

Eastern Illinois University

The Keep

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August

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## Daily Eastern News: August 30, 2023

Eastern Illinois University

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# THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

'TELL THE TRUTH AND DON'T BE AFRAID'

## Meet the Greeks showcase new look



*Meet the Greeks'  
new look*

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*Panthers start  
season 3-0*

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# Student elections this week

By Rob Le Cates  
Editor-in-Chief | @robert\_lecates

Student Senate elections have typically been held during the spring semester, but due to a lack of interest and several executive positions running unopposed, elections will now take place this semester instead.

Former Student Body President Lucy Ade, a senior interpersonal communications major, said the elections were delayed because the group wanted a better pool of students to run.

The election timeline is:

- Candidate petitions are due Wednesday and can be submitted to [llfuqua@eiu.edu](mailto:llfuqua@eiu.edu) and [president\\_sga@eiu.edu](mailto:president_sga@eiu.edu),
- A Meet the Candidates social media campaign run through Student Government's Instagram will happen on Thursday and Friday,
- Elections will be held through school email next Monday and Tuesday,
- Results will be announced at 7 p.m. next Wednesday at the Student Government meeting.


So far, the reception has been great, Ade said. She said although the number of candidates couldn't be released at the time, there has been a jump in engagement.

Besides the lack of people wanting to run in the previously scheduled spring election, the senate also had a participation problem: Only three of its scheduled meetings hit quorum.

It hit its first official meeting in early April then sustained quorum up until the end of the year for two more meetings.

During the official meetings, the Senate approved a bylaw changing the quorum and the amount of students one senator represents.

Originally, 300 fully enrolled students



BY STUDENT GOVERNMENT | SUBMITTED PHOTO

Student Government elections will be held via email next Monday and Tuesday.

counted for one seat, but after the change each seat represented 800 students with the minimum amount to meet quorum being 11.

When the Senate does not reach a quorum, it is unable to conduct official business like the approval of any new student clubs, the allocation of funds or the appointment of members to school committees.

Some of the proposals during the semester that could not be approved until April were:

- Raisings student fees for housing and dining, operation fees for the Martin Luther King Jr. University Union, Lantz Stadium and O'Brien Field, Grant-in-Aid and campus improvement.
- Various appointments to Faculty Senate, Distinguished Faculty Award Committee, and Bond Revenue Committee.

- Resolutions denouncing gun violence at two universities.
- Several budgets for various events and committees.
- Six registered student organizations.
- The allocation of funds to the Student Recreation Center.

Ade along with current Speaker of the Senate Karolina Guzek, a junior political science major, have spent a portion of the summer planning the election and Pantherpalooza tabling to encourage students to gain interest in the Senate.

Ade said although her term ended, and she is not officially associated with Student Government, she didn't want to leave Guzek to run and organize elections and recruitment all by herself.

**Rob Le Cates can be reached at 581-2812 or at [deneic@gmail.com](mailto:deneic@gmail.com).**

FRONT PAGE BY ROB LE CATES

## What's Happening August 30 - September 6

<h3>Wednesday</h3> <p>Poker Club 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. - MLK Junior Union</p>	<h3>Saturday</h3> <p>Residential Dining Consolidated to South Quad All Day</p>	<h3>Monday</h3> <p>Labor Day No Class</p>
<h3>Thursday</h3> <p>Local Part-Time Job Fair 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. - Library Quad</p>	<h2>YOUR EVENT COULD GO HERE!</h2>	<h3>Tuesday</h3> <p>Study Abroad Explained: How You CAN Do It! 6 p.m. - 7 p.m. - Booth Library 1220</p>
<h3>Friday</h3> <p>Monarch Tagging 1 p.m. - 2 p.m.</p>		<h3>Wednesday</h3> <p>Paint &amp; Sip 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. - University Ballroom</p>

Send your event information to [dennewsdesk@gmail.com](mailto:dennewsdesk@gmail.com) to be added to our online and print calendars!

# First week of school for President Gatrell

By Cam’ron Hardy  
News Editor | @DEN\_News

Beginning his day at around 6:05 a.m. with Starbucks, followed by entering his office around 6:15 and 6:30 to check both of his email accounts, Eastern’s President Jay Gatrell looks forward to getting to work.

He looks through his email to see if students have any issues that he can solve. He said that a lot of things pop up in his email regarding problems that students have including troubles with classes or financial aid verification.

Gatrell then begins looking at his second email to read reports and data.

“I read the data in the morning about enrollment applications, and so on, so I get all that done somewhere about 6:57 a.m.,” Gatrell said.

The former provost and vice president of academic affairs was announced as president on Feb. 3.

Gatrell has been going around campus the first week and getting to know the students more.

Compared to other 4-year institutions, Eastern is on the smaller side. Gatrell said Eastern is a great place for getting to know each other.

“A place like Eastern does relationships extraordinarily, extraordinarily well, and my hope is that we all get it right and we’d spend the time to pay attention, and I think we all value that, that’s what makes this place special,” Gatrell said.

There was an alumni legacy luncheon in Doudna Fine Arts Center on Aug. 17 which Gatrell attended.

He also attended Welcome Weekend to get to know Eastern’s students and parents.

Freshman students were mandated to volunteer during their first weekend on campus. Students had the option to make blankets, paint the light posts around downtown Charleston or be involved in other activities.

“It’s just so great seeing students give back to the community,” Gatrell said.

Along with meeting the students at events, Gatrell said he has scheduled presidential office hours at the bridge at the Martin Luther King Jr. University Union.

He hopes that students just come in and address any concerns that they may have or just to have a conversation with



BY ASHANTI THOMAS | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

In his Old Main office, University President Jay Gatrell said his goals for the school year are to have employees and students be successful and reach their goals. “Creating a culture of care for our students and creating a culture of care for our employees.”

him.

Gatrell said he is looking forward to some of the programming that Eastern is going to provide for students.

He also has an interest in Greek life.

Celebrating different types of organizations brings the community together. The events are exciting to Gatrell.

“All we’ve done is take students who are passionate about this place, and their friends and their teammates, and put them in one place,” Gatrell said. “We put them all in one place and that energy is exciting and that’s really [what] I think captures the passion of the faculty and staff and students and our entire leadership team for what we do here at Eastern.”

Gatrell also spoke about some of the goals that he had for the school year.

In general, he said he wants to ensure the success of students.

“I think my objectives are to make sure that students understand that this is a place where they can be successful,” Gatrell said. “Where they can belong, where they can be comfortable and create a community for themselves and to support one

another.”

Gatrell also spoke about ‘Plan 2028.’

While vague about it at the moment, Gatrell said it is going to launch at a public session on Sept. 27.

“We’re going to introduce that to the campus community and there’ll be a number of initiatives so I really want to focus on advancing our strategic plan at the sort of macro level, but also creating a culture for employees and students so they can be successful, that they can reach their goals, and that’s really what plan 2028 is about,” Gatrell said.

Another plan that Gatrell has for the school year is starting a national search for a new provost.

“I’m excited about moving forward with the capital campaign in the future,” Gatrell said. “We’re in the exploratory phase right now around.”

Gatrell said he is looking for an “outstanding” provost. He expects the next provost to embrace the same values that he shares.

He also said that the next provost understands the type of university that East-

ern is.

“[I want them] to understand the type of institution a rural, regional [and] comprehensive university like Eastern is, but also complement sort of all the members of the leadership team [like] Dr. Anne Flaherty, Matt Bierman, Josh Norman, Katie Anselment” Gatrell said.

“The next provost has to be focused on the mission and be committed to this place and understand sort of the challenges but also the opportunities of being at a human scale institution, like Eastern,” Gatrell said.

Gatrell is just looking forward to making Eastern a better space and community for students.

“I’m grateful for our outstanding faculty, I’m grateful for our staff, the students, our graduate assistants who are working in labs,” Gatrell said. “I just am grateful that a lot of folks come here every day to make a difference.”

Cam’ron Hardy can be reached at 581-2812 or at cahardy@eiu.edu.

## Special Olympics Family Festival Viva La SOFF

*Celebrating 40 years of SOFF memories*

### - Volunteers Needed -

We need volunteers to be a Friend-For-A-Day at Lake Land College from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Saturday, September 16, 2023  
Volunteer registration forms are available in 1212 Buzzard Hall and must be returned no later than September 11.

HOSTED BY

Stop by and see us at **Pantherpalooza** on Aug. 29!

Help us spread the word by posting to your social accounts!

Special Olympics Family Festival | @mySOFFtweets, #SOFF2023

**VOLUNTEER MEETING**

**Tuesday, September 12, 2023, 6 PM**

**at 1501 Buzzard Auditorium.**



# BSU aims to unite community

By Alexis-Moore Jones  
Feature Reporter | @DEN\_News

The transition from a school or neighborhood full of people who look just like you to a PWI, predominantly white institution, in a rural town can be difficult and a bit of a culture shock for African American and other minority students.

The need for community and human interaction from someone of a similar walk of life is crucial in making one feel safe within their surroundings.

That is where the Black Student Union comes into the picture.

Black Student Union is a passionate organization on Eastern's campus whose main goal is to promote and advocate for Black students on campus, create a safe space for them and build a community.

"I feel like going to a PWI sometimes in our classes, we're misrepresented, we really don't see each other that much," said Vice President Hannah Lawrence, a junior nursing major. "When we all come to BSU that's when you see the people that you don't always see all the time, and it's really good to meet other Black students on campus."

BSU meets regularly on Mondays at 6 p.m. in the Charleston-Mattoon room on the top floor of the Martin Luther King Jr. University Union. During the meetings, members and students come and talk about Black issues, culture, history, life and the Black experience.

To become an active member there is a \$10 fee for a semester and a \$20 fee for the entire school year.

Both charges come with a BSU t-shirt, free entry to all BSU events and participation in members-only events like Miss Black EIU.

Although the organization is titled "Black Student Union" it is not just for Black students. BSU is an all-inclusive student organization that is accepting of everyone.

The goal may be to center Black students, but anyone willing to listen or learn about the Black experience is more than welcome.

All the executive board members are sophomores and above, and most of the members wished they had known about the Black Student Union or something like this their freshman year.

BSU President Ashley Mickens is one of the board members who joined after her freshman year and naturally found a home.

"I was like, 'Oh I wanna get involved with campus' so I joined BSU," Mickens said. "I was just a regular member who, you know, just watched the meetings, didn't say nothing. Now I'm president today, so it's like kinda ironic."

"BSU made an impact on me, so I wanna do the same thing for other students on campus," said Mickens. "Just showing them that it's a place for them here and there are different ways to get involved and meet new friends, especially now since we have a bigger freshman class."

Due to the hardships they faced as incoming freshmen, the BSU executive board's plan for this school year is to be loud and proud and highlight themselves as a reliable resource and safe haven for first-year students and any-



one else who needs it. That's where their "Welcome Black Bash Union Party" comes in.

They had the event Friday from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. in the University Ballroom inside the Union. The executive board has been planning this since late April.

Zoom meetings over the summer, venue reservation, catering, the DJ and all the other vital details were all planned out thoroughly by the new and old executive board as well as student life officers Ariel Taylor and Ceci Brinker.

BSU was originally founded on Eastern's campus in 1967 but as time went on, especially with the rise of Covid-19, their impact on campus and number of members began to dwindle.

Parliamentarian Shay Edmond explained why this event means so much to BSU this school year.

"When I joined my sophomore year in 2021, I noticed a decline in BSU," Edmond said. "We've lost a lot of members, we also lost our entire [executive board] at one point in time. So for us, kind of like starting from the bottom and like building our foundation again, tonight is important to us because we wanna show everyone how much we want everyone to come together as one."

Due to some bumps along the road, the new BSU executive board has made it their mission to start the school year off with a bang and reintroduce themselves to the school with their Welcome Black Bash Union Party

The overall purpose of the 90s-themed event was to bring students together and give them a safe space to relax, have fun, mix & mingle and enjoy themselves.

"I really believe that students deserve to have a break. I believe this [event] can allow them to go out, get out of their comfort zone, have fun, get to



BY ASHANTI THOMAS | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Top: EIU's Black Student Union hosts "What's the Scoop?," a free ice cream and bowling social on Monday night at the Martin Luther King Jr. University Union.

Bottom: Papers to join Black Student Union filled up with members wanting to join during their ice cream and bowling social.

meet new peers and listen to some great music," said Secretary Terrell Steele. "I mean, who [doesn't] like nineties music?"

The night had music, a live performance from the African Student Association dance team Essence, free popcorn and refreshments, a photo booth and a place for everyone to connect.

BSU member Naomi Wright-Allen was in great spirits tonight eager to chitchat and show off some dance moves.

"I'm a Black student and we unite here," she said. "So far, my favorite part of the night has been seeing the unity and the people dancing."

It may have had a slow start, but as the night went on, the feeling of stress-free fun was in the air as students be-

gan to loosen up and truly interact with one another.

"My favorite part was the Turbo Slide because I killed it," said Senior Tattiana Stinger.

As the night came to a close, the "see you later" hugs and smiling faces encapsulated BSU's goal for the night of starting the year off right and showing students that they have a place to call home.

"I hope we can see how this event goes and use that outcome to plan for the future," said BSU Treasurer Kemal Dodd.

**Alexis Moore-Jones can be reached at 581-2812 or [admoorejones@eiu.edu](mailto:admoorejones@eiu.edu).**



# Meet the Greeks' new look

By Alexis-Moore Jones  
Feature Reporter | @DEN\_News

In the past, the Meet the Greeks showcases have been held at the Mellin Steps, located by the Doudna Fine Arts Center.

This year the NPHC had a different plan in mind. Not only did they change the location of their event, but they also revamped the entire thing.

The location was moved from the Doudna steps to the Lawson-Taylor basketball court. As opposed to meeting in the late evening, allowing the stars and building lights to highlight the night, they decided to move the event up to the afternoon so everyone could have fun in the sun.

In terms of the event itself, it was more than anyone could expect. They kept the annual showcase theme alive by saving the step show for last. The change that made this event so special was allowing students and attendees to actually meet the Greeks.

Every year attendees file onto the steps, watch the show and then mix and mingle once the show is over. The focus for this event was inclusivity and exposure.

“We wanted to make it more hom-ey,” the current chapter president of Zeta Phi Beta sorority Rafiat Yarrow said. “We wanted to make it feel welcoming and have everyone together instead of us having you watching us. We wanted everyone to actually meet the Greeks to get to know us and hang out with us.”

The day consisted of lawn games like big Jenga, cup pong made from trashcans and basketballs, bowling and big connect four. One of the main attractions was jump rope which caught the attention of many on-lookers. It got to the point where there were two to three people in the rope at one time.

Another unique difference the NPHC added to this event was food. They had burgers, hotdogs, chips and drinks available for everyone.

By the end of the night, there were more conversions being made, people sitting with each other and it started to feel like a cookout or party of sorts instead of a school-organized event.

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity member Marshone Gordan shared his feelings about the success of the night.

“We’re all just Black people who want to succeed, who wanna do better in life so we love to see black people come together and have a good event,” Gordon said. “No violence, food, taking care of each other, supporting each other and uplifting each other instead of tearing each other down. We appreciate the time. It was fun preparing and planning for the event and to do it.”

Delta Sigma Theta members Trelyn Newkirk and Amari Hurn also expressed their thoughts about the day.

“I was excited to see everybody show out even though, you know, it was raining or whatever but I’m just proud that everybody was still able to support us and come out for our events,” Newkirk said.

“I was looking forward to seeing everybody. Everybody came out, did an amazing job.” Hurn said “I was ready to see the new students, of course, a lot of freshmen, a lot of new students. It was exciting to see everybody come out and, you know, still show love.”

**Alexis Moore-Jones can be reached at 581-2812 or [admoorejones@eiu.edu](mailto:admoorejones@eiu.edu).**



PHOTOS BY ROB LE CATES AND CAM'RON HARDY | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Top: Azaria Bell, a junior spanish major, double ditches before the start of Meet the Greeks at the basketball courts on Saturday night.

Middle: A member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. Marshone Gordon, emcee's and announces the next group up to perform.

Bottom: Members of Alpha Psi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. stroll at the annual Meet the Greeks event.



COLUMN

Film on father of bomb

By Cam’ron Hardy

Director Christopher Nolan continues to set standards with his new drama/biography “Oppenheimer.”

During World War 2, physicist Robert J. Oppenheimer, played by Cillian Murphy, was selected by Lt. Gen. Leslie Groves Jr., played by Matt Damon, to work on the top-secret Manhattan Project. Over several years, Oppenheimer gathers some of the best scientists to work on the world’s first atomic bomb.

I do not think there is a lot that could be better with the film.

To start, I have seen this film three times. It was an interesting story to tell, and Nolan told it in a special way. I was expecting just the making of the bomb, but that idea vanished after a few minutes of the movie starting.

I was very ignorant on mostly everything. I knew about the bomb and where it dropped but not much else. Shortly after watching, I had an urge to go out and just learn, maybe to understand it as a I was watching it. At the same time, though, it was interesting to learn as I was watching it.

Nolan started the film with Oppenheimer in an interrogative setting with men in suits. This setting plays an imperative part in the film towards the last hour of the film, which will be talked about later.

The casting was great. It was very surprising see how many actors and actresses were in there, and there were even some unexpected appearances.

Playing Harry S. Truman, Gary Oldman was one of the surprises. It was hard to depict who he was at first due to the costume.

Another pleasant surprise appearance was by Josh Peck, who played Kenneth Bainbridge. Peck played a significant in young adults’ lives by playing Josh Nichols in the Nickelodeon TV show “Drake and Josh.”

Someone else who had this same effect on young adults’ lives who had a role in Oppenheimer was Devon Bostick.



COMIC BY JENNA MINOR | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

EDITORIAL

Students: our voices matter, let them be heard

Last spring, Student Senate only met quorum three times during the entire semester.

When it is unable to hold official meetings, the group cannot approve committee appointments, budgets for on-campus groups, fee increases, and Student Registered Organizations.

Hitting its first official meeting in early April, the Senate approved changing the quorum bylaw requirement from 15 to 11 and the total students represented by one seat from 300 to 800.

It is unrealistic to have one single person represent the collective voice of 800 people, but in order to ensure the sustainability of the group, we understand why the change was made. Desperate times call for desperate measures, right?

It is our hope with the upcoming elections that a plethora of students will join the Senate and allow the group the ability to hit quorum every meeting, even if the bylaw reverts to what it was previously.

This issue comes as a concern to us at The News, but we believe students should be just as worried. If students continue to show a lack of interest, this will impede the current social culture and governance process

at Eastern.

Some students might think “well why would I want a group that can vote to approve increases to my tuition and fee increases?” To that we say those changes happen every year, and not being able to approve student organizations or conduct regular governmental processes will harm the student body directly.

There are almost 100 active groups on campus, according to Eastern’s RSO page, and those include Greek organizations, hall councils, honorary societies, and varying gaming, academic, and religious clubs. If students want to create new clubs, they have to go through the Office of Student Life where the proposal is presented to the Senate. Six RSOs were approved at its first official meeting last April and while some of these groups still met, they were not officially registered through the university and did not have access to promotional tools the office has.

Student Government is one of the only student groups on campus that can directly enact change through the university chain of command. The executive vice president for student government is responsible for the student seat at Eastern’s Board of Trustees

meetings.

These meetings are where choices for university spending, awards, tenure recommendations, hall renamings, contracts, large-scale projects and more are enacted.

Student Government’s elections were postponed for five months due to the lack of interest and several executive positions running unopposed. Now, elections are just around the corner with polling taking place through email next Monday and Tuesday.

Former Student Body President Lucy Ade said the choice to delay the elections was to get a better pool of students to run, and she has seen a jump in engagement.

We at The News believe choosing to push back the election to allow a wider representation of students to run is the smartest decision. An annual rotating government roster cannot and should not operate with those who were elected uncontested.

If students continue to not represent the student body, this will cause the Senate to lose the one thing that matters, the students’ voice.

The Editorial Board can be reached at 581-2812.

The rest of this column can be found online on our website:  
[dailyeasternnews.com](http://dailyeasternnews.com)





# Five takeaways following Panther Classic volleyball

By Zaria Flippin  
Sports Editor | @DEN\_News

Head Coach Sara Thomas and the Panthers close out the Panther Classic 3-0 in Lantz Arena.

The EIU Panther Classic started on Friday, Aug. 25 and concluded the following day.

Eastern beat all three teams in the EIU Panther Classic: University of Louisiana-Monroe (3-0), Valparaiso University (3-2) and The University of Akron (3-1).

Here are five takeaways from the Panthers' performance throughout the tournament:

**1. This is the second straight tournament hosted by the Panthers the team went 3-0.**

Eastern did not host a tournament in 2022, but the school hosted the EIU Panther Invitational on Aug. 27 and Aug. 28, 2021.

The Panthers beat the IUPUI Jaguars (3-0), the Bellarmine Knights (3-2) and the Chicago State Cougars (3-0).

Thomas was only in her second season of coaching for the 2021 EIU Panther Invitational.

Before the 2021 Panther Invitational, the Panthers went 0-3 in the Panther Invitational on Aug. 30 and Aug. 31, 2019.

**2. Graduate outside/opposite hitter Natalie Mitchem set a career-high of 25 kills against Valparaiso.**

Mitchem's previous record was 21 kills with the Ball State University Cardinals against the University of South Florida Bulls in 2019.

With the experience Mitchem has already had with multiple Division I schools, she knew that the Beacons would be a competitive team.

"I knew this was going to be a battle and we had to come at the top of our game," Mitchem said.

Mitchem also ended the game with five

blocks to help the Panthers beat the Beacons Friday evening.

**3. Eastern went on an 11-0 run against Valparaiso.**

At the beginning of the fifth set, the Panthers went on an 11-0 run against the Beacons.

"The preparation is everything we talk about in the preseason," Thomas said after the 3-2 win over the Beacons.

Throughout the run, Mitchem had four kills, junior outside hitter/opposite Tori Mohesky had one kill and sophomore setter Catalina Rochaix had two service aces.

**4. Setter Catalina Rochaix recorded more than 100 assists in a three-game span.**

Rochaix recorded 139 assists throughout the EIU Panther Classic.

"Preparation was key for me," Rochaix said. "I practice a lot and have a lot of individual meetings with the coaches, and I trust in my team a lot."

Rochaix had 36 assists against ULM, 53 against Valparaiso and an additional 50 against Akron.

Rochaix led the team in assists in all three games.

"I'm so happy with how we played and how we practiced for this tournament," Rochaix said after the 3-1 win against the Akron Zips. "I think we did a really great job, and I'm happy with my team."

**5. Defensive specialist/libero Christina Martinez Mundo led the Panthers with 70 digs within a three-game span.**

The senior, Martinez Mundo, had 17 digs against ULM, 29 against Valparaiso and an additional 24 against Akron.

Two days before the tournament, Martinez Mundo said she felt excited about the EIU Panther Classic.

"I know we're going to do a lot of good things because we've been putting in the work," Martinez Mundo said during practice.

Martinez Mundo also had nine assists



BY ASHANTI THOMAS | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

TOP: Senior outside hitter Giovana Larregui Lopez (15) serves the ball over the net for the Panthers against their game vs. Valparaiso. The Panthers won 3-2 against the Beacons Friday night in Lantz Arena.

BOTTOM: Senior Christina Martinez Mundo (4) attempts to defend the ball at the Panthers volleyball game against Valparaiso.

throughout the Panther Classic and three services aces, one for each game in the tournament.

"I never take wins for granted," Thomas said after the third and final win of the Panther Classic. "Playing three games pretty much in 24 hours can not always be the easiest thing."

Eastern's first game against ULM started at 1 p.m. on Friday, and the Panthers played again against Valparaiso at 7 p.m.

The Panthers played the next day against Akron at 2 p.m.

The Panthers are traveling to Indianapolis, IN to attend the IUPUI Hampton Inn Invite. Their first opponent is the Golden Eagles from Oral Roberts University. The game is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. at the IUPUI Gymnasium.

**Zaria Flippin can be reached at 581-2812 or zhflippin@eiu.edu.**

## Athletes of the Issue

### LESEGO MALOMA



Senior forward Lesego Maloma started the Monday game off strong for the Panthers by scoring the only goal in the 1-0 victory against the Governors State Jaguars.

The ball was passed by Sam Eccles from the left-side of the field to Maloma. He kicked the ball from the penalty box, but Jaguar goalkeeper, Marcol Salom Chandre, could not stop the ball.

### NATALIE MITCHEM



Graduate outside/opposite hitter Natalie Mitchem set a career-high of 25 kills breaking her previous record of 21 set in 2019 in the game against Valparaiso University in the Friday game during the EIU Panther Classic.

Mitchem ended the tournament with 51 kills, 15 against the University of Louisiana-Monroe with an additional 23 against the University of Akron.



# Panthers v. Sycamores in football season opener Thursday

*Panthers to face-off against second most played opponent in program history for the 88 time*

By Zaria Flippin, Duane Carter  
Sports Staff | @DEN\_News

The Panther's season opener is Thursday, and they will be traveling to Terre Haute, IN to face the Indiana State University Sycamores.

After ending the last season with a 2-9 record, this season's team is looking forward to exceeding their expectations.

"The team's preparation has been very good," Head Coach Chris Wilkerson said. "We push the guys very hard from the end of last season, you know, from the last game in November, all through winter, spring, summer and preseason."

Wilkerson also said he is pleased with the progress that they have made and is happy with the way the team has responded. In addition, he said the team is ready to start playing in the new conference.

"You know it's that time of the year, I think the guys are ready to play against somebody else," Wilkerson said. "You go through spring and have 15 practices and you play against each other. You go through fall and there are 29 practices leading up to the first game, so we've had about 26 practices where 20-24 of those we played against each other. So, you know they've gone after each other for about 40 practices in a row and were focusing certainly on an opponent and they're ready to play."

Wilkerson talked about what style of play fans can see from his team this season.

"We are an advantage bass spread offense and we are a four two as a base or a four three as a base teaching standpoint, but the most important thing is that we want to be improved," Wilkerson said. "I want our guys to be I know that we're going to be more physical. I know that we're going to play harder for each other. And I'm just looking forward to watching them continue to develop as we move forward."

Wilkerson also addressed specific areas of focus during training to help the team's weaknesses from last season.

"For us philosophically, we knew we needed to do a better job taking care of the football," Wilkerson said. "So offensively, the whole theme for the entire spring and preseason has been no balls on the ground, meaning that we want to limit the turnovers. That's something where we just turned it over too many times last year, and we know that it's something that we can control, so

we want to limit those turnovers defensively. It's about limiting the gain or limiting the explosive plays."

Wilkerson also explained what the game plan is for Indiana State and how the Panthers will execute on Thursday.

"You know for us, we want to make sure that we win the turnover battle," Wilkerson said. "We want to make sure that we do a very good job limiting their explosive plays and creating more explosive plays. We want to win the battle with the explosives. We want to be penalty-free. If we can, we want to avoid the procedural stuff that happens in week number one, and most importantly, we just got to go out and trust our training."

Senior offensive lineman Chad Strickland feels the offense is ready to play against Indiana State.

"I think our biggest strength is running the ball," Strickland said. "I think the offensive line is ready to carry the offense this season."

Fifth-year running back Juwon Farri said that the biggest improvement he saw during training camp was the communication among his teammates.

"Everybody just picked up the slack that we were lacking last year," Farri said. "The whole team has a chip on their shoulder and they're ready to show what we can do as EIU."

Junior linebacker Elijahwah Tolbert feels confident heading into Thursday's game in Terre Haute.

"We prepared ourselves all summer, and now we're just ready to show all that we prepared for," Tolbert said.

Redshirt junior defensive back Mark Aitken said that the biggest improvement he saw during training camp was the chemistry between him and his teammates.

"We all know each other pretty well, and we play well with each other," Aitken said.

Coach Wilkerson left a message for the fans and supporters before the Panther's first game of the season:

"We're really excited again; our players have worked really hard. Our coaching staff has worked really hard. Our administration and support people have worked very hard. The atmosphere of O'Brien will be very different than what it's been in the past."

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BY DAYNE EMBERY-TAYLOR | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

TOP: Chad Strickland, a senior exercise science major, performs offensive line drills at O'Brien Field Monday evening.

LEFT: Mark Aitken, a redshirt junior marketing major, performs defensive back drills for practice

RIGHT: Head Coach Chris Wilkerson has players perform a series of drills for practice.

