World class athletes suit up for Nation

Maria Jamarillo
Colombian National Team Player
Dear Friends,

In this summer issue of WMU International News, we offer a different take on global engagement by focusing on the international dimension of Bronco Athletics and its student scholar-athletes.

Under the direction of Kathy Beauregard, WMU’s director of intercollegiate activities since 1997, WMU’s 15 women’s and men’s varsity teams include many international athletes, with home countries ranging from our closest neighbor, Canada, to Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Germany, and Senegal (all of which are featured in this issue), and more. International talent is not limited to our scholar-athletes: We have included a feature on Canadian-born Bronco Hockey Head Coach Andy Murray, who has achieved success on the global stage, in the NHL, and who was inducted into the International Hockey Hall of Fame in 2012.

Additionally, Kathy Beauregard has taken her expertise on the road for WMU, building on educational development efforts abroad to offer workshops in the Dominican Republic with senior government and education administrators interested in modeling our success with scholar-athletes to set up collegiate athletic programs where they don’t yet exist.

All of our scholar-athletes from other countries help internationalize the athletic experience for domestic students and our coaches by sharing their experience in training and competing at home. Many of them had already served on their country’s national teams by the time they selected WMU to advance in their sports, as well as to earn a world-class degree from a U.S. university.

I hope you enjoy these accounts of WMU’s global impact through Bronco Athletics and the pride we take in forging positive change in Kalamazoo and around the world.

We appreciate your interest in Western Michigan University and the Haenicke Institute and we welcome your comments about WMU International News. Please write us at: wmu-international@wmich.edu.

Wolfgang Schlör
Associate Provost
Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education

We would love to hear about noteworthy accomplishments from our talented WMU students, alumni and friends: Share Your Story
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When Kathy Beauregard was named Western Michigan University’s director of intercollegiate athletics in 1997, she was already an 18-year veteran of Bronco Athletics, serving nine seasons as gymnastics coach—winning MAC Coach of the Year—and nine years in athletic administration.

With such a deep “bench” of experience and a roster of 15 women’s and men’s teams that include world-class athletes from many countries, Beauregard is a globalizing force in collegiate athletics. She has been tapped to share her expertise in the Dominican Republic and with other WMU international partners aspiring to develop collegiate athletic opportunities at their schools.

In the Dominican Republic in summer 2013, Beauregard and WMU President John M. Dunn met with the country’s Minister of Sports and Minister of Education, as well as presidents and senior administrators from several colleges and universities interested in learning how to launch and develop quality athletic programs focused on education, as well as sports.

“Students in the D.R. have very limited opportunities to play sports in high school, so those who can are studying elsewhere,” said Beauregard, the third woman to be named an athletic director in the Mid-American Conference and the first at WMU. “Western is already offering sports management workshops in the D.R. to help people there learn how to do that work. The group we met with also wanted to hear about how we develop the infrastructure for competitions and rankings. After we met with them in the D.R., the cohort visited WMU, where they were able to get a better look at what our student athletes experience on campus and what it’s like to play for a Bronco team.”

“Tennis, hockey and soccer are the biggest sports attracting international athletes to WMU. Beauregard said about half of the players on both the men’s and women’s tennis squads are international students. Because Bronco coaches do not travel overseas to recruit players for most sports much of the recruitment communication with athletes is handled over the phone and via email. However, Bronco coaches are sometimes able to get a look at international athletes in the U.S. playing for high school teams, which gives the student athletes a stronger chance to be recruited by U.S. colleges and universities.

“It is rewarding to see the cultural diversity that international students bring to our programs through their languages, foods, and their experiences playing in their home countries.”

-Kathy Beauregard
cases, the student athlete reaches out to us, and our coaches appreciate the opportunity to work with them. It’s exciting for international athletes to come to WMU and participate in a sport they love, while also gaining access to higher education and a degree from a United States’ university. Focusing on the academic side is an important part of what we do and what we talk about when we are recruiting and developing our athletes.”

Bronco Athletics works closely with the National Collegiate Athletic Association clearinghouse and follows guidelines regarding review of amateurism and eligibility, which Beauregard said is quite extensive for international students.

“When it comes to the immigration requirements, we’ve all been challenged with visa issues,” she said. “We must also ensure that the student athlete is appropriately prepared to study in English and to meet the University’s admission requirements. Because the definition of “professional athlete” varies from country to country, we sometimes have to navigate those issues and concerns; this is different from school to school and some international students have been paid to play in their countries. When we encounter language barriers during the process, the Haenicke Institute for Global Education has provided tremendous support to help these students come to Kalamazoo.”

Beauregard said many, but not all international student athletes receive athletic scholarships to study and play for WMU. Some of them also get the opportunity to work or complete internships within Bronco Athletics, where they enjoy learning about running collegiate sports and the college athletic culture in the U.S. Additionally, Beauregard believes international student athletes play an important role regarding global engagement on their Bronco teams.

“It is rewarding to me to see the cultural diversity that international students bring to our programs through their languages, foods, and their experiences playing in their home countries,” she said. “The intercultural interaction they have with their teammates is truly a significant part of all of our athletes’ University experience.”

Beauregard with Steve Hawkins, head coach of Bronco Men’s Basketball.
Lynda Mclean — Volleyball — Canada  
WMU Athletic Hall of Fame 2011 inductee

Lynda Mclean, from Ontario, Canada, was named a Presidential Scholar and top female scholar athlete in 1987 and 1988. After college, Mclean moved back to Ontario to attend medical school and become a doctor.

- Mclean was awarded First Team Academic All-MAC (1985-87), GTE Academic All-American (1987), GTE Academic All-District (1986-87), Presidential Scholar (1987) and top female scholar athlete at WMU (1987-88).
- A recipient of the NCAA Post Graduate Scholarship, she played on teams that won four MAC titles and had a combined record of 106-27.

Keith Jones — Hockey — Canada  
WMU Athletic Hall of Fame 2013 inductee

Keith Jones, a former star player on the Bronco Hockey team, has found success on the rink and on TV. From Ontario, Canada, Jones came to WMU in 1989 to play the right-wing position. After college, Jones played professionally for nine seasons with the Washington Capitals, Colorado Avalanche, and Philadelphia Flyers. After a career-ending injury, Jones decided to move to broadcasting and now works on various NHL pregame and postgame shows on NBC and NBCSN.

- Played in 491 career NHL games, scoring 117 goals and 141 assists for 258 points.
- Currently a hockey studio analyst for NBCSN and a color commentator for Philadelphia Flyers games on sister network Comcast SportsNet Philadelphia.
- Played professionally for the Capitals, Colorado Avalanche and Philadelphia Flyers.
Caroline Kearney—Track and Field—Ireland
WMU Athletic Hall of Fame 2014 inductee

Caroline Kearney graduated from WMU in 1990 with a degree in social work. She made the All American team in track and field in 1987 and cross country in 1986. During her time at WMU, Kearney was named WMU’s top female Senior Scholarship Athlete in 1987 and 1990.

- Mullen-Kearney won the Conference Championships in the 3,000 in 1987 and 5,000 in 1987 and 1989 and is the only WMU female athlete to have captured threeMAC Cross Country titles.
- Competed in more than 15 events since college, racking up four first-place finishes.

Larissa Chinwah-Mavros—Tennis—Australia
WMU Athletic Hall of Fame 2014 inductee

Larissa Chinwah-Mavros, from Australia, graduated in 2003 with a bachelor’s degree in journalism.

- Chinwah-Mavros played for the Broncos from 1999-2002, garnering First-Team All-Mid-American Conference awards each year.
- 1999 MAC Freshman of the Year
- After graduating from WMU, Chinwah-Mavros pursued a master’s degree in public relations and journalism at fellow MAC school, Ball State University, where she also served as the women’s tennis graduate assistant coach for three years. Chinwah-Mavros is now a communications specialist in Minneapolis.

Jamal Mayers—Hockey—Canada
WMU Athletic Hall of Fame 2014 inductee

Jamal Mayers, from Toronto, Canada, graduated from WMU in 1996 after playing 155 games for Bronco Hockey and compiling an 88-56-13 career record, making NCAA Tournament appearances in 1994 and 1996. He went on to play 14 seasons in the NHL. After winning the Stanley Cup with the Chicago Blackhawks in 2013, Meyers retired from professional hockey to work for the NHL network.

- Drafted 89th overall by the St. Louis Blues in the 1993 NHL Entry Draft and played 10 seasons for the Blues.
- Played with the Chicago Blackhawks in 2011 and was re-signed for the 2012-13 season.
- Won a gold medal against Finland in 2007 and a silver medal against Russia in 2008 at the Hockey World Championships.
Competing for Colombia in World Cup qualifying matches at the U-17 through U-20 levels well prepared Maria Jaramillo to play at the collegiate level for Western Michigan University.

Jaramillo has lived in Windsor, Ontario since she was six years old, playing youth soccer on both sides of the United States/Canadian border. While attending a soccer clinic at the University of Toledo in 2011, the head coach of the Colombian Women’s team approached Jaramillo to let her know that Colombia was looking for players for its U-17 national team. That interaction eventually landed her on the pitch in Azerbaijan for the 2012 U-17 Women’s World Cup.

“Playing in the U-17 Women’s World Cup showed me what hard work and determination can lead to,” said Jaramillo who came to WMU in the fall of 2014 to major in biochemistry. “It was one of the greatest memories of my life and it fuels me to keep working harder so that maybe one day I can play at that level again. Most importantly, it helped me realize that I had to trust in God’s plan because He has great things mapped out for each one of us.”

That experience prepared Jaramillo, a midfielder, to advance for three years on the national team and gave her the opportunity to compete in all seven of Colombia’s matches in the 2014 U-20 CONMEBOL World Cup qualifying tournament in Uruguay. The team earned a third-place finish but was ineligible for the World Cup because only the top two teams advance.

Though she tried several sports as a child, Jaramillo said soccer “stuck” with her because her father was a skillful player and he enjoyed working with her. She played for youth recreational leagues in Ontario early on, then advanced to club-level play with Michigan soccer teams, such as the Michigan Gators, which required border crossings for practice and games.
While playing for the Gators, the team won back-to-back state championships in 2012 and 2013.

Nate Norman, Bronco Women’s Soccer head coach, believes Jaramillo’s time playing abroad has greatly impacted her collegiate game, giving her the strength, skill and endurance to go hard for the Broncos in 15 matches during the 2014-15 season.

“The international playing experience has really helped Maria transition into a very good college soccer player very quickly,” Norman said. “The pace of play and the amount of pressure she experienced playing on the Colombian national team has allowed her to have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to be successful at the collegiate level. She has also been able to travel around the world with her team, which has given her the experience and the maturity level to not only handle the pressure of college soccer, but also the pressure of the entire college experience.”

Overall, Jaramillo said her first Bronco season was very successful. She proudly scored her first goal in a match against Michigan State University, and the team advanced to the MAC tournament finals. She said some of the greatest highlights of the season were traveling with the team and forming friendships with her new teammates.

The beauty of the campus, the qualifications of the coaches, and the overall prestige of studying and playing for a Division I college are the three main reasons Jaramillo cites for selecting WMU. Balancing her demanding major and athletics has been difficult, but she has figured out how to manage her time to excel at both.

“I try to make the most of every minute,” said Jaramillo, who earned a 4.0 GPA for her freshman year. “If I’m not at practice, I’m studying or doing homework. The math tutor lab and the library have both been resources that I have utilized to help me academically when it seems like I am becoming overwhelmed with my school work. And, the comradery I have with my teammates keeps me motivated to excel. We are a very happy group and we work really hard together.”

Jaramillo plans to continue playing soccer for WMU until she earns her bachelor’s degree in spring 2018 and then go on to graduate school to study in the medical field. She shares a little advice for other international athletes considering studying abroad to play at the collegiate-level: “Just do it! It’s a great experience and you grow up a lot. It’s a good opportunity to meet new people and learn about a new culture.”
Edu Jimenez, a junior from Seville, Spain, has managed to find success both on and off the pitch, honing his skills as an athlete while maintaining a 3.93 GPA.

In 2013, Jimenez was named Newcomer of the Year by his Bronco coaches, along with Bronco Goalkeeper Chase Rau. Like most kids from Spain, he learned to play soccer when he learned to walk. “I have been playing my whole life; it’s just something I’ve always done,” Jimenez said. “Soccer is huge in Spain, so it was natural for me to play.”

Jimenez is majoring in finance and commercial law. He plans to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in fall 2016 and go on to earn a master’s degree in his field. He initially came to the United States as a senior high school exchange student, attending Jenison High School near Grand Rapids, Mich. That gave him the chance to be picked up by a high-level club team—the Grand Rapids Crew Juniors—that took first place at the 2011 United States Youth National Championship.

Chad Wiseman, WMU’s head men’s soccer coach, had watched Jimenez play for the Grand Rapids club team. After high school, Jimenez returned to Spain and enrolled in college. When Wiseman got the chance, he contacted Jimenez and offered him a chance to play on the Bronco squad.

“During our recruiting process, I reached out to him to see if he would be interested in transferring,” said Wiseman, named WMU’s head coach in spring 2013. “Edu is a classy individual. He has maintained a 3.93 GPA the four semesters he has been at Western and he is very good at balancing athletics and academics. We play differently here than what I am sure Edu was used to back in Spain, but he has adapted well and has become one of our star players.”

After he was approached by Coach Wiseman to transfer to WMU, Jimenez said “everything just kind of fell into place.” He described his team as hard-working and dedicated to success on and off the field. The team has earned an impressive cumulative 3.43 GPA, which ranks them in the top-3 Division 1 men’s soccer teams for highest GPA scores.

“Just being able to keep up with academics and still compete athletically has been my proudest accomplishment as an athlete,” Jimenez said. “I take self-care very seriously. I try to get eight hours of sleep every day and I eat properly. If I didn’t like my classes, it would be so much harder. Everything fades away when I am playing. Suddenly, there are no worries, no problems, just a ball, teammates, and opponents. Soccer allows me to be in my own world and escape from everything else in life.”

Coming to WMU, Jimenez says, has been one of the best decisions of his life. Hailing from a warmer climate, Jimenez said living through Kalamazoo’s cold, snowy winters took some adjusting to, but WMU’s close proximity to Downtown Kalamazoo offers a wide variety of coffee shops, clubs, restaurants, museums and theaters where students can escape the weather and relax.

“Studying in a different country adds so much to your life and helps get you out of your comfort zone,” he said. You only get one life to live, so have the courage to follow your dreams, whether that is to travel, play a sport, or go to college.”
Pablo has worked diligently to find a good balance between school and athletics, meaning he starts working on his homework as soon as he gets home from practice each day.

“There is no down time,” he said. “The competition and enthusiasm for tennis in the U.S. is on a different and higher level, which creates a lot of pressure. I have always played singles, so it is different, but rewarding, for me to be a part of a team. We have each other to rely on, and I am motivated not to let my teammates down.”

The flexibility of his professors has been very helpful, though Mora-Toro notes he has taken the initiative to meet with professors anytime he is concerned about coursework. When he competed with his team in the 2013 Mid-American Conference tournament, for example, he had to travel quite a bit and missed several classes. “Developing good communication with my professors is something I have learned to rely on to succeed,” he said. “Meeting with my professors outside of class has allowed me to understand assignments more fully and to be able to arrange flexible due dates when traveling for competitions.”

When asked what sets tennis players apart from other athletes, Mora-Toro stresses that the mental aspect of the game should not be underplayed considering the game’s physical intensity. “It is very much a mental sport—you have to be able to get yourself out of a difficult situation on your own,” he said. “You have to be tough all the time or you can lose easily. Additionally, the player has to be positive and embrace any situation as a flexible but capable athlete.”

Mora-Toro also sealed the deal with Brittany. The couple is getting married in July 2015.
Competing against athletes from prestigious institutions like Harvard, Yale, and Princeton might be daunting for some, but not for athletes like Western Michigan University’s Julia Champion. Regarding the Ivy League competitors she faced on the course at Penn State’s 2014 Nittany Lion Invitational, this Champion confidently said, “I appreciated their professionalism.”

Champion joined the Bronco women’s golf team as a freshman in fall 2014, moving to Kalamazoo from her hometown—Markham, Ontario. She has been swinging on the greens since she was 12 years old and participated in many sports as a youngster, including tennis. Her brother emerged as the hockey player of the family, and Champion admitted that she “lives her life vicariously through him,” because she is a huge hockey fan. Nevertheless, she became the golfer and has no regrets.

“Golf is my No.1 passion,” Champion said, who hopes to go to qualifying school for the Ladies Professional Golf Association after she graduates from WMU in 2018. Even if her professional golf career plans change, she is grateful for the time and effort she has spent on the game. “Golf is a life skill—the best business contacts happen on the golf course,” she said. “It is also a very calm sport. I like the alone time it offers, where you can think about anything.”

Since the age of 13, the young athlete competed in golf tournaments throughout Canada, taking her first win in Ontario. For many years, she trained and competed with older girls in various national tournaments who had already received college scholarships, learning everything she could from the older players. She says a defining moment came when she accepted the athletic scholarship offered by WMU. “I finally realized I was worthy of this level,” she said.

Despite recruitment efforts by several other universities, Champion chose WMU. “It’s not too far
from home, but it’s not too close,” Champion said. She was also excited about the two private courses the team uses for practices—The Moors and Kalamazoo Country Club. “These courses are difficult and really test the team’s ability,” she said.

For the first time in her golfing career, Champion has a dedicated coach—Stacy Snider—who has helped Champion greatly improve her mental game. “Coach Snider teaches us to let the little things go and to not get down on ourselves when we have a bad round,” Champion said. “I compete mostly with myself, and every time I leave practice or leave a round I try to take something away.”

Snider appreciates Julia as well. “Julia has a great work ethic. She is very coachable and wants to know everything.” Snider was pleased when Julia finished in fourth place in a fall 2014 Toledo tournament. “Having that kind of success that early tells the tale of what is to come,” Snider said.

So far, Snider’s tale of what is to come is holding true. By the end of her first full season in spring 2015, Champion had not only finished third overall on the team, she was also runner up for the 2014/2015 Mid-American Conference Freshmen of the Year award.

Champion not only keeps up with the demands of her athletic life, but she maintains a 3.88 GPA, as well. She is majoring in criminal justice with her sights set on attending law school once she graduates from WMU, but only as a second choice to a professional golfing career.

Fortunately, an intense practice schedule of three to four hours per day has allowed her to quickly become close to her teammates. Adjusting to college life out of right out of high school can be a culture shock for anyone and studying abroad can intensify that feeling, but Champion said it has helped her that there is little cultural difference between Kalamazoo and in her home-town near Toronto. “Everyone at WMU has been very welcoming,” she said. “I feel right at home in Burnham Residence Hall, where all the freshmen athletes live.”

An important role model for Champion is LGPA Pro Stacy Lewis, who she says has a “technically sound swing and great tempo.” Moreover, Champion appreciates and tries to imitate Lewis’ humble personality. “She plays for the love of the sport,” Champion said. “It’s sad when athletes lose touch with why they started playing and become obsessed with the money and fame.”
Bronco Head Coach Andrew Murray has made a global impact in hockey leading teams from four countries and picking up quite a few honors along the way, including being the first coach to take home the gold in three World Hockey Championships with Team Canada, and being the first foreign hockey coach to work in East Berlin after the Berlin Wall came down in 1989.

Murray also earned a spot in hockey's International Hall of Fame in 2012 for his performance with Team Canada and racked up substantial experience coaching NHL and European teams before joining Western Michigan University's hockey program in July 2011. (See sidebars for career highlights.)

Born in Souris, Manitoba, a small town in the southwestern area of the province, Murray has fond memories of the pick-up hockey games he played in his youth. “I have photos of me when I was two years old playing hockey with my dad on a backyard rink—Canadian dads get their sons on the ice right away,” Murray said. “Back in those days we used natural ice for rinks and we had to wait until November for our rinks to open. We’d play on different surfaces as they froze—tiny ponds froze first for little rinks, then the creek and river would freeze, which gave us bigger rinks. I remember that we’d get out of school and play on the rivers and ponds until dark.”

Travel club teams didn’t exist back then, so Murray said it was a “thrill” to drive 20 miles to play other local teams. In addition to hockey, curling was a big sport in Souris that was played in the building that also housed the community ice rink. “I was an avid curler,” he said. “My Dad was an avid curler and hockey player. My grandfather was a king curler, and I was thrilled when Gramps once asked me to come to play on his team.”

After playing in hockey in college, Murray accumulated 10 years of playing and coaching experience in Canada and Europe. He followed that with a 20-year coaching career in the NHL, where he became one of only 39 coaches in league history to reach 300 wins, with a career record of 333-278-58-71. (See sidebars for career highlights.)

“I transitioned from college play to playing and coaching for some for teams in Europe,” he said. “I was eventually offered the opportunity to get into coaching national teams in Canada. I was later contacted by some teams in Switzerland and asked if I was interested in going over there to coach. I took a one-year leave of absence and ended up staying in Switzerland for eight years. It was a great league and a beautiful country.”

While living overseas, Murray and his wife, Ruth, had three children, Brady, Jordan and Sarah, all of whom have become hockey players for U.S. collegiate teams and/or professional teams in Switzerland. 26-year-old Sarah Murray is so accomplished that she was named in early 2015 as head coach of the South Korean Women’s Olympic Hockey team, which is slated to compete in the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

Being the first foreign hockey coach to work in East Berlin after the Berlin Wall came down offered some unique challenges and Murray said it broadened his cultural understanding about how sports are played and perceived in other parts of the world. “It was quite a big change going from comforts in Switzerland to East Berlin,” he said. “Coaching a team from a communist state was very different from my past experiences at the time. The players’ motivation to work harder—it wasn’t necessarily there—they were used to being paid the same amount of money no matter how much work you put in or how well the team performed. Some players had been on the team for eight years and had well-established comfort zones—motivation was not a strong part of their vocabulary at that time. We had to establish that personal gratification needs to come through extra work and working harder; that changed the mentality.”

In 1998, Murray moved his family back to the U.S. when his oldest son was being recruited by U.S. colleges. He decided to take a step back in his career to be more present to his
family by taking a position at a prep school in Minnesota, but his feet didn’t rest solely on U.S. soil for too long. Partway through his first year at the prep school, he received a call from a friend in Germany who wanted Murray to serve as general manager of a team there. “I said I wasn’t prepared to move to Germany to do that, so he asked if I could fly over on weekends and help put a team together,” he said. “That meant that every Saturday afternoon after the prep school games I would fly to Germany to watch that team play on Sundays. After their games, I would talk to the players and coaches, work a bit in the office, and then catch a Monday flight at noon to head back to Minnesota. I would then have to hustle out to the rink for evening practices. I did that 10 times—it was tough, but rewarding.” The following year, he was hired as the head coach of the NHL’s LA Kings franchise.

On becoming a Bronco

After a very successful 20-year career in the NHL, Murray was offered the opportunity to help develop NHL talent by serving in a collegiate hockey program, and brought his game to WMU in 2011. In his first year, Murray led the Broncos to the program’s second CCHA Tournament Championship, with a first season record of 21-14-6 and a 14-10-4 conference record. He has recorded similar successes every season since and has shepherded several Broncos into NHL contracts. He attributes his success to seeking not only excellent athletes, but student athletes who will also excel in the classroom.

“Our coaches and I don’t talk about scholarships with prospective students until they first tell us that they want to be a Bronco,” he said. “We’ve got an incredible university with a beautiful campus and a president who is supportive of athletics and the role that athletics plays on a university campus; I want our players to appreciate that. I won’t talk scholarship until I hear a young man say, “Coach, I want to be a Bronco.’”

“Hockey has become a very popular game and we have people looking out for new talent all over the world,” Murray continued. “We have an elite German player on our team now, Frederik Tiffels, who is considered one of the top players in his age group, and Aiden Muir, from Canada, who has already committed to the Edmonton Oilers. We are always talking to players who are good students from a variety of countries who want to come to a place like WMU.”

Murray believes it is his task to develop good people—not just people who are good at playing a sport and competing at the collegiate level. “I would much rather that our players are known as good people rather than just good players,” he said. “I really like it when flight attendants who serve us when we travel say that our athletes are polite—that is just like winning a championship to me. We are helping these people develop dual career paths—sports and academics.”

He also sees it as his responsibility to make sure all of the players on his team—regardless of skill level—receive adequate sup-
**HOMETOWN:**
Cologne, Germany

**POSITION:**
Left wing forward

**YEAR:**
Freshman

**MAJOR:**
Pre-Business (Finance)

**ANTICIPATED GRADUATION DATE:**
Spring of 2018

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Freshman Frederik Tiffels is just coming off the heels of playing for the German National Team in the International Ice Hockey Federation World U-20 Championship. The competition brings together the top-10 U-20 teams in the world. Tiffels was invited by the German Hockey Federation to join the team for the 2015 tournament that was held in the epicenters of hockey culture, Toronto and Montreal, Canada. Although the German team took last place in the tournament, Tiffels gained important exposure to coaches from the National Hockey League. Tiffels is recognized as one of the world’s top players in his age group and many professional coaches are watching his collegiate career in the hopes of recruiting him for their teams.

“Frederik Tiffels is a tremendous addition to our student body at Western,” said Andy Murray, Bronco Hockey head coach. “Not only is he an elite hockey player, but his academic excellence for a student whose second language is English is inspiring. Frederik’s work ethic and attention to detail in all facets of his life will provide for a rewarding future.”

In this interview, Tiffels talks about how he landed at WMU and his future prospects.

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**WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO ATTEND COLLEGE IN THE UNITED STATES?**

My long-term goal is to play in the NHL, and I knew I would have to leave Germany to get the opportunity. I chose to come to the United States so I could get a good education, as well. I moved to Muskegon, Mich. when I was still in high school because it is difficult to progress as a hockey player in Germany, where there are only small club teams to play on. The biggest challenge was overcoming the language barrier.

**WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO COME TO WESTERN?**

Coach Murray was the main driving factor for me. He has coached in the NHL and had a lot of success coaching the Canadian National Team. He has had success around the world and I knew that he could develop me as a player.

**HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN PLAYING?**

I started playing when I was three years old, so I have been playing for 17 years. My dad is a huge hockey fan. My older brother also played and so I looked up to him and wanted to practice just like he did. My brother now plays professional hockey in Germany for the Heilbronner Falken, a team based out of Heilbronn, Germany.

**WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT PLAYING HOCKEY?**

I love the competition, playing the game, and being with my teammates. Every part that goes into it is satisfying to me. Scoring goals, hitting people, it is all why I love the game. I just love to say that I won.

**WHAT IS MOST CHALLENGING ABOUT YOUR SPORT?**

There are so many good players out there and the hardest job is to be better than them. My ultimate

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(continued on page 15)
Aiden Muir, a freshman enrolled at WMU in fall 2014, has already been drafted by the National Hockey League to play for the Edmonton Oilers after he finishes his collegiate career. He was named the Rookie of the Month in December 2014 by the National Hockey Commissioners Association after averaging a point per game during the early part of his first Bronco season. Earlier, in 2011, Muir played for the Victory Honda U-16 minor team in Michigan. He later played on the U-18 Victory Honda team and served as the assistant captain. He was chosen as overall pick in the 2012 USHL Entry Draft and has since been ranked as the 108th top player in North America.

“Aiden Muir is an outstanding student athlete who competes hard on the ice and in the classroom,” said Andy Murray, head coach of Bronco Hockey. “He carries himself like a pro, and with his size and speed he will be an NHL player once his college days are done.”

In this interview, Muir talks about being drafted to the NHL and playing for the Broncos.

**Why did you choose to study in the United States at WMU?**

It’s one of the best hockey programs in the country. Coach Murray is amazing and I know he’s going to be my key to getting to the next level athletically and professionally. I moved from my hometown near Toronto to Ann Arbor, Mich. six years ago to improve my chances of playing in college.

**What are you most proud of in your athletic career thus far?**

That I was drafted to the NHL two years ago as a high school student. Rising high school players can be picked by an NHL team, which then owns your rights and helps you develop until you can join the team. I was drafted to the Edmonton Oilers based in Edmonton, Alberta. They are members of the Pacific Division of the Western Conference of the National Hockey League.

**How long have you been playing?**

I have been playing since I was four or five. It’s just what you do when you’re growing up in Canada. My family played, my friends played, everyone I knew played hockey.

**What do you most enjoy about playing hockey?**

We are one of the biggest and fastest college teams—no one wants to play against us because they know we have skill and will work hard to win. Each school has a different style, especially in recruitment. A school like ours looks for fast players, while others will look for defense or skills. It all depends on what the coach feels is most important to form a strong, winning team. What I enjoy the most is being part of a team that is willing to put all they have into each game. Being victorious and knowing that it’s because the team worked together and worked hard for a common goal—that feeling is priceless!

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goal is to play on a professional team. There are other players out there with the same dreams and I have to work harder and be stronger than them because we are all progressing and getting better at the game.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR PROUDEST MOMENT AS AN ATHLETE?

I played for Germany in the World Junior Championships, which is for players who are under 20 years old. Ten national teams competed in the tournament, which was played in Canada—that was really special because hockey is so big in Canada. I had already played with some of the German team players but not all of them, so the tournament was a good way for me to meet new players and learn from them.

HOW DO YOU BALANCE SCHOOL AND ATHLETICS?

We have study tables for six hours a week. You have to organize your day. You put in the work for school and practice and then you can have time for yourself. But, my priority is always school and hockey. I came to the United States over two and half years ago to play junior hockey in Muskegon, Mich. for the Muskegon Lumberjacks. I have had to make sacrifices and keep my priorities straight so that I could achieve my goal of playing college hockey. A future goal is to play in the NHL, and I knew I would have to leave Germany to continue to play. I chose to come to the U.S. so that I could get a good education, as well. It was important to my parents for me to go to college.

WHAT CAMPUS RESOURCES HAVE YOU FOUND TO BE HELPFUL?

Definitely the library and the athlete study tables. The library is just a good, quiet place to work with your friends or class partners.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHER STUDENTS CONSIDERING STUDYING ABROAD?

You have to be good at your sport AND have good grades. It’s not enough to just be good at your sport. If you fall behind in school then you won’t have as many opportunities. Overall, just have fun and love what you’re doing.
When the Western Michigan University Women’s Volleyball team claimed the championship position at the Mid-American Conference tournament in November 2014—earning an impressive National Collegiate Athletic Association tournament bid—Mikaela Ryshytylo was on the court for the action.

“That is one of my proudest moments as an athlete,” said Ryshytylo, a sophomore from Selkirk, Manitoba. “I have always dreamed of coming to the United States to play volleyball in college because of tournaments like the MAC, where the level of playing is much more competitive than in Canada. Athletics is more prevalent in college in the United States. It’s a part of the university in a way that isn’t comparable in Canada. In the U.S., college athletics is a big deal and there’s so much support!”

The six-foot-two-inch outside hitter began gaining recognition in her sport as a three-year varsity starter for Lord Selkirk Regional High School in Manitoba. Ryshytylo also played on the U-16 Provincial Team for her country, collecting gold and silver medals in 2008 and 2010, respectively. In 2012, she was playing for the Cobras, a Manitoba-based club team that snagged third place at the Canadian Open Championship. “I have been playing volleyball for more than 10 years,” she said. “My dad and older sister taught me a lot and instilled a passion in me for the game at a young age. It runs in the family.”

Ryshytylo was originally drafted by and enrolled at the University of Wyoming, but after two years at UW, she began speaking with WMU’s Head Coach Colleen Munson. She decided to transfer to WMU to serve the team as an outside hitter. She was also attracted to WMU’s speech-language pathology program, which has been ranked in the top 50 programs in the nation by U.S. News & World Report.

Nicknamed “Mik” by the team, Ryshutulo said she shares a tight bond with her fellow players, who have helped her adjust to being 1,000 miles away from home. “We’re very close—kind of like a second family, and we’re all very competitive,” she said. “I know that everyone on the team would all be there for me if I needed them. I love the game, having teammates that depend on me, and playing with this team.”

Coach Munson says Ryshytylo filled a key spot on the Bronco volleyball squad—outside hitter—that she and her coaching staff were focused on identifying following the 2013 season. “We are so fortunate that Mik was searching for a school that had her major as well as a competitive volleyball program,” Munson said. “Mik is a tremendous athlete and has embraced our program and her teammates since she arrived in Kalamazoo. Her contribution on the court was a big part of our MAC Championship and our bid to the NCAA Tournament last fall.”

The MAC win hasn’t made Ryshytylo complacent about her training. If anything, she and the rest of the team are more determined to up their game to take first place at the 2015 NCAA Women’s Volleyball Tournament. “In season, we lift and practice every day for four hours and we play matches every Friday and Saturday,” she said. “When we’re not in season we still take our training and practices very seriously. We lift weights, do conditioning work, and practice every day.”

After completing a bachelor’s degree at WMU, Ryshytylo plans to enroll in a master’s degree program in speech pathology. That means she needs to stay focused on her grades, as well as her game. Utilizing the athletic study hall that is adjacent to WMU’s Read Fieldhouse, where Bronco athletes train indoors, and Waldo Library when she has tests or projects to complete have helped Ryshytylo achieve a 3.2 GPA. “It’s all about time management for me; I can’t procrastinate,” she said. “I have to study and do my course work first, then, if I have extra time, I can see friends and relax.”

After college, she plans to continue playing volleyball, possibly for Canada’s national team. Her long-term career goal is to become a speech pathologist focused on helping young children.

The most remarkable thing she has experienced at WMU is the passion of the team’s fans, including students, faculty, staff and community members. “It is a close-knit group of fellow Broncos striving for a common goal of success,” Ryshytylo said. “Our team receives amazing support from the community and we always have a ton of fans at our games. That creates a loud and fun environment to play in.”

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EUROPEAN STANDOUT RAISES HER RACQUET AT WMU

By Linda Hanes

After earning significant rankings in her home country of Georgia and throughout Europe, Barbare Eristavi brought her racquet and game to Kalamazoo in fall 2013 to play for the Bronco Women’s Tennis team.

Eristavi, a native of Tbilisi, Georgia’s capital, learned to play tennis from her father, Grigol Eristavi, when she was six years old. Her mastery of the game became apparent as she racked up 25 tournament championships as an under-14 and under-16 player and when she was named one of Europe’s top 25 under-16 players in 2010.

In her first season at WMU, Eristavi led the team in doubles play, before suffering a season-ending knee injury in December 2013. She came back strong for the 2014-15 season, posting a 24-11 record in singles action and a 7-1 record in Mid-American Conference matches. She was also impressive in doubles action, teaming with Yuriko Ono, from Japan, for a 17-6 doubles mark that included a 9-4 record in the No. 2 spot and a 6-1 record against MAC opposition.

Eristavi was recognized for her strong recovery when she was awarded the team’s 4th annual Unsung Hero Award at a year-end banquet in April 2015, which is an honor decided by the coaches to recognize one player’s contributions that might otherwise go unnoticed.

“Barbare received the Unsung Hero Award because of her toughness and ability to bounce back from injury to be a force for us,” said Associate Head Coach Ryan Tomlinson. “If you want to talk about a tough athlete, you only have to look at the fact that she has had two knee surgeries over the last 18 months. She really was an anchor for us in the middle of our lineup.”

Head Coach Betsy Kuhle said Eristavi’s recovery has been inspiring for the entire team. “Barbare, better known as “Bako” to our team, is a tremendous person, player, and teammate, who has overcome a lot of adversity to continue to play the sport she loves. I can’t thank her enough for choosing WMU!” Kuhle said.

The competitive nature of tennis is what Eristavi says has kept her passionate about tennis through all the ups and downs: “I feel proud as an athlete when we as a team come out at matches and prove our hard work by winning. I love competing and the feeling I get after winning a hard match. In my opinion, tennis is a mental game. Staying mentally stable during the match is most challenging.”

THE ROAD TO WESTERN

As high school graduation loomed on the horizon, Eristavi realized she would need to find a college in the United States that was interested in recruiting her if she wanted to compete at the collegiate level—an opportunity that does not exist in Georgia.

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After being ranked one of the top-10 individual tennis players in Croatia, Ella Perinovic set her sights on finding a collegiate tennis opportunity that would allow her to advance her game, as well as to earn a degree from a United States university.

She landed at Western Michigan University in 2014 from her hometown, Zagreb, where she racked up 14 years of experience on the court. Tennis is a very popular sport in Croatia and one of several sports she was introduced to by her father, Valter Perinovic, a strength and conditioning coach.

“No other sport was as interesting to me as tennis,” she said. “It has been my dream to make it to the top levels since I started playing tennis when I was five years old. Through practice, hard work, and experience, I competed in several Croatian national tennis championships and was ranked as one of the top-10 tennis players in Croatia every year from 2007-2012.”

WMU’s Women’s Tennis Associate Head Coach Ryan Tomlinson said Perinovic has been a great addition to the Bronco tennis team, skill-wise, as well as being a supportive and encouraging teammate.

“Ella has a tremendous amount of talent,” Tomlinson said. “She brings athleticism and foot speed to the court. I am looking for big things out of her for her remaining years of eligibility. Our team is extremely driven—we all have goals in mind that we are trying to achieve together and everyone has bought into that. What we do takes a tremendous amount of passion.”

Perinovic said she loves the confrontational, competitive nature of tennis and playing against just one other person in singles matches; she also enjoys the sport’s mental challenges.

“You have to be mentally strong to be successful at tennis,” Perinovic said. “When you are playing you have to be all in—focused and concentrated. You can’t just hit the ball; you need to know where you want it to go.”

A serious setback occurred in 2011 just as Perinovic began considering collegiate opportunities—she came down with mononucleosis. Doctors were unable to determine a diagnosis for several months. The illness kept her off the courts for a year and a half and out of competition for three years. Once she regained her health, she worked hard to sharpen her game in preparation for the collegiate recruitment cycle. Tomlinson identified Perinovic as a potential player while recruiting in spring 2014 and offered

(continued on page 19)
BARBARE EРИSTAVI

She heard about about WMU through a friend, and, after some research, decided that WMU was the best fit—academically and athletically.

“It was hard for me to leave my family and friends and to commit to a school that taught only in my second language, English,” she said. “It was also very hard for me to deal with such a busy schedule when I was a freman—I had practices, classes, tried to maintain a social life, and to keep in contact with my loved ones from home. That has gotten easier now that I have been here for a while.”

Eristavi is majoring in human resource management and expects to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in 2017. She plans to attend graduate school and she aspires to become a children’s tennis coach or a human resources professional. In addition to giving her the opportunity to play tennis at the collegiate level, she said studying abroad is one of the smartest choices she has made in regards to her education.

“Every college student should study abroad,” she advised. “Don’t fear the challenges—all of the hard work and adjustments are worth it to gain a new perspective about the world.

ELLA PERINOVIC

her a place on the Bronco squad for the 2014-15 season.

“The proudest moment for me was when I got accepted to Western on a full-ride scholarship after that huge battle,” she said. “The first semester was kind of tough, but during spring semester it was much easier to pick things up and understand my classes and professors.”

Perinovic already holds an associate degree in interior design from the School of Applied Arts and Crafts in Zagreb. She considered continuing her studies in interior design at WMU, but recently switched her major to exercise science, and she will begin courses in that program this fall. She plans to graduate from WMU in spring 2019, and then move to Florida to pursue a graduate degree and professional opportunities to compete on the court. “Tennis is my passion,” she said. “I think I’ll play it all my life.”

“Every college student should study abroad,” she advised. “Don’t fear the challenges—all of the hard work and adjustments are worth it to gain a new perspective about the world.

“Every college student should study abroad,” she advised. “Don’t fear the challenges—all of the hard work and adjustments are worth it to gain a new perspective about the world.
Not even a broken hand suffered at the first practice of the 2014-15 Bronco Men’s Basketball season, which side-lined Khadim Dieng in his freshman year of eligibility, could diminish Head Coach Steve Hawkins’ enthusiasm about the future success of his team’s tallest player.

Though he never played in a high school basketball game, Hawkins said Dieng has what it takes to become a solid center and one of the strongest players on the Bronco squad, as well as an excellent student.

“He’s very talented, and a very skilled seven-footer,” Hawkins said. “He uses both hands well, and is a very good basketball player for being that tall. He not only has a very bright future in basketball and with our program here, but he’s just a tremendous kid. He’s probably the most popular player on the team, and for good reason. He’s respectful and gets along well with everyone he encounters—not just his own team—but also the professors he works with, the coaches, and all of our support staff. Khadim is someone we’re looking forward to having around for the next several years.”

Dieng is originally from Dakar, the largest city in Senegal and its capital. At the encouragement of a family friend, Dieng moved to Virginia when he was 16 years old to take advantage of an opportunity to play basketball and study at Oak Hill Academy, a prestigious boarding school. He said one of his biggest challenges studying in the United States was that he had to learn English—French is his first language. The following year, he moved to West Michigan to play basketball for the Amateur Athletic Union, where he made the acquaintance of several players from NorthPointe Christian School in Grand Rapids. He took a liking to the West Michigan area, decided not to go back to Virginia, and found a host family willing to help him make the transition. Dieng had hoped to play basketball at NorthPointe, but he was ruled ineligible to compete by the Michigan High School Athletic Association. “America definitely offered me more opportunities to be a student and an athlete,” Dieng said.

While playing for the Amateur Athletic Union, Dieng attracted the attention of several college scouts and coaches. He received offers from Eastern Michigan University, Seattle University, Spring Arbor University, and Northern Illinois University, but his host family pointed him to WMU. He contacted Hawkins and learned more about WMU’s program, then eagerly signed a letter of intent committing to WMU.

“Playing college athletics is one of my biggest accomplishments as an athlete,” Dieng said. “It puts me in a good position when it comes to student life—it is a way to travel, see the world, and make new friends. The team is hard-working and we are all very close.”

The native French speaker has embraced studying in English. He said Waldo Library and the athlete study tables have been important resources for his academic success. “Balancing school and athletics is hard,” Dieng said. “It’s all about time management and taking advantage of what the school has to offer that will help you succeed in both.”

Dieng, his coaches, and his teammates are all looking forward to what they hope will be an injury-free, record-setting 2015-16 season for the team’s tallest player.

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