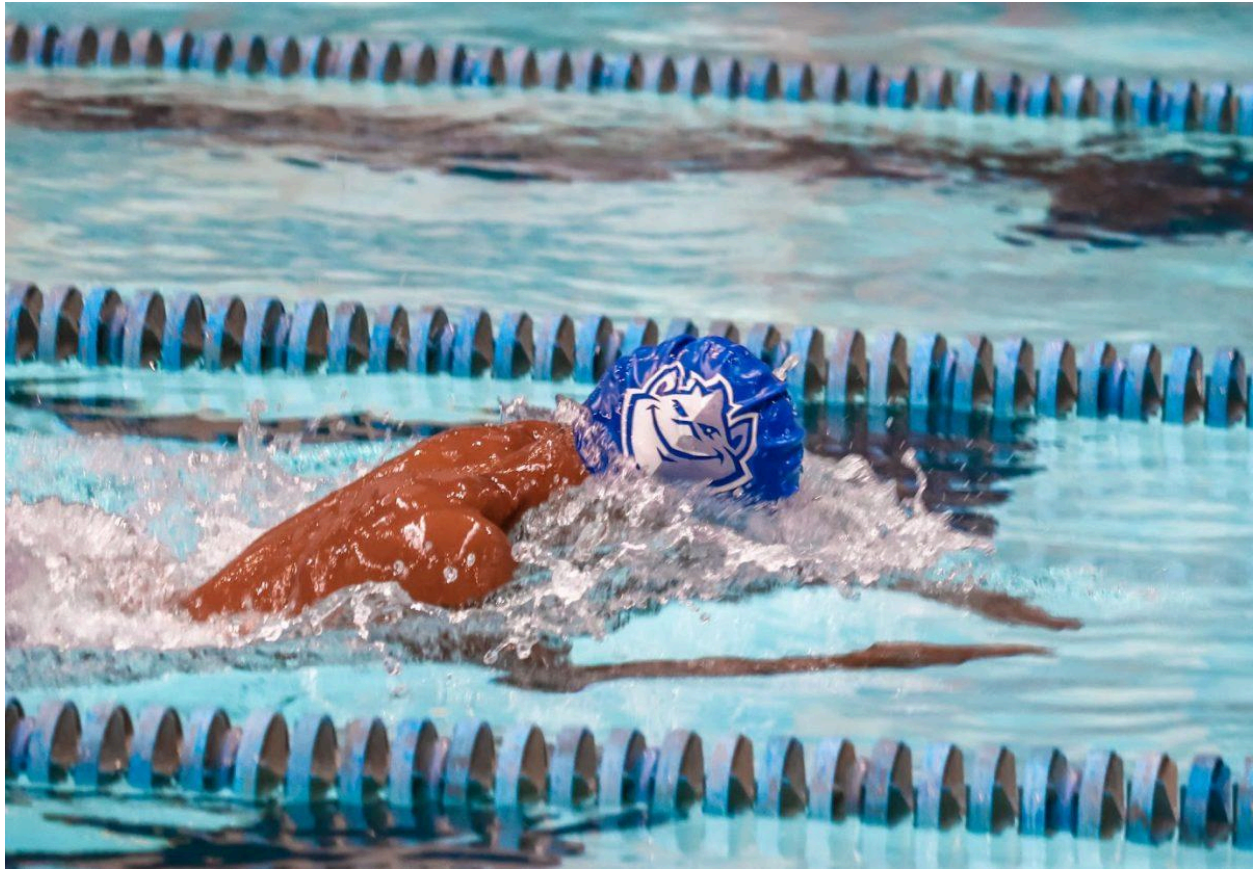


## SLU Swim and Dive earn third at the Phoenix Fall Classic

By Marin Finnerty



The SLU Swim and Dive team once again headed back to Chicago for the three day Phoenix Fall Classic meet on Nov. 17. Out of the seven teams, SLU Billikens earned third overall, just behind New York University (NYU) and University of Chicago. Despite the difficult competition SLU held their own against the other teams.

NYU ended with a score of 1482 and 659.7 points, Chicago ended with a score of 1281 and 653.0 points, and SLU just fell behind at a score of 884 and 618.7 points. The Billiken swimmers left Chicago with 65% season bests and 29% personal bests, making the meet an overall success.

The women's senior class performed phenomenally well as they helped lead the team with top scores. Distance senior swimmer Emily Leonard contributed the most points. Not far behind, seniors Lettie Williams and Maragaret Mcpherson contributed to the complete tally. The SLU seniors contributed to an overall solid total score.

The Billiken men continued this momentum when competing in their events. Top point earners seemed to come from the sophomore class, with Ben Militti, Brae Sanchez and Logan Townsend

all dominating in their respective events. Junior Franklin Liu and senior Jack Locke proved useful to the team as well with the points they contributed.

Not only did the swimmers have a successful meet, but the few SLU divers did, as well. With a team of just four, freshman Ben Mears proves to be a promising addition to the squad. He earned first place overall in the one meter diving, with junior Jacob Wasserman earning third.

Billikens will have to wait until Jan. 19 for their next meet against Omaha held at home, the Simon Rec Center. For more information on future meets and specific swimmers, visit Instagram. @slu\_swimdive is always being updated.

SLU Swim and Dive ends their season and looks forward to the next  
By Marin Finnerty



Brae Sanchez competing at the Atlantic 10 Championships meet. Photo by Amber Searl / Atlantic 10

SLU Swim and Dive headed to Hampton, Virginia for the annual Atlantic 10 Championships meet. The meet was held over four days, with all swimmers and divers competing in multiple events.

George Washington's men and women's teams were able to claim first at the end of the week. SLU's men obtained eighth place while the women earned 11th.

The Billiken men left with 22% season bests and 51% personal bests. The women were just behind the men with 37% season bests and 17% personal bests.

Sophomore swimmers Zach Byars, Jimmy Dukes, Jack Redden and Brae Sanchez all had a good mindset about the somewhat unfortunate results.

"A lot of the swimmers on the team made really good improvements. Team morale is at an all time high. The coaches have been supporting us the whole way through," Brae Sanchez, a breastroker said.

Sanchez was the top-scorer for the men's team and ended up dropping in all of his events. He made finals for two individual events.

Not all swimmers were able to perform as well as they would have liked. “Personally, I was given a scoring opportunity, and I didn’t score any points, so it was a bit of a let down,” Jimmy Dukes, an individual medley swimmer said.

All of the swimmers are already looking forward to how they can improve their season next year. They believe that some small changes can improve the team’s performance.

“I think we should keep more or less the same program, but maybe change the taper programs a little bit,” said Jack Redden, a freestyle sprinter.

“I think the taper worked really well for me. I think it needs to be more specified for how different people work. The girls probably have to have a different taper program [than the boys],” agreed Zach Byars, an individual medley and backstroker.

The improvements for the training could have been made throughout the year and not just before the Championships.

Sanchez is looking ahead to next season on how he can continue his success and improvement in the pool. “I think a big change for me to make is to focus on the small details in the middle of the season,” said Sanchez.

SLU Swim and Dive ends its season with both hard work from swimmers, and head coach Mary Woods, assistant coach Austin Mayer and dive coach Renee Ham.



## Caitlin Clark's influence on women's basketball and her journey to potential March Madness champions

Marin Finnerty



*Caitlin Clark after winning against Colorado 89-68, leading Iowa to the Elite 8. Photo by Greg Fiume/Getty Images.*

Iowa Hawkeyes star player Caitlin Clark has garnered mass media attention from her recent success during Women's March Madness.

Clark recently became the highest scorer in college basketball history for both men and women. Her success has resulted in a growing interest in women's basketball.

Interest in women's sports often lags far behind men's sports in the media, but Clark is changing the narrative. Ticket prices for her games alone increased by nearly [200 percent, and women's sports are expected to make over \\$1 billion in global revenue for the 2024 season.](#)

A star player like Clark is what women's sports need to gain the same respect and financial benefits as men's sports.

ESPN has made a huge step forward in lessening the pay gap between women's March Madness and men's March Madness. The NCAA and ESPN agreed on a deal with an average of [\\$115 million per year for March Madness.](#) \$65 million of that deal goes towards broadcasting the women. Other programs, like CBS, are still offering much higher pay for men.

Big3, a basketball league co-founded by Ice Cube, confirmed they offered Clark a \$5 million dollar contract. "[Caitlin is a generational athlete who can achieve tremendous success in the BIG3](#)," Ice Cube said.

Clark's dad, Brent Clark, recently made headlines during the Iowa and Holy Cross game on Mar. 24, 2024. After being filmed yelling at his daughter for her attitude towards the officials, Brent Clark was heard saying, "Take her out, my gosh."

Caitlin Clark cleared the air by saying that her dad's behavior was aimed at keeping her head in the game. "Yeah, I mean, my dad is literally one of my biggest supporters, and he honestly hasn't missed one single college basketball game of mine," she said.

All teams have aimed to take down Iowa, none of which have been successful thus far in the tournament.

Iowa took on their toughest competitors thus far on Apr. 1. Louisiana State University (LSU) beat out Iowa last year in the final to claim the March Madness title. The Hawkeyes got their revenge in the end, beating out LSU and advancing to the Final 4. It was a close game, with a final score of 94-87.

The Hawkeyes will take on UConn for a chance to enter the finals on Apr. 5, 2024.

Marin Finnerty



Katie Shield's 11 years as head coach for the SLU women's soccer team has brought numerous conference wins, school-records, awards and more. Shield's greatest achievement in her eyes is seeing her women succeed.

The women are a part of a close-knit team if the banter and laughs are anything to go by, all led by the positive, yet competitive, Shields.

"She's someone who wants to win no matter what," said Caroline Kelly, a former SLU player.

Shields has built a dynasty not only by the talented players and support by SLU athletics, but by the values she looks to instill in every player that walks onto the field.

"We focus on the principle: we over me," said Katelyn Brinkman, a junior defender.

That principle has achieved a lot of success for the team, and it is something Shields and the coaching staff will look for when recruiting.

“We recruit good students, good people. We have found that the most successful women that have come through our program, they have a growth mindset, but they’re good students,” Shields said.

Recruiting looks at a player from all angles, their academics, their character and their style of play.

“We have a pretty positive environment, and that’s something people crave in a community,” Shields said.

A humble Shields takes no credit for the women that come into the program. “Our women are our biggest sellers in our recruiting,” she said.

Shields also attributes the interest in SLU to the uniqueness of the school, that the academic and athletic programs can work so well together. It is not unusual for the team to be driving late at night home from a tournament to get back for early morning clinicals.

Shields is happy to work at a school that cares for the students as much as she does. “We are caretakers of dreams,” she said.

When Shields is not on the field coaching every day from 3-5, she can be found planning the next practices, what she spends the most time doing.

Shields’ own experience playing soccer helps her when preparing for practices. She often asks herself if she would enjoy the practice. “The cool thing about soccer is that it’s a player’s game,” she said.

The love and respect she has for her team is evident in the way she includes them as a part of her family. The team has gotten to know her actual family when she brings her son and daughter to the practices. “My kids get to grow up around these amazing role models,” she said.

Shields grew up in Dana Point, California, where she practiced soccer, softball, basketball and surfing.

Education has always been an important aspect in Shields’ life, as both of her parents were public school teachers.

Shields’ success at her club soccer team opened the door for her to extend her academic career at Harvard with a major in government.



What seemed like a perfect butterfly effect, Shields was spotted by a scout at a tournament in Houston against the U16 National Team. “Usually I didn’t get much action, but we did, so I had a good opportunity,” she said.

Harvard was the perfect place for Shields to advance her education and her soccer skills. “I have two loves, I love books, and I love soccer,” she said. She worked at both the library and the athletic offices during her time.

After one of Shields’ college coaches connected her with a coach at University of California, Irvine, she jumped headfirst into the coaching world.

“The coaching door opened, and I just walked through it,” she said. She also has coaching experience at Northwestern, Harvard, U.S. Youth National Teams and many other various teams.

Shields was able to gain unique experience with the wide range of coaching she has done. Coaching youth allowed her to try out what works before bringing it to the national level, which requires her to be on her edge.

“Every environment teaches you something about athletes and also about yourself as a coach,” she said.

Her coaching experience, athletic past and her emphasis on education has helped her create a successful team. However, she acknowledges the importance of SLU’s athletic programs.

“They not only gave me the chance, but they really supported me. They gave me time, they gave me resources, they supported me through hard early years. And a lot of my peers maybe don’t get that,” she said.

Janet Oberle, the deputy director of athletics at SLU, said “She is very integral in our department as a leader within the coaches.”

Shields’ love for SLU is evident in her gratitude and excitement when talking about her job. “Bury me under Hermann,” she said when asked if she would ever leave.

# A look at the upcoming SLU Men's Basketball season

September 17, 2024 | By Marin Finnerty

Saint Louis University is only a couple months away from the first basketball season led by head coach Josh Schertz. Along with the new coaching staff, 13 new players have been brought in for the upcoming season.

Schertz had a record-breaking [2023-24 season](#) at Indiana State University (ISU), before accepting a head coaching position at SLU in April. ISU reached the National Invitation Tournament championship game and had a .787 winning percentage.

SLU had a disappointing 2023-24 season, finishing 14th out of the 15 teams in the Atlantic 10 Championship. Some fans seemed discouraged based on the team's performance.

Schertz aims to build a championship-level program at SLU, bringing a source of hope to the school.

"I could not be more excited to be named the head coach at Saint Louis University," Schertz said.

"I've heard we're going to have a better year," said Liz Woodman, a sophomore SLU student studying marketing.

Yash Kukreja, a freshman majoring in neuroscience says, "He's been a pretty successful coach."

New SLU basketball player Robbie Avila, who was previously coached by Schertz at ISU before joining him at SLU, has students hopeful.

"I hope Robbie plays well," Kukreja said.

According to Schertz, Avila is in a position to set a good example for the other players on the team.

"The very best thing you can say about a player is that he makes everyone around him better, and Robbie certainly does that," Schertz said.

SLU's first non-conference game is on Nov. 4, 2024, against Santa Clara. The conference schedule has yet to be released for this year. Schertz and the team are excited to start early.

"If you had told me when we started scheduling in mid-April, with 12 games to get, that we would have this non-conference schedule, I would have been overjoyed," Schertz said.

Freshman Zach Phillips has been a longtime SLU basketball fan.

"I hope to make the tournament this year," Phillips said.

Marcus Freeman makes history as first African American and Asian American head coach in national championship game

Marin Finnerty | Staff Writer



Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman with a player before the Orange Bowl College Football Playoff semifinal against Penn State on Jan. 9, 2025, in Miami Gardens, Florida. (AP/Rebecca Blackwell)

University of Notre Dame's football head coach Marcus Freeman made history by becoming the first African and Asian American to lead a team in the College Football Playoff National Championship game.

“It is an honor, and I hope all coaches – minorities, Black, Asian, white, it doesn’t matter, great people – continue to get opportunities to lead young men like this,” Freeman told [ESPN](#). “But this ain’t about me. This is about us. We’re going to celebrate what we’ve done because it’s so special.”

Freeman, who became Notre Dame’s 30th head coach in 2021 after serving as the school’s defensive coordinator, is the second African American head coach in the university's history. Tyrone Willingham was the first, coaching the team from 2002 to 2004.

Notre Dame football coaching legend Lou Holtz shares his support for Freeman's coaching style.

"He's going in the right direction. But I want Notre Dame to always be successful, particularly with somebody who understands what Notre Dame is all about," Holtz said.

Holtz coached Notre Dame to its most recent national championship victory in 1988, cementing his legacy at the school.

Freeman has aligned himself with Notre Dame's values by bringing back gameday Mass. Mass for Notre Dame had been held the day before a game for the past 11 years. The team walks together from Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Notre Dame's on campus basilica, to the stadium.

"To me, what better time is there to go have Mass?" Freeman said.

Before his coaching career, Freeman was [drafted by the Chicago Bears](#) but retired early due to a heart condition. His ties to Ohio State extend beyond the championship game, as he played linebacker for the Buckeyes during his college years.

"I've always said this: I don't want this to be about me. I want this to be about others, and others getting opportunities and our team," Freeman said.

Freeman has implemented changes in the team's mentality. "I do not take for granted that I am a representation for many guys on this team that look like me," Freeman said.

Notre Dame had a strong season, finishing 14-2 with three wins in the College Football Playoffs despite the Fighting Irish's 34-23 loss to Ohio State University.