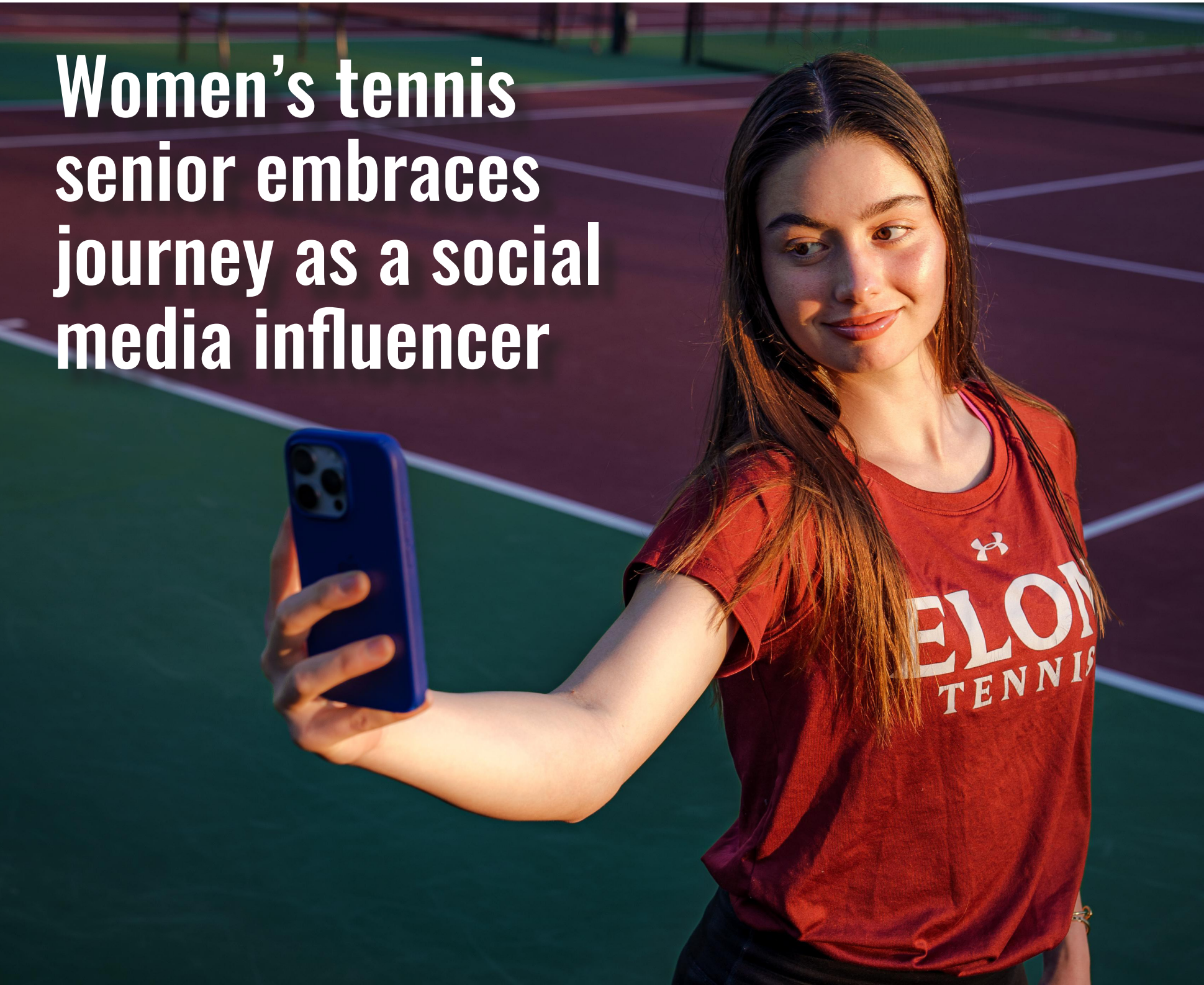
The team hopes to utilize those habits when the CAA comes to town in April.



COURTESY OF ELON ATHLETICS
Junior Veljko Krstic winds up for a backhand during his match against East Tennessee State University on Feb. 21.



COURTESY OF ELON ATHLETICS
Junior Oskar Antinheimo rips a forehand in a match against East Tennessee State University on Feb. 21. Elon won 4-3.



Senior Miray Konar is a TikTok and Instagram influencer and has generated over 160,000 followers on each platform.

ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR

Miray Konar shares her perspective growing her social media platform while also excelling on the court

Benjamin Berfield
Elon News Network

Senior Miray Konar can be seen doing two of her favorite interests on the tennis court since coming from Izmir, Turkey. During games, she is contributing to the Elon University women's tennis team's 8-3 record. When the tennis team isn't playing, she is attracting a huge following online as a social media influencer.

Konar regularly posts content of her daily life on her Instagram and TikTok accounts which have generated over 320,000 combined followers. Her reels on Instagram regularly get hundreds of thousands of views, sometimes millions.

She said her mom was a big reason why she became interested in this hobby after seeing her enjoyment of social media.

"My mom was a huge social media person," Konar said. "She has whole albums and everything, and I was always a big fan of posting. She was always a big role model and that's what really gave me the love for posting things."

Konar said she realized how impactful social media can be as her platform continued to grow. She was amazed by the number of people she could actually reach out to within a month through posting content. With her ability to utilize a large platform, Konar said she sometimes looks to reach out to as many as 60 million a month.

Konar said that she also wants to be truthful in her posting regardless of whether she's having a good or bad day. She pointed out how most people will post as if everything is perfect.

"When you look at social media, you'd think everyone has perfect lives," Konar

said. "I felt like if I wanted to post my life, it has to be more realistic. It's normal to have a bad day but also a good day too."

Konar said this approach allows her to continue keeping up with her content.

“

WHEN YOU LOOK AT SOCIAL MEDIA, YOU'D THINK EVERYONE HAS PERFECT LIVES. I FELT LIKE IF I WANTED TO POST MY LIFE, IT HAS TO BE REALISTIC. IT'S NORMAL TO HAVE A BAD DAY BUT ALSO A GOOD DAY TOO.

MIRAY KONAR
ELON WOMEN'S TENNIS PLAYER

"I think it's made me a lot more sustainable," Konar said. "I don't know anyone out there who is constantly happy and having a perfect life."

Konar's teammates such as junior Madison Cordisco have also admired her work on social media. Cordisco said she initially didn't know about Konar's platform, but immediately recognized Konar's creativity as an influencer once she found out about it.

"The way she does all her videos, we really enjoy it," Cordisco said. "She always has these great ideas and different TikToks we can post on our tennis Instagram account."

Cordisco also said Konar's ideas generate attention for the team, which has been beneficial for recruiting new members.

Cordisco said she is most impressed

by Konar's ability to devote time to both activities. She praised Konar for excelling in both areas.

"It's very inspiring that she can do all of these things and still have a very good performance on the court," Cordisco said. "It shows all of her dedication to tennis and her hobbies outside of tennis."

Konar said she believes there are lessons that can be translated from social media to tennis. She explained the importance of being consistent in both areas and sticking to habits that are beneficial.

"Consistency is a big thing," Konar said. "Posting every day and interacting with your followers is like tennis. We got to practice every day. We go out there, hit tennis balls, and do the same things."

She has been a key factor in the Elon University women's tennis team's strong start so far, and remains undefeated in singles

with a 4-0 record and is 4-4 in doubles.

Konar said her increased confidence has played an integral role in her performance. She said this helped her learn from her initial struggles.

She also credited assistant coach Ashe Ray. She said he's improved her skills during doubles matches, particularly when she plays closer to the net. He has focused on helping her keep her confidence, Konar said.

Konar said she hopes to be an inspiration for Turkish athletes who are also playing sports and attending a university. She said her account can let athletes know that it is possible to balance out multiple responsibilities even with the demands of being an athlete.

"I was always seeing this as a chance to give younger athletes in Turkey sports a way," Konar said. "It is very hard to do a professional sport and university classes at the same time, so I was always trying to inspire them."

Konar said she plans to continue enjoying both activities for the remainder of her senior year.

"I just want to do the things I love, and tennis and social media are two things that are always going to be in my life," Konar said.



ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR

Miray Konar posts content about her daily life.

MIRAY KONAR
INSTAGRAM PAGE



ICELANDIC GOLFER TEES OFF FINAL SEASON

Andrea Asmundsdottir will finish collegiate golf career before heading back home

Monika Jurevicius
Elon News Network

Elon women's golfer senior Andrea Asmundsdottir is one of six international students on her team, but the only one who has played Iceland's midnight golf. From the hometown of the "world's most northerly 18-hole golf course," the Iclander has teed off her final collegiate season.

Golfing didn't start as a personal interest for Asmundsdottir. Her grandfather started playing golf and brought her grandmother onto the range as his team member for partner golf. At the age of 6, Asmundsdottir began playing with her family, transitioning to competitive tournaments at 12 years old.

"In general, sports are really big in Iceland," Asmundsdottir said. "I think that has brought a lot of kids into it, and it's also just a family sport."

Growing up, Asmundsdottir was typically one of the only girls playing golf in her home city of Akureyri. However, she is already the third Iclander Elon women's head golf coach Chris Dockrill '86 has brought to the team, after Hilda Kristjansdottir and Sunna Vidisdottir. Dockrill said he sees three to four recruits every year from Iceland.

"It's pretty amazing. It's in the middle of a tundra — it's cold up there," Dockrill said. "How do they produce all these good golfers? Andrea is just the perfect kid to have on your team. She's gone through ups and downs but she's working extremely hard and it's paid off."

Iceland has seen massive growth in golf. According to a 2014 study by KPMG, the number of registered golfers in Iceland was 16,371. However, in 2024, Golf Iceland — a trade association for golf and tourism — reported that there were 24,000 registered golfers in the country. Iceland has the highest number of golf courses per capita because as of 2021, Iceland had 65 courses for a population of 393,349. Iceland also boasts an interesting golf tradition.

When summer comes about, golfers from all around the world come to play midnight



ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR

Senior Andrea Asmundsdottir is one of six international students on the Elon women's golf team.

golf during June and July, as the sun does not set in Iceland during those times due to its northern location. Golf is able to be played at midnight, especially at Asmundsdottir's course at Akureyri Golf Club, where competitions for this type of game are commonly played. The latest Asmundsdottir played golf back home was at 10 p.m. and ended at 2 a.m.

"The sun doesn't really set in the summers," Asmundsdottir said. "That's really unique and an experience that not many people can do. I'll definitely play once I finish college."

During the season, Icelandic golfers will travel to Europe and Spain to compete in warmer climates when the weather is too severe in the Nordic countries, according to Asmundsdottir and Dockrill. Asmundsdottir would go abroad near Easter to compete to combat the short Icelandic golf summers.

The COVID-19 pandemic was an important component for Asmundsdottir to consider while she was searching for a university to play golf at. Many of the schools that called her said that she would

be a great fit, but could only start playing in 2022, leaving her having to have taken an unwanted gap year. Dockrill reached out to Asmundsdottir when a spot opened up on Elon's team.



NO ONE COULD COME WITH ME, JUST THREE SUITCASES AND A GOLF BAG.

ANDREA ASMUNDSOTTIR
ELON WOMEN'S GOLF PLAYER

"No one could come with me, just three suitcases and a golf bag," Asmundsdottir said. "I felt like I was in a movie because it was so different from home. This experience makes you much more independent. I'm

looking forward to just spending time with my teammates and enjoying every day until I graduate because it's going fast."

For the Elon women's golf team, most of the players on the roster aren't the only ones who have traveled to Elon from another country to play the game. Dockrill came down to Elon from Nova Scotia, Canada, as a two-year member of the men's golf team from 1985-86. He was inducted into the Elon University Athletics Hall of Fame in 2014 as a leader for his team and his continued dedication to the golf teams at his alma mater.

Including his own experiences as a student-athlete, Dockrill thought about the circumstances behind bringing in students from abroad to play golf. As a smaller private school, he knew that he would have to compete with bigger schools in North Carolina and their budgets. Dockrill has seen that his international players have similar experiences in the sport compared to each other, so he saw no difference in recruiting them.

"My philosophy is, 'Look, we got limited budgets,' Dockrill said. "I'm going to go with foreign kids. I'm originally from Canada, so it was easy for me having gone through the process myself. It's been a good thing, golf team-wise, but it's also been a good thing for pretty long, too."

As the season progresses, Asmundsdottir reflects on her athletic career at Elon and how it has shaped her to want to be there for everyone on her team. Joining a team was a shock to her when she first came to the U.S. after years of playing golf independently, but she found ways to work together with her teammates to provide a positive environment on the green.

The golfer looks forward to graduating with a marketing degree this May, returning home to pursue a career that combines both her passions for business and sports into one. She plans to continue playing golf and competing back home in the summers, especially in the midnight golf tournaments.

"I've grown as a player and I want to see everyone on my team do good," Asmundsdottir said. "I want to help them and influence good team culture. We all work together to create that culture. I think for me as a person, being in this environment has made me grow as a person."

Men's golf looks to win conference tournament after coming up short the past 2 years

The team has veteran experience to get it done as all but 2 players are underclassmen

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

After two heartbreaking 2nd place finishes in a row at the Coastal Athletic Association Championship, the Elon men's golf team is hungry for more and desperate to avoid the bitterness of following short for another season.

"We've had a chance coming down the stretch the last two years, and that van ride coming back is always a little bitter when you don't get it done," senior Matthew Doyle said. "All of us have that sour taste in our mouth, and we don't really want to feel that again. For most of us on this team, it's our last year of college golf. So we want to end it on a high note."

The team is extra motivated this year as half the team is made up of seniors and all but two members are underclassmen. Doyle said this year is extra special because there won't be any more chances left for many of them.

"We have a family on our golf team. All nine of us are like brothers," Doyle said. "We want to play for each other. We want to play for ourselves. We want to play for the school. This is really our last chance as individuals to play the game that we love as a team with our brothers."

Head coach Don Hill has high expectations for the senior-led team, believing that their experience — some players on the team have played more than 115 rounds of college golf — propels the team into the opportunity to compete at a high level. He said he hopes to win the CAA and make it to the postseason for the first time in program history. Hill said one of the challenges this year will be contending with an extremely tough schedule. According to Hill, this is the most difficult schedule the program has ever had. It will be competing against high-profile programs such as Texas, Ohio State, Georgia, Arizona State and Wake Forest. But, Hill is excited for the challenge of the schedule.

"This is who we aspire to be, and this is who we are going to be, and we are so excited to have the opportunity to compete against these teams, to put Elon Golf on the map, not just in the state, local, state or region, but on the national level," Hill said.

Having a team full of veterans who have been there before will help with this gauntlet of a schedule, according to Hill. He also added that the most important thing is that the players already understand how their bodies work and how to prioritize sleep, nutrition and keeping fit during the season, unlike how some freshmen need a year to learn those types of skills. Hill also said their leadership will be helpful down the line, especially for the two underclassmen on the team as they learn from each other.

A new addition to the squad this year is assistant coach Roddy Guest. After serving

as a volunteer assistant last year, he has joined the coaching staff this year and is primarily focusing on player development, coaching stroke schemes and helping players improve their short game.



WE WANT TO PLAY FOR EACH OTHER. WE WANT TO PLAY FOR OURSELVES. WE WANT TO PLAY FOR THE SCHOOL. THIS IS REALLY OUR LAST CHANCE.

MATTHEW DOYLE
ELON MEN'S GOLF PLAYER

The addition of Guest and the extra motivation this year has led to increased preparation for the season. Senior Garrett Risner, who was named to the 2024 All-CAA First Team last year, said he wanted to avoid rust this year.

"We just wanted to get out there more than we have in the past, and get out to a hotter start in the spring than we have in years past," Risner said. "I tend to come out a little rusty in the spring after the winter, and I think that's true for a lot of our players. So just getting outside and hitting more balls and practicing

a little bit more this year was a big emphasis."

Getting over the hump and finally winning the conference championship will require different results, according to Hill. In the last two years, they have held a lead with less than nine holes to go in the final round, but both times failed to capitalize on it and finish the job. Hill said that in both tournaments they played 45 good holes of golf out of the 54 total holes and believes that the team needs to avoid getting off to a slow start or a slow finish. When those slow starts or finishes do come, though, Hill said they need to trust in their abilities more.

"When those stretches do come — hopefully they don't but inevitably in sports you have stretches that don't quite go your way — how we handle that adversity will ultimately determine how successful we are," Hill said.

Risner said reacting well to pressure will be the key to how they perform.

"We just can't let our emotions take control of the situation," Risner said. "So understanding that we need to control our emotions and really just be okay with having pressure on ourselves coming down the stretch."

Elon started the season in South Carolina and tied for fourth place at the Battle at Briar's Creek tournament. Individually, Risner tied for first in the tournament and was named CAA Men's Golfer of the Week. The Phoenix will play four more tournaments before heading to New Jersey to battle it out for the CAA Championship.

Future of paying college athletes remains uncertain

Revenue sharing, NIL bring new issues to NCAA before approval of House settlement

Avery Sloan
Elon News Network

With college athletes now able to profit off their own name, image and likeness and athletes and depending on the outcome of the U.S. House of Representatives settlement court case, athletes might be able to profit with revenue sharing — the landscape of college athletics is rapidly changing.

This, coming off of the creation of the transfer portal in 2018, allowing players more freedom to transfer schools, will lead to even larger changes within college athletics — particularly for smaller schools such as Elon. NIL allows college athletes to profit off of their own personal brand as an athlete — something that was not allowed before 2021.

On Feb. 28, Elon’s sport management department hosted a symposium with panelists speaking on the future of college athletics, with topics including NIL and revenue sharing in sports. Panelists included the ACC Commissioner Jim Phillips and Elon director of athletics Jennifer Strawley. The event, held in Turner Theatre, was filled with both students and faculty members and included a number of interactive polls on payment and college athletes. The room,

including many students majoring in sport management, leaned in favor of college athletes receiving payment — but there was not overwhelming support for the idea.

Phillips, who acknowledged at the event how complex the issue of paying college athletes is, said that this is something well worth doing. He pointed out that with over 500,000 student athletes in college athletics right now, there is no group of young people who have benefited more from grants, aids and scholarships than college sports, besides the GI Bill which helps veterans and their families pay for education.

“

I WILL ALWAYS DO THE RIGHT THING AND ENSURE THAT OUR FEMALE STUDENT ATHLETES HAVE EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES TO OUR MALE STUDENT ATHLETES.

JENNIFER STRAWLEY
ELON DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS

“This is an opportunity for access and affordability to a group of young people that may not have had a chance to access and get into higher education and or

have it be affordable for them,” Phillips said. “That’s worth saving. That’s what it’s fighting for.”

The final approval hearing for the House vs. NCAA settlement is scheduled for April 7 and was granted preliminary approval Oct. 7, 2024. If approved, all NCAA institutions that opt into the settlement, these schools will be able to compensate their own student athletes with revenue shares with a total cap of \$20 million. Another major component of the House settlement is NIL back pay for former student athletes. Certain student athletes who began competing from 2016 to Sept. 15, 2024, are eligible for back pay. The settlement will distribute \$2.576 billion to these athletes and the money is coming from NCAA institutions — including Elon University.

Sport management professor Bill Squadron said while it is hard to predict exactly how the House settlement will impact Elon, he said it will make it harder to compete with schools that have larger budgets.

“The more that money flows into the transfer portal activity and athletes being able to move from school to school based on money being offered, the harder it becomes for schools like Elon to retain really tough athletes who get attracted by some of the big schools that have a lot more resources,” Squadron said.

During the event, Jennifer Strawley, Elon director of athletics, said she does not anticipate Elon will be sharing revenue with student athletes, yet she does anticipate

Elon having to adapt and change with these new guidelines.

“There are pieces of NIL and pieces of things we can do differently, that through contracts and through agreements and through pieces that have to be put into place to be executed if it were, if the settlement, which I think everybody believes is when the settlement, is approved,” Strawley said.

Another new challenge that will affect Elon athletics is new roster caps in the 2025-26 academic year. New roster caps will limit the number of non-scholarship players on teams and lower the number of players in a number of sports including football, men’s and women’s basketball, baseball and men’s and women’s soccer.

“

THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY TO A GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE THAT MAY NOT HAVE HAD A CHANCE TO ACCESS AND GET INTO HIGHER EDUCATION AND OR HAVE IT BE AFFORDABLE FOR THEM.

JIM PHILLIPS
ACC COMISSIONER

With these changes, there are a number of uncertain factors, including how Title IX will play a role with revenue sharing. Title IX states that schools cannot discriminate on the basis of sex, meaning schools must provide equal opportunities for male and female students in athletic programs and award athletic scholarships and financial aid equally to men and women. Many schools, including Virginia Tech, are planning to share their revenue unequally to its athletes — with athletes in sports such as football and basketball making more, as those are the sports that generate the most revenue for the school.

“It is not being done on the basis of sex, it’s being done on the basis of revenue, revenue’s coming in from football, revenue’s going back to football,” Squadron said.

However, it is unclear when the House settlement is decided if there will be specific guidelines regarding Title IX and the amount of revenue that has to go toward women’s sports. Strawley said as someone who has benefited from Title IX guidelines, she is committed to this issue, but without a clear guideline from the courts, there is a “gray area” regarding how Title IX fits into revenue sharing.

“I am not the director of athletics at Elon if I didn’t have the chance to participate in college sports in the 90s, which would not have been possible without Title IX,” Strawley said. “I value it deeply, and I’m committed to it, and I will always do the right thing and ensure that our female student athletes have equitable opportunities to our male student athletes. I think it’s gray in the space of what it means as it relates to revenue sharing. I don’t think that question has ever really been asked.”

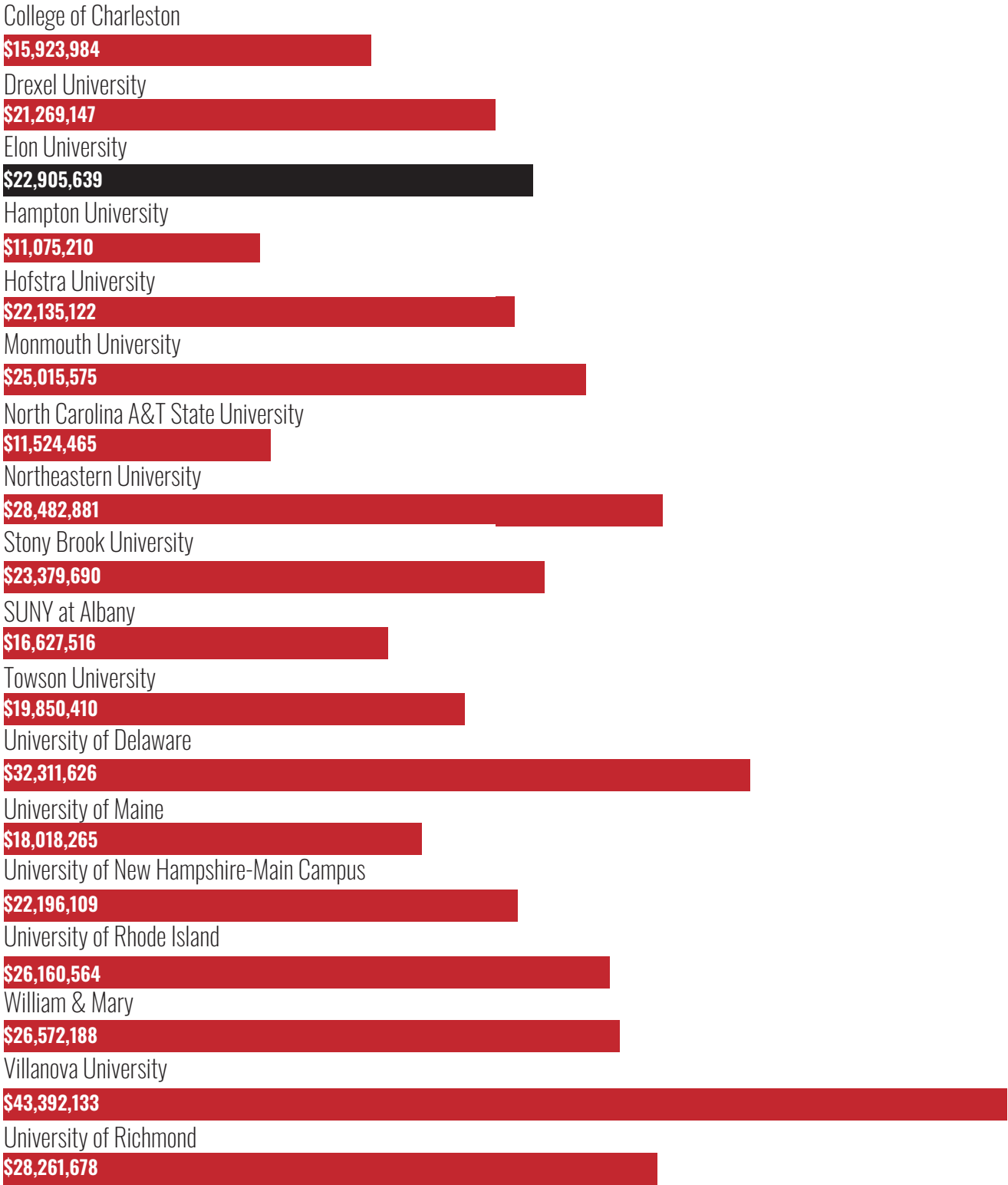
With unanswered questions regarding Title IX and also a lack of consistency across different states and recruiting laws, Phillips said during the event that future federal legislation may be something that provides some guidance for schools and would create a more level playing field.

Squadron said this is an interesting piece to the issue, as many times people find federal involvement adds complications to an issue, not the opposite — proving how complex the future of college athletics is.

“This is a situation where the head of the NCAA and many people in college sports believe that stability can best come from Congress getting involved,” Squadron said.

Total expenses of CAA schools in 2023-24 school year

Total expenses for each school in the Coastal Athletic Association for both men’s and women’s teams.



CAMPUS-WIDE DISRUPTIONS

GROWING IT DEPARTMENT FALLS BEHIND

Elon University accounts went down unrelated to the snowfall, outages continue across campus

Alex Nettles
Elon News Network

The end of February was punctuated by trickling snowfall, stop light outages and ultimately a systemic disruption of Moodle and Elon University accounts. The events brought a rush of E-Alerts and put Elon's Information Technology department in the inboxes of the academic conversation.

Elon students faced recent email issues March 2. The E-alert read that there was "a widespread microsoft outage. Updates will follow, Campus IT is aware."

An E-Alert was sent Feb. 21 that said Elon's IT department was "working to resolve campus account access issues at this time." The IT issues were resolved at 12:26 a.m. on the following day.

Elon's IT department is in charge of synchronizing university accounts and Elon's learning management software, Moodle, to updates on the course curriculum. The updates are most often dictated by the registrar and administration, according to information security engineer Alan Allred.

The department working on implementing that new system left Moodle accounts disabled for a night, according to Allred, who specializes in cybersecurity.

IT was implementing a new synchronization system, which incidentally caused some issues, freezing Elon University accounts, according to Allred.

A synchronization system is how you ensure consistency between two variables of data. An example is Moodle and IT department data.

Elon University students have single sign-on accounts, which means that there is one username and password for all Elon related activities. According to Allred this can make protecting data and synchronizing accounts more of a challenge.

Allred said larger schools function with individualized departments. Elon has a single core IT department that handles sourcing from all the departments of the university. Large universities like University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill have IT departments for each department of the university. Allred said other institutions have individual departments like a School for Wellness Science IT department.

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WE ARE DIFFERENT, AND WE ARE GROWING.

ALAN ALLRED
INFORMATION SECURITY ENGINEER

"We are different, and we are growing," Allred said. "When we have a new department, we have to learn how that department works."

When the account difficulties occurred, junior Savana Rivera had to submit some work using 3D mapping software for her anatomy class.

"We weren't able to turn any of our work

in," Rivera said.

When freshman Michael Fath tried to submit his work for his intellectual history class, he sent an email to his professor. Fath said he was not worried about it affecting his academic performance.

"I would be shocked if I were penalized for something that happened to the whole school," Fath said.

Campus E-Alerts during outage

E-Alerts are emergency message notifications sourced from RAVE mobile safety. When a student adds their phone number they will start getting alerts on safety and schoolwide changes.

Elon students witnessed a high volume of E-Alerts recently with the campus facing trickling snow, traffic outages and account system failures.

The outage struck the eastern portion of campus Feb. 20. E-Alerts were used to warn drivers about traffic light outages, and the following day for the IT system difficulties.

Elon Campus Safety and Police are generally in charge of writing and processing campus E-Alerts. Although E-Alerts can be assigned and monitored by other departments at Elon University, the software and messaging has the most contact with Campus Safety and Police, according to Campus Police Chief Joe LeMire.

"We try to make everything we send an emergency," LeMire said.

A tip could begin with an officer on duty or a call to the dispatcher. The need for an alert is then assessed by the supervisor on duty, where the need for an alert is approved. If the problem is serious enough, the officer can override that process and

send a message out for the sake of time. It is possible for other divisions of the university to use the technology also.

LeMire said that an active shooting scenario or a broken railway crossing are the types of scenarios worth using a bypass for. LeMire mentioned how "people can get message fatigue" if alerts are sent too often.

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THAT IS PART OF THE CHALLENGE WHEN WORKING WITH UNIVERSITIES. UNIVERSITIES WANT TO SHARE INFORMATION AND IN CYBERSECURITY, WE WANT TO PROTECT.

ALAN ALLRED
INFORMATION SECURITY ENGINEER

According to Allred, the IT desk got a higher volume of calls during the power outage, but it wasn't anything difficult for them to handle. Allred said that Elon's IT department was primarily service-focused. He noticed in his nine years of working at Elon that the needs of IT security can get complex with the spreading of information at a university.

"That is part of the challenge when working with universities. Universities want to share information and in cybersecurity, we want to protect," Allred said.



The Elon University Information Technology building as seen March 3 on East Lebanon. Unlike many larger colleges, Elon IT serves as the sole department for each branch of the school.

ALEX NETTLES | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



A community member speaks to Davis Montgomery, capital projects manager for the city of Burlington, while Montgomery closes the gates to the new pickleball complex Feb. 28 at Burlington City Park. ANJOLINA FANTARONI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Burlington Recreation & Parks sees delay in building of new pickleball courts

Weather, infrastructure challenges add to delay; opening date not yet announced

Anjolina Fantaroni
Elon News Network

A place where the community now plays tennis will soon be home to a new type of court — pickleball. Seventeen new courts are expected to open at Burlington City Park with six courts at Fairchild Park. However, five months have passed since the anticipated opening date in September 2024.

The \$4 million project set to open in the fall has been delayed for a variety of factors such as weather and timing and has no new announced opening date, said Davis Montgomery, capital projects manager for the city of Burlington.

“It ended up making this area like one large pond,” Montgomery said. “It retained the water longer than it should have. So it took us longer for it to dry out, and then longer for us to be able to pack and do what we needed to do.”

Montgomery said another large factor in the delay is the light posts stationed around the courts. He said that the lights are not only needed for strictly pickleball but any events in the future that community members wish to host.

“We wanted these lights, these poles, to be capable of carrying Wi-Fi, speaker wire — in addition to the energy wire for the lights themselves, and any additional things that may come in the future,” Montgomery said. “We wanted them to be very functional, very flexible, which meant that we had to be very particular about what kind of poles we could use.”

Burlington resident Chad Coble, an active pickleball player, said he practices whenever he can.

“It’s friendly, and it’s not boring, and you get to meet a lot of new people. And everybody that does it loves it,” Coble said.

When Coble first heard about the construction of the Burlington courts, he

immediately took to Facebook and began a public group for anticipating players in the area. The group has accumulated over 850 members.

“As soon as I heard about it, I was like, ‘We already have all these text groups. We’re meeting people, so why not have a Facebook page just for that,’” Coble said.

A main topic within the group is the opening date of the courts, which still have plenty of additions needed to be worked on — but Coble said some members have information on the court’s construction progress.



IT’S SOMETHING THAT I WANT TO SEE GROW IN THE CITY OF BURLINGTON, TO GIVE THE CITY A UNIQUE LOOK, TO SET US APART FROM ALL THE OTHER SURROUNDING CITIES.

ARTIE BARKSDALE
ARTIST

“There’s the benefit of having insider knowledge on almost everything, and we get that information immediately, because people are just, you know, ‘Oh, this happened,’ and ‘Well, this is why it happened.’”

The new courts at City Park sit in front of Willow Creek Apartments, just a few hundred feet away. Montgomery said the construction team wanted to ensure the sound from the courts and pickleballs would not make neighbors upset. A heavy, dense, soundproof material will line the fences to reduce sound from the courts.

“With neighbors this close, we wanted to do everything we possibly could. We have a natural barrier in the trees and the shrubs that are back there,” Montgomery said.

The courts at City Park will showcase more than the 17 new courts, they will also highlight local talent brought to the project — Artie Barksdale III, a freelance artist. Barksdale is the painter behind the new pickleball mural on a practice wall located next to the courts. He said the thought behind his work is aesthetics.

“It’s all about Burlington — to enhance the aesthetic, the color choice of Burlington, pickleball, and the colors blue, green, and turquoise,” Barksdale said. “It’s more about aesthetics for me, and it’s something that I want to see grow in the city of Burlington, to give the city a unique look, to set us apart from all the other surrounding cities.”

Barksdale said he was chosen to paint the mural simply by word of mouth.

“You get a lot of conversations about word of mouth and artists advertising,” Barksdale said. “I think that my reputation and my integrity are what got me this mural.”

He hopes that when people come to play pickleball and tennis, they will feel a sense of

pride when looking at his work.

“It gives Burlington something different outside of the norm tennis court,” Barksdale said. “Practice walls are not normally painted, so it’s not an eyesore anymore. It’s an attraction and it’s an addition to the actual ambiance of the whole court.”

With anticipation rising in groups such as Coble’s, Montgomery said he has not heard any backlash on the project.

“Most of the people — in fact, all the people that I’ve talked to — have just expressed how anxious they are and how excited they are and how they can’t wait to get it open. And how they would like to have seen them open before now but certainly can’t wait for them to open up in the spring,” Montgomery said.

Although there is no exact opening date for the courts, Montgomery said they are taking it one day at a time and figuring out solutions.

“We’re always doing it with the purpose of delivering the absolute best product we can,” Montgomery said.



Artie Barksdale poses with his new mural Feb. 27 at Burlington City Park. ANJOLINA FANTARONI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



A rendering featuring the renovated Paramount Theater and new event center.

COURTESY OF ERIC KERCHNER

Elon’s Music Theatre Department helps close out a historic era for the Paramount Theater

The show at 7 p.m. March 13 is the last before the theater closes for expansion, renovation

Megan Walsh
Elon News Network

“West Side Story,” “Into the Woods” and “Sweeney Todd” — only a few of Stephen Sondheim’s works that the Burlington Paramount Theater will be celebrating in “95 Years of Stephen Sondheim.”

At 7 p.m. March 13, Elon’s Music Theatre Department will perform “95 Years of Stephen Sondheim” to close out the Burlington Paramount Theater before its year and a half long renovation and expansion. Director of the Paramount Theater Eric Kerchner said the renovations hope to bring more people to downtown Burlington and create a space unique to the area.

The theater approached the Music Theatre Department about doing a show before the space closed for renovations, co-director and narrator of the show, professor of the performing arts Chris Rayis, said

“They wanted to do sort of a send off to everything that had happened in that theater,” Rayis said. “We were there when

this idea sort of came to them, and we were really lucky.”

Rayis said it is very exciting for the department to be a part of the theater’s history.

“It’s enormously meaningful, and that we have the opportunity to be a part of Burlington’s change from its history to its future is really cool,” Rayis said.

The Paramount Theater was built in 1927 as one of three movie theaters in what Kerchner said was a booming city.

“Burlington, when the textile industry was still going, was a big time deal,” Kerchner said. “They had a railway stop, and so it was quite an affluent area and a lot of workers.”

In 1997, the theater had fallen into disrepair. The city of Burlington purchased and renovated the space into its current form today. Kerchner said that in November 2024, a bond referendum was passed by the city to complete the renovations and expansion to the theater.

Now Kerchner said the city hopes to improve the space through both cosmetic changes such as new lighting and sound equipment to adapt the space more for live theater, as well as internal changes such as new plumbing and HVAC systems.

Beyond renovating the existing theater, a new event center will be built next door.

The event center will house two floors of multipurpose event spaces with an open-air rooftop entertainment space making up the top floor.

The current budget for the project, according to the city of Burlington, has \$11 million in funding allocated to the project. Kerchner said he met with all the contractors interested in bidding for the project for the first time Feb. 26.



HOW LUCKY WE ARE TO GET ANOTHER PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITY THAT WE CAN SHOWCASE A REALLY UNIQUE PART OF OURSELVES THAT WE DON’T ALWAYS GET TO DO WITH GRAND NIGHT OR COLLAGE OR THE BIG SPECTACLE THINGS, OR NORMAL SHOWS.

ANDREW FRANCE
JUNIOR MUSIC THEATRE MAJOR

The goal of the project is to bring more people to downtown Burlington and support multiple local businesses, not just the theater.

“It’s all very different,” Kerchner said. “Nothing like this exists in Alamance County, so we really hope that people will be excited about it and use it.”

Specifically, Kerchner said that making a strong connection with Elon University was important and bringing the Music Theatre Department in for the final show before closing for renovations helped start that connection.

“Elon students do not come to downtown Burlington all that much,” Kerchner said. “We want to try and give them a reason and say, ‘It’s not that far and you can have a really good time.’”

This is not the first tribute concert held at the Paramount Theater in recent months. University of North Carolina, Greensboro performed a tribute to jazz performer John Coltrane in September 2024 and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University performed a tribute to singer

Nina Simone in November 2024.

Rayis said that Sondheim’s works were chosen for the show not only to commemorate the composer and lyricist’s 95 birthday, but also for the notability of his works such as “West Side Story,” “Into the Woods,” “Sweeney Todd” and “Merrily We Roll Along,” which will be performed by the department in May.

“I think it’s fair to say that Sondheim is our greatest writer,” Rayis said. “You couldn’t really find anybody better than Sondheim.”

The show will survey works from throughout Sondheim’s career, from the beginning with “West Side Story” going throughout the length of his career.

Junior Music Theatre major Andrew France is performing in two numbers for the show. He said rehearsals are very loose as the students in each number meet in groups on their own instead of formal rehearsals for now.

“A lot of us are talking about just how cool of a project it is,” France said. “How lucky we are to get another performance opportunity that we can showcase a really unique part of ourselves that we don’t always get to do with grand night or collage or the big spectacle things, or normal shows.”

Rayis said this show is meant to kick off a new outreach strategy for the Music Theatre Department and will hopefully help the department learn more about the communities’ interests.

“We love the work we do here, but it’s important that we reach out to the community and to let the community know that we’re here,” Rayis said. “To find what the community’s interest is in what we’re doing here.”

The show is open to both the public and the Elon University population. Tickets do not need to be purchased ahead of time and can simply be purchased day of at the box office in the theater at 128 E. Front St. in Burlington. Community members can purchase tickets at Paramount Theater’s website. Elon students, faculty and staff can simply show their Elon ID at the box office for free admission.

IF YOU GO

7 p.m. March 13 at Paramount Theater, located at 128 E. Front St. in Burlington.

Community members wishing to purchase tickets online can visit the Paramount Theater’s website. Elon students, faculty and staff can simply show their Elon ID at the box office for free admission.



MEGAN WALSH | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon’s Music Theatre Department will perform “95 Years of Stephen Sondheim” at 7 p.m. March 13.