

# Allegheny's athletes respond to lost season

Adam Cohen, Contributing Writer | May 1, 2020

Amid the COVID-19 outbreak, nearly the entire sports world has come to a halt. Sports fans are still hoping for their professional team to resume, or even begin, this year, but for spring season collegiate athletes, this is not the case. Although the NCAA has allowed student-athletes an additional year of eligibility on their respective teams, they have still lost a potentially playoff-bound season.

The Allegheny College Men's Tennis team entered the spring season with a 4-0 record, and their season was postponed before their spring break tournament in South Carolina. They were poised for their first playoff berth in two years. David Salazar II, '22, commented on his initial reaction to the season being cancelled.

"There was a lot of remorse and anger at the same time because you work so hard all year to prepare for the season just to have it taken away by something nobody can control," Salazar said. "It definitely makes you mad thinking that all that hard work was for nothing."

Despite being disappointed by the abrupt end to the tennis season, Salazar said he is grateful for his athletic improvement during the school

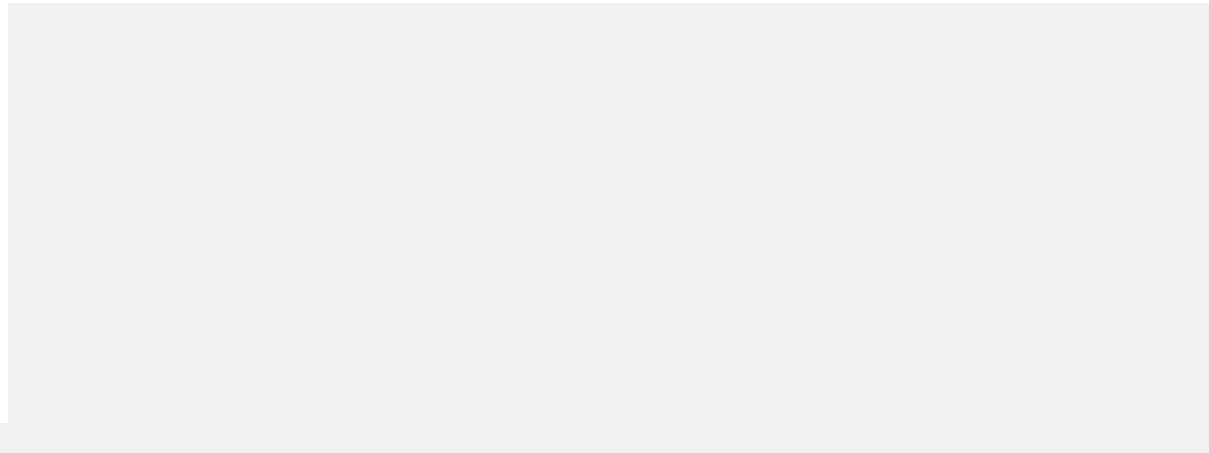
year. He gives Head Coach Taylor Coffman a lot of credit for pushing him to take his game to the next level.

“The coaching was a big change being that (Coffman) was a new head coach, but she took control of the reigns and did not let anything go,” Salazar said. “It was nice to be intimidated because it pushed us and told us to wake up and push ourselves even more.”

Coaches are important to the team dynamic and level of play, and the role of Allegheny’s coaches played a role in helping players deal with the hardship of missing out on a season of play. This includes women’s lacrosse midfielder Elizabeth Dolan, ’23, who said Head Coach Ashley Hughes was there for her and the team when they all found out together about the cancelled season.

“(Hughes) spoke her mind,” Dolan said. “I think that was something that we all felt, which really helped in my own mind and my own peace — seeing just how shocked and disappointed she was, along with me knowing that her emotions were the same with everyone.”

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Before the season was cancelled, the women’s lacrosse team went 3-1, and were hoping to make the playoffs for the first time since 2018. In the last game of the season, Allegheny defeated Buffalo State for the first time since 2006. Though the season was cancelled, Dolan said her life back at home has helped her deal with the unfortunate circumstances in a positive manner.

“I would say that I am just blessed to have the people around me that I do,” Dolan said. “My family is very active, and very much involved with one another’s lives, which just really helped. We’ve had family dinners and family game nights and just enjoyed being with one another.”

All four players have kept themselves busy during the extended offseason, either by working out, finding a way to play their respective sport and spending time with their families. Ella Swan, '23, has kept herself in mid-season shape through various forms of exercise.

“Besides tennis and schoolwork, I have been working out,” Swan said. “I have been bike riding a lot and running. I have to look at the positives.”

Swan continued to reflect on the positives of the season and was satisfied with the team's level of play. She had a lot of faith in her team going to the playoffs, especially as the women's tennis team was on the verge of having a .500 record or better for the first time in five years.

“In the fall, we were actually undefeated (with a 5-0 record),” Swan said. “We played one match in the spring, but how we were practicing and how we were doing, there was definitely a good chance of making the playoffs.”

All four players felt confident about making the playoffs. One of the pitchers on Allegheny's baseball team, Sean Kealey, '23, was really looking forward to a deep playoff run.

“We were projected (in the) preseason to come in fourth in the conference tournament, but we were on a tear,” Kealey said. “Our first two games, I would say it was not an experiment, but there were still moving parts. We were figuring out what worked best for us, and if we kept that, we would have been a hard team to beat.”

Allegheny's baseball team was 5-2 on the season and even rode a five-game winning streak before the season was cut short. They were hoping to make the playoffs for the second year in a row. However, Kealey has faith that next year's team will be just as good, if not better, than this year's team.

"I think they got a really good core group and we brought in a big freshman class," Kealey said. "A lot of the guys contributed and will be contributing a lot for the next three or four years in that class. This team had the most depth that I've played with."

Although the NCAA season was cancelled amidst strong perspectives for many of the teams, one common thread from the athletes was their focus on the positive.