

# SPORTS

## Student-Athlete Profile: Soccer Co-Captain Emily Ketchum

Senior Emily Ketchum has played a key role on the women's soccer team, serving as a captain during her final season in blue and gold.

The 5' 2" defender, a native of Richlands, North Carolina, started 14 games for the Bishops (3-6 in USA South), recording one assist and helping her team limit opponents to an average of 1.44 goals per game.

After the season, the exercise science major reflected on her time as a Wesleyan student-athlete and her plans for graduate school next year.

**Q:** What attracted you to NCWC in the first place?

**A:** It was the opportunity to play collegiate soccer and get a great education that would allow me to pursue a career in healthcare.

**Q:** What's your best memory about playing on the soccer team?

**A:** There are so many memories that I've made on the field over the past four years. My favorite occurred during my sophomore year when we beat Meredith in penalty kicks to advance to the semifinals of the USA South tourney. I was out with a concussion for this game, but it was an incredible feeling to crash the field with my teammates after the last PK was kicked and the game was won.

**Q:** Talk about a favorite memory that happened off the field.

**A:** When the team is together, there's never a second that we aren't all laughing. I can remember a particular bus ride to one of our games when we decided to do karaoke with a twist. After putting on headphones, we were each given a random song to sing—mine was "Jesus Take the Wheel" by Carrie Underwood. Not only was this the time that my teammates learned I could sing; we also learned that many of our teammates could NOT sing. It made for tons of laughs and memories that will last a lifetime.

**Q:** What did you learn about yourself in the past four years?

**A:** An awareness about who I am as a person. I've learned that I have a passion for education and caring for people, which has al-



Emily Ketchum SI Photos

lowed me to form lots of meaningful relationships and become the leader I am today. If I put my mind to it, I know I'm capable of accomplishing anything. I've also learned that it's okay to take time away from school to have fun, and that taking naps is a crucial part of getting through college!

**Q:** What was it like serving as a team captain?

**A:** During my senior year my teammates voted me a captain and it meant a lot that they saw me as a leader. The experience taught me about effective communication, teamwork, dedication as well as compassion for my teammates. It's not just a matter of leading the warm-ups, or making sure everyone is on time for the bus; it's also being there to answer the phone when a teammate needs a pick-me-up, or encouraging them to keep pushing on the field when they're tired. It means leading by example, pushing myself on and off the field. I'm working hard for the team, so I expect my team to work hard for me. I have a passion for leading and I was honored to have the opportunity to do that for my team.

**Q:** How will you continue to participate in soccer, now that the collegiate career is over?

**A:** Soccer is passion of mine that I don't think will ever go away. Although my competitive career is coming to an end, I would like to play in an adult league after I leave college. A

dream would be to coach young kids sometime in the years to come.

**Q:** What did you like most about the Wesleyan exercise science program?

**A:** It takes dedication and drive to get through the exercise science program. It's prepared me in every way for what's to come in graduate school. I find the field so interesting! Between learning about the anatomy and the physiology of the body and the techniques behind exercise, I've been able to understand the importance of exercise with chronic diseases.

I valued the opportunities the program provides in research. During my sophomore year, the soccer team participated in a study whose findings were presented at the Southeast American College of Sports Medicine Conference. This fall semester, I worked alongside other students to perform research on two different studies, one that will be presented at the SEACSM conference by my teammate Megan Mackey this spring. And next spring, I'll be working alongside Dr. Alex Ehlert to create a research study with our new lab equipment. We'll measure the correlation between an athlete's speed, strength, and rate of deceleration. We hope to present our findings at a conference in March. The new state-of-the-art EXS lab has been a great addition to our program.

**Q:** What's one change you would make at Wesleyan that would improve life for student-athletes or students in general?

**A:** If I could make one change on campus, it would be to add more standing desks in the library and in the classrooms. It would not just be for comfort. Every student learns differently, and some may find that they're more attentive while standing.

**Q:** Talk about your plans for after graduation. What are you hoping to do with your exercise science degree?

**A:** I'm super excited about my plans after I leave Wesleyan. I've been interviewing for doctoral programs in occupational therapy. My top choice is Shenandoah University (Va.), followed Radford (Va.) and Methodist. After graduate school, I'd like to specialize in pediatrics and sports medicine, working in an outpatient clinic.



Coach Artina Trader is back on the bench, a year after a heart attack ended her 2020-21 season.

## Trader Returns to Sidelines after Recovering from Heart Attack

One season after winning the USA South's East Division with a 12-0 record, the women's basketball team finds itself 4-5 overall, 2-1 in the conference through the first nine games.

"We need more consistency in both rebounding and jump shots," said Artina Trader, now in her 13th year as head coach. "If we had more consistency in those areas, we'd have maybe only one or two losses."

Some familiar faces have returned to the team for 2021-22. Kayla Johnson, Javana "JuJu" Jones and Keorra Taylor have all elected to invoke the fifth year of eligibility afforded to them due to the Covid pandemic.

Trader welcomes the veteran presence on her team. "It's awesome to have them all back," she said. "When it comes to athletics, experience is invaluable and those three have done it all."

Trader noted that Johnson (13.4 points per game) enhances the team's perimeter scoring. "We're confident in her scoring ability, which takes pressure off other players," the coach said, adding that Johnson sets an example for her teammates with the extra work she puts into her game outside of practice.

Taylor (7.2 ppg, 3.6 assists per game) continues to lead the attack at point guard, Trader said, noting, "An opposing coach recently told her, 'You're the head of the snake and I'll be glad when I don't have to include you in the scouting report.'"

Able to play shooting guard as well as the three forward positions, Jones (6.3 ppg, 7.7 rebounds per game) provides the Bishops with needed flexibility. "She can play the two through five on the court and does it at a high level," said Trader, who loves not just her player's versatility, but her enthusiasm. "She's the type that will cheer the hardest on the bench and play the hardest on the court. JuJu does whatever is necessary for us to win."

Trader returned the sidelines less

## Off to 6-3 Start, Hoops Team Seeks Continuous Improvement

Led by all-conference guard Damon McDowell, the men's basketball team has jumped to 6-3 start.

Last season the Bishops finished 8-2 in the USA South, tying for first in the East Division before the team was ousted by Averett, in an upset, during the semi-finals of the conference tourney.

Guard Brayden Dixon said the team is determined to avoid last year's outcome. As an illustration of the team's commitment, he pointed to an early-season matchup with rival Methodist during the Virginia Wesleyan Tip-off Tournament. Though the Bishops trounced the Monarchs, 90-59, the coaches and players were back to work the next day, watching game film and practicing on the court, looking for ways to improve.

"We're all on a never-ending quest to be the best we can be every single day," Dixon said. "Coaches have laid the foundation. The expectation is that this year will be different from last year. We know we have a lot of work to do. We feel we haven't even cracked the surface."

Dixon said that last year's tournament loss to Averett—a week after Wesleyan beat the Cougars in the regular season finale—stung for a while. It was the second year in a row that Dixon and the Bishops had been ousted by their Virginia rivals.

The junior said he and his teammates try not to dwell on last year's season-ending game, but.... "As a team, I bet we all have the Averett games circled on our calendar," he said.

McDowell once again finds himself leading the conference in scoring at 19.5 points per game. Dixon is glad his teammate elected to use his extra year of eligibility, as the Bishops seek to repeat as East Division champs. "He makes everyone around him better with his presence," he said.

Asked to name the stiffest competition the East Division, Dixon called Pfeiffer a daunting opponent, pointing out that the former Division II program is bringing back many of the players from last year's successful campaign.

## Bishop Sports Briefs

### Men's Soccer

Cary, NC—Freshman Fred Rogers posted three shutouts in the USA South soccer tourney, but the Bishops still fell in the title match when Covenant beat them, 3-1, in penalty kicks on November 6.

The two teams battled to a scoreless tie through 90 minutes plus two overtime periods, as the Bishops outshot the Scots 11-10. Then Covenant's Parker Owen, Jay Patterson and Kade Theunissen all converted their PKs, while goalkeeper Henry Hooks snuffed two Bishops and one other struck the crossbar on his shot.

Wesleyan, 5-2 in the regular season, opened the conference tourney by defeating Brevard in dramatic fashion, as Augustin Rodriguez broke a scoreless tie in the 100th minute during OT. The Bishops had dominated play for much of the contest, firing 18 shots, and taking 10 corner kicks to Brevard's one.

In second round action, Ro-

driquez tallied the opening goal and Luca Zallo added insurance in the second half, as the Bishops eliminated Averett, 2-0. Rogers made five saves in the victory.



Fred Rogers

### Cross Country

NC Wesleyan played host to the USA South Conference championship races on October 30, with

Southern Virginia taking the men's and women's titles.

SV's Dylan May took individual honors in the men's meet, running the 8,000-meter Wesleyan campus course in 25:01. Placing seventh among the 13 teams, the Bishops were paced by Philly Barungi, who finished 44th, one second ahead of teammate Maleik Small.

Piedmont's Val Angel won the women's meet with a time of 23:01 over the 6,000-meter course. Wesleyan's top finisher was Teanna Bellamy, who placed 34th with a time of 26:34.

### Volleyball

Wesleyan's volleyball team tied Pfeiffer for fifth place in the East Division, with both teams finishing 9-9 in conference action.

But the Falcons qualified for the final tournament slot based on a tiebreaker.