

SPORTS

Ball State Soccer: The seniors’ standard



Freshman midfielder Izzy Ross kicks the ball Oct. 16 at Briner Sports Complex. Ross played at Blue Valley Southwest High School before committing to Ball State. Isabella Kemper, DN

By Rylan Crum

Oct. 30, 2025, 3:24 p.m.

f X

Ball State soccer has started its 2025 campaign with an overall 9-5-2 record and a 6-3-1 conference record, but this team is more than the performance on the field; it is also about the culture within the team — and it starts at the top.

The 2025 season marked the first year in Cardinals’ red and white for soccer Head Coach Andy Stoots. Many times, when new coaches join a program, they want to bring their own team culture with them.

For Stoots, he focused on embracing the existing culture at Ball State, specifically the one that the team’s seniors have created.

“On the first day [I got here], the one thing that I vowed to the seniors was [that] I would do whatever it took to make sure that they were having a good chance to close out their Ball State careers on a real positive note,” Stoots said.

That existing culture has been created over the years, and for the 2025 team, it starts with senior forward Delaney Caldwell, forward/midfielder Addie Chester, goalkeepers Abby Jenkins and Grace Konopatzki, forward Emily Roper, midfielders Fiona Kilian and Tori Monaco, and midfielder and defender Kira Verburg.

Caldwell joined the Cardinals in 2022 after graduating from Saline High School in Chelsea, Michigan. In her freshman year, she won the Mid-American Conference (MAC) Freshman of the Year award, along with being named to the All-MAC Second Team. She is currently tied at 11th for most goals in a season in Ball State history with seven, and tied 16th for most points in Ball State history with 15. So far in her final season, Caldwell has racked up six total points and three goals for the Cardinals.

Caldwell attributes her successful career with the Cardinals to her teammates.

“Just the people here, that’s my biggest thing. I say every year I’ve loved my teammates, this last year has been one of my favorite years with everyone, so it’ll be a very hard team to leave, but my teammates have been the biggest thing,” Caldwell said.

After Delaney’s playing career comes to a close, she plans to stay in her new home state in Indiana and be an elementary school teacher.

Along Caldwell’s side at midfield is Chester, who is in her second and final season for Ball State. She committed to Louisville and played two years there after graduating from Delta High School in Muncie, and set the Indiana state record for goals in her junior season with 59.

In her first year with Ball State, she was named a First-Team All-MAC forward, starting in all 18 games and leading the team with ten goals. Chester has also made quite a mark in the MAC during her senior season as she is first in the conference with goals per game (.571), third in the conference in game-winning goals (.214), second in shots (49), eighth in assists per game (4) and leads the conference in total points (24).

Although her senior season is only her second year with Ball State, Muncie is still her home.

“Being back home is cool. I feel like I’ve gotten to know my teammates a little bit more from last year because I transferred in. I just feel super comfortable,” Chester said.

While Chester is not completely set on her future goals, it seems that she has somewhat of an idea.

“I’m kind of seeing where soccer goes, if not, I’m going to move to San Diego probably [and just] see what happens. It’s really up in the air [but] that question just stresses me out,” she said.

As the other two seniors are upfield trying to score goals, Jenkins is the one protecting the net for 90 minutes. Jenkins committed to Ball State after graduating from Hamilton Southeastern in Fishers, where she was an all-state goalkeeper and recorded 18 career shutouts. In her first three seasons, she played only two games, but last season, she showed why she committed to the Cardinals. In her 2024 season, Jenkins made only two starts but played in seven games, achieving 18 saves with a .900 save percentage. So far in her final season, she has a 2-1-2 record with an .800 saving percentage.



Senior forward Delaney Caldwell receives the ball Oct. 16 at Briner Sports Complex. Caldwell started in all 18 games last season. Isabella Kemper, DN

As Jenkins wraps up her goalkeeping career for the Cardinals, she said she will always look back and credit the team for her growth.

“Honestly, I think being in this program, I’ve learned a lot over time, and so being a senior now, I’ve got four or five years under my belt of experience. So you know, just working from that and gaining confidence from my coaches, my teammates, and everything. They’ve allowed me to be the best I can be,” she said.

As for her future, Jenkins has already applied to medical school, but still plans to stay connected with her teammates.

“The dream’s going to medical school, but then staying with it, following the girls on their own journeys [and] staying connected with the program,” she said.

Caldwell, Chester and Jenkins are not just a part of Ball State soccer — they could be considered the heart of it. They have a combined 11 seasons of Cardinal soccer under their belt, with Stoots crediting the culture he has seen to their experience.

“With as much as we’ve wrapped our arms around them, they’ve wrapped their arms around us, and I’m just happy for them,” Stoots said, “Regardless of if they’ve played a ton or haven’t played a ton, they have been extremely integral to our success. They’ve shaped the culture; it’s gone from being a good relational culture to adding in some good performance elements, and those seniors have set the standard for what that looks like. I couldn’t be happier.”

Stoots’ first year has not just been all about wins and losses, but also about the experience the seniors bring and the culture they have built as a team. Stoots said he knows that it is something they can use to their advantage as they head into the MAC tournament starting Nov. 1.

Contact Rylan Crum at rylan.crum@bsu.edu or on X @RylanCrum.



DNTrending

NEWS

Ball State responds after faculty posts on Charlie Kirk’s assassination draw backlash

By Staff Reports | 9/15/2025

NEWS

Director of Health Promotion and Advocacy, Suzanne Swiere, terminated by Ball State

By Shelby Anderson and Staff Reports | 9/17/2025

NEWS

Ball State faculty firing sparks debate, lawsuit over free speech

By Shelby Anderson and Meghan Braddy | 9/23/2025

NEWS

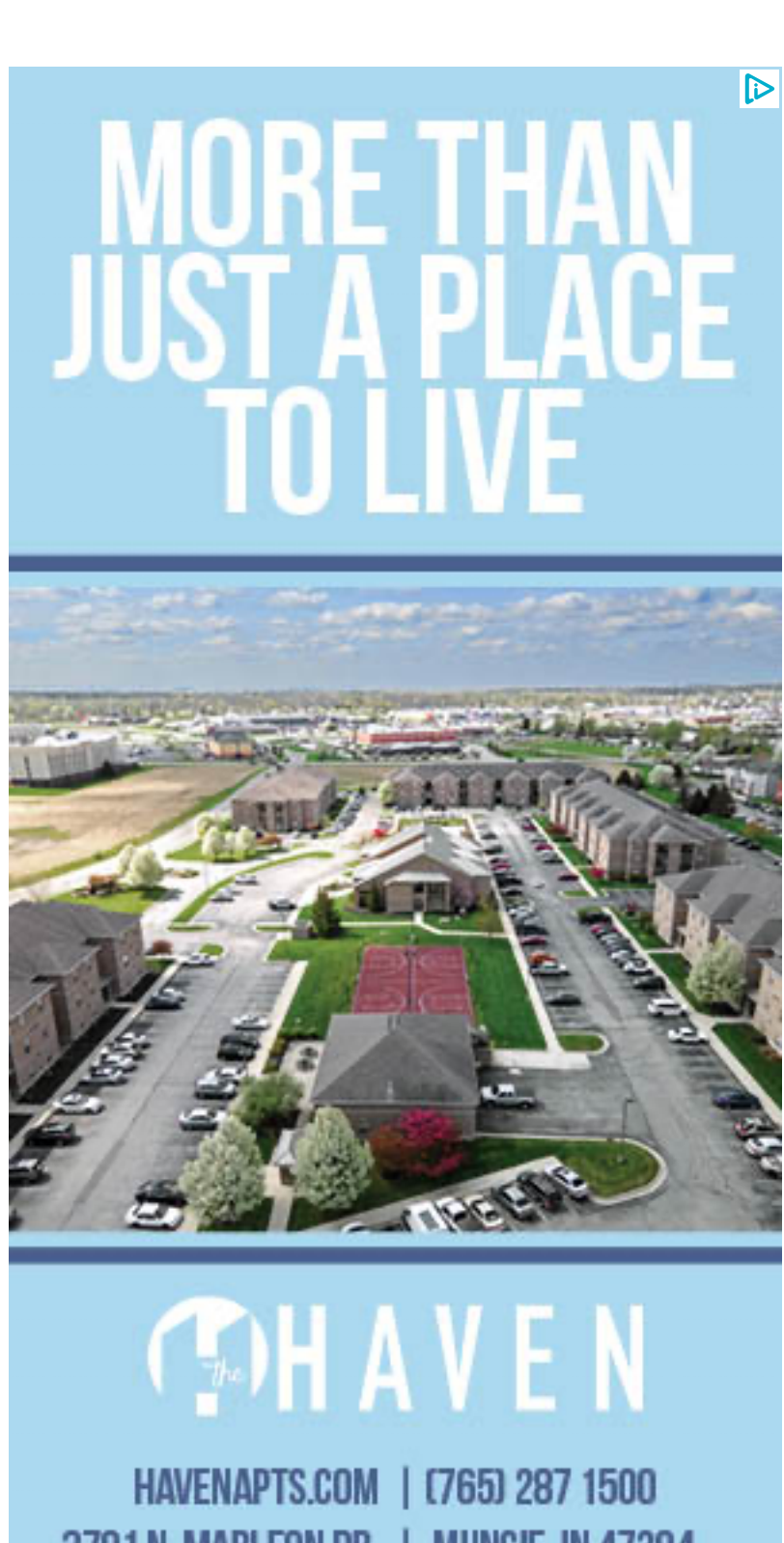
Ball State Speaking Center opens for all

By Jayden Vaughn | 10/1/2025

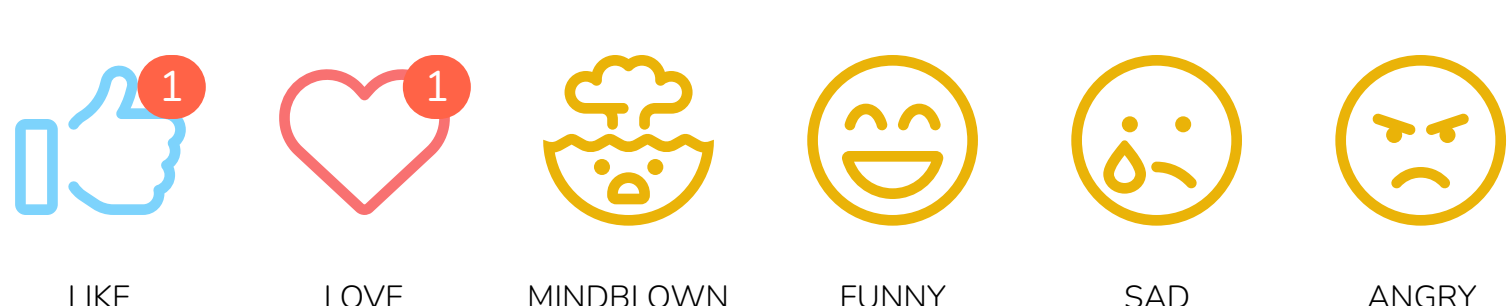
NEWS

Missing Ball State student Brian Kelly has been found

By Staff Reports | 10/23/2025



The Daily News encourages reader feedback and dialogue. Please rate this article and continue the discussion on social media.



NO RATINGS YET.

DNMore



SPORTS

Exclusive Q&A: Ball State soccer’s coaching staff on building a new era

By Trinity Rea | 9/26/2025



SPORTS

Ball State soccer returns to the MAC tournament

By Stephen Grata | 11/4/2025



SPORTS

‘A winning culture:’ Ball State Women’s Basketball is back

By Trinity Rea, Kyle Stout and Rylan Crum | 10/22/2025