



**Social media
and athletic
teams
Page 2**



**Dormitories
experience
hauntings
Page 3**



**Swim and diving
won NE10
title
Page 4**

SOUTHERN NEWS

WWW.THESOUTHERNNEWS.ORG

FEBRUARY 23, 2022

VOL 61 - ISSUE 15

Mental health resources available for students

**By Sarah Shelton
Features Editor**

One thing many college students talk about is their decreasing mental health and being overwhelmed with work.

According to the Director of Counseling Services Nick Pinkerton, “71 percent of Southern students reported increases in their level of stress and anxiety, and 46 percent reported increases in their levels of depression since May 2020.”

The CDC states that 75 percent of Americans aged 18 to 24 report poor mental health related to the pandemic, and according to NMHI, suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students.

One place to go for mental health assistance is the Active Minds club.

“Active Minds advocates for mental health awareness and ending the stigma surrounding mental illness. We as an organization aim to expand the education of the Southern Connecticut State University student body and faculty by providing access and awareness to resources, coping techniques, and the recovery process on an abundance of prominent mental health-related topics,” social work major and Vice President of Active Minds Maria Bernabucci, a junior, said.

Bernabucci said there is a wide variety of events held by the organization.

“Tabling typically includes providing resources for students and holding open dialogue surrounding a specific topic,” Bernabucci said. “Every month we select a number of mental health issues that has dedicated national dates to spread awareness and ensure those who are struggling feel supported.”

Bernabucci said the club can get students in contact with additional resources or they are here to just listen to them.

“Students can contact

Active Minds if they need help, although we are not professionals, we are a student-run organization that is always willing to assist others. E-Board and active members aspire to be friendly faces on campus that others can come to when they need someone to listen,” Bernabucci said.

Another option is seeing the university’s service dog, Officer Jules.

“He’s been through 10,000 hours of training since the time he was nine weeks old. He’s almost two and he just graduated,” University Police Sergeant Cynthia Torres said. “So he had to go through public access testing so that he’s a service animal. He is ADA, Americans with Disabilities Act certified, and he can go into any building same as somebody that has a handicap placard. So there’s not any denying him access into those areas.”

Torres said she is interested in doing group meetings with Jules for the students.

“This first month was making sure that he felt that this was his home base, that he has a safe space that is very calming and safe for him as well and then he has a very stable home life. So he goes from home with me to here, which now he gets excited about coming,” Torres said. “In the first couple weeks, it was like ‘okay, we’re here again. What is this?’ So now, when he walks through the door, he’s like, Oh, cool. I know what this is.”

Now that Jules has that home base, he is ready to help students.

“So now, we’re gonna focus on going out to events that are already planned. So we can kind of just pop in, or just walk across campus and start meeting more students and faculty and staff members. I did put on his Instagram page [@k9jules_scsupd], if somebody wants to send an email if I have time, we

can certainly set up times. We’re starting to do one-on-one. But I think if we can get groups together that would be interesting. That would make the most sense,” Torres said. “I’m hoping to at the Student Center to do something like library hours or office hours, if you will.”

As his handler, Torres said she notices his tail wags when meeting groups of students.

“He really seems to like the groups of people. When it’s one on one, he’s kind of more mellow,” Torres said. “So when there’s a group of students that are excited to see him, he picks up on that. He’s really excited, you know? He likes to go over to the Student Center and kind of by the food court area where there’s a lot of activity. He also likes to smell the food.”

Not only is Jules here to help the university’s students, but he is also here to help the university police.

“I was having a not-so-good day yesterday, and I didn’t tell him that I wasn’t, and he came and just laid here [next to me] for a while,” Sergeant Kim Clare said. “He just knows.”

Lastly, counseling services, located in Engleman hall, is the place to go and where most of the university’s mental health initiatives start.

Director of Counseling Services Nick Pinkerton said one thing he wants students to know about is a mobile app which also provides an aspect of its own counseling.

“[There is] an app called nod, which is for helping students overcome concerns around isolation and loneliness. The numbers of students who have been struggling with those issues actually have been rising before the pandemic, and then they’ve been exacerbated by the pandemic. So the cool thing about this app is that it sort of challenges students to step outside of their comfort zone and start finding strategies to actually make some friends and build some connections for a sense of community,” Pinkerton said.

To connect more with students, counseling services also plans on taking their work to social media.

“We’re going to be doing a social media marketing campaign,” Pinkerton said. “My hope is that in the next few weeks, there’s going to be a couple of videos that get pushed out of

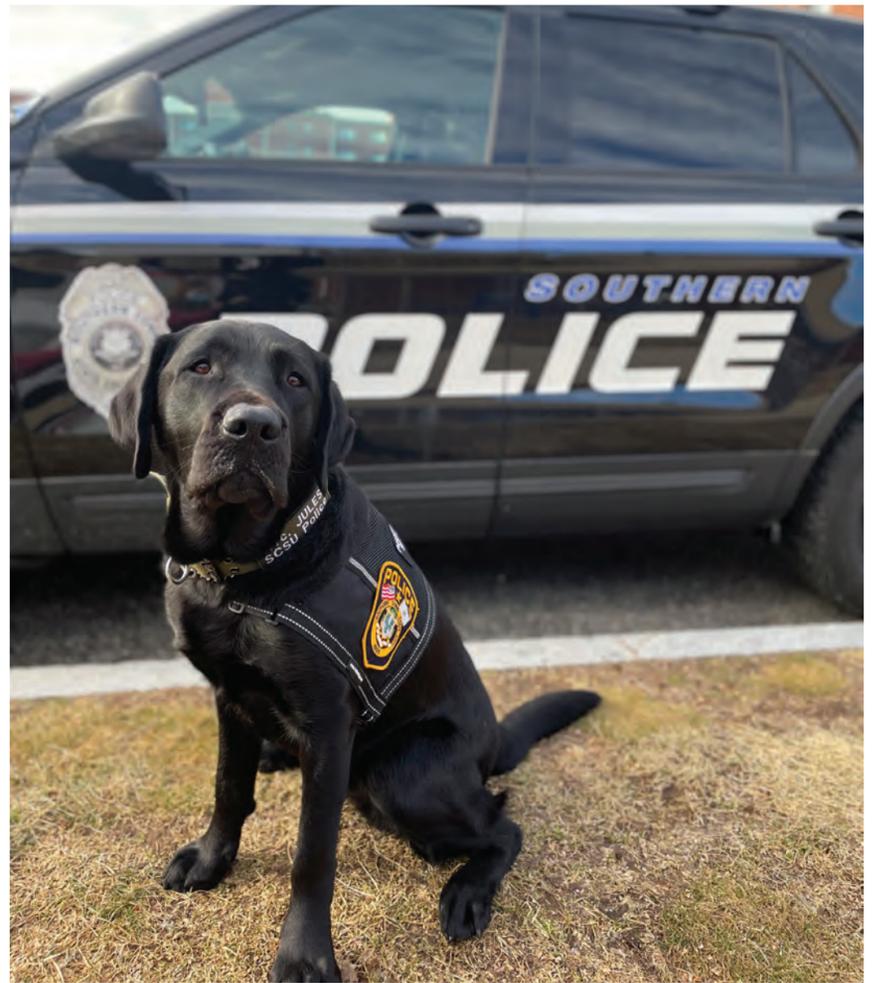


PHOTO | SARAH SHELTON

Jules, the police dog sitting in front of a campus Police car.

students actually talking about the importance of mental health. The slogans that we’re sort of playing around with are “your voice matters” and “we’re stronger together,” kind of playing on that theme of “Southern Strong,” but stronger together. We’re hoping that turns into a hashtag. I’m not so much into this social media thing but hey, I would love for that to work.”

Another thing Pinkerton adds is the university’s involvement with The Jed Foundation.

“Not many people know about JED campus, but it’s kind of cool,” Pinkerton said. “It includes students and faculty and staff and community providers and just kind of a swath of everybody to really bring mental health to the forefront of people’s attention.”

The goal of the JED Campus initiative is to create a mental health coalition on each campus represented by students, staff, faculty, administrators, assess available mental health resources, and achieving 20 percent campus engagement in the Healthy Minds Survey.

The big initiative happening right now, which is a part of JED Campus, is a student survey called “Healthy Minds Survey.”

“The Healthy Mind survey is kind of a nationally recognized survey of student mental health, substance abuse and wellbeing-related stuff.

The data that we get back from this will be looked at not just here at Southern, but actually at the system’s level, so all the other universities and the college system for the CSU system, and they’re going to be looking at it and trying to determine what this means in terms of our students’ needs and what resources should we be making sure we have available to meet these mental health and wellbeing needs,” Pinkerton said. “This is a great opportunity for students to raise their voices, take action and do something that’s really going to be beneficial. The challenge is our students all have very busy lives and to take 20 to 25 minutes out of their day to go fill out a survey is a big ask.”

The survey is offering the first 500 students who complete the survey a “Your Voice Matters” T-Shirt and everyone who completes the survey will also be entered for a chance to win one of 10 one hundred dollar Amazon Gift Cards. Pinkerton said this is to incentivize students to take the survey so they can learn students’ needs.

“The reality is that this survey is going to be sent to students in their email. You probably already received it, but it’s from the University of Michigan, and that’s because the University of Michigan is where the folks who do the Healthy Mind study actu-

ally reside. It’s a national survey, that’s where they come from,” Pinkerton said. “So this survey that gets sent to students emails. I’ve worked with it to make sure they don’t go into the spam folder, but you know how your email kind of breaks things down into direct messages and then the other? It’ll go into that other column and I know for a lot of people, myself included, that other column is almost always just junk mail. So my worry is that there’s going to be a lot of students that just kind of bypass this.”

Counseling services even got the university president involved to help spread the word.

On Tuesday Feb.15, President Joe Bertolino sent out an email stating, “As part of Southern’s commitment to mental health and well-being, beginning today, each of you will receive an email from a research team led by the University of Michigan asking that you complete the Healthy Minds Survey. This survey represents an important opportunity for you to share your experiences and observations at Southern to help us improve our services, outreach, and holistic support. Check your Southern email for your unique link.”

Bertolino added, “your voice matters, so I encourage you to take action and be heard. We’re only #SouthernStrong, together.”

Student athletes utilize social media to promote themselves

By Sebastian Arbelaez
Contributor
Riley Johnson
Contributor

Social media has changed the game for student athletes, adding a whole new dimension to the process of self, and team promotion.

Athletic director, Ken Sweeten has used social media in many ways and can attest to it playing a large role in exposure for athletes and even for the university.

"It allows us to get important information out, it allows us to get timely information out and it's critical to everything we do on a daily basis. It's our top priority every year," he said.

Sweeten oversaw social media while he was an athletic director at Quinnipiac University before he came to the university.

Sweeten recalled the time he had used pictures from the Men's hockey team's personal Instagram's and had displayed them with the faces blurred out on the jumbotron during one of their home games, and in large words "Coach, is this the how you'd like to have your team represented publicly?" and the message he wanted to get across was how the players were using applications like Facebook or Instagram inappropriately.

"Let's just say I lost some friends after that," Sweeten said. "On our end we always try to use it for good. I remember posting pictures on Twitter from an event and ESPN had shared it, and the father who was running the page had told me once it was posted you could see the peak in dollars for the charity."

Once again during his time at Quinnipiac, he had helped set up a benefit for a neighbor of the university's men's hockey team's head coach who had an undisclosed disease and had posted a photo that went viral overnight. Because of that, it instantly helped rack in the monetary goal they had set for the fundraiser.

Speaking of dollars, since the NCAA passed a law that now allows student athletes to be paid for their name, image, likeness around the country, there have been college athletes getting paid almost half a million dollars just for their social media use.

According to data that FiveThirtyEight used from Opendorse, a sports technology company, athletes like Paige Bueckers, a women's basketball player at The University of Connecticut, are earning over half a million dollars annually and she is making up to \$20,710 per post.

At the university, dual sport athlete Jaylynn

Cundiff's hard work has paid off, receiving sponsors since the new law was passed, but as far as paying, his compensation comes in a different form than money.

"I've made two deals so far, but none are involving me collecting any revenue," Cundiff said.

Cundiff, who is a member of both the football team and track and field for the university, is currently endorsed by Bodyarmor SuperDrink as well as Barstool Sports.

"I get gifts sent to me, so free drinks and clothes," Cundiff said.

Cundiff said that Instagram can be a very beneficial app because it can result in athletes tagging a company or messaging them which can lead to responses and deals from said company.

"I think social media should be used as a place to post things like photos or your opinions, and I don't even see how people get paid for that. Once it became legal for college athletes to get paid, I didn't even look into it. I have too much to focus on instead of trying to make money on Instagram," sports management major, Payton Reis, a junior said.

Reis believes that social media can be judgemental.

"Social media can become a gateway for individuals to not act like themselves or put something into the world that they might not want everyone to have access to, which can also lead to further problems. Once you put it on the internet, you pretty much agree to being judged or criticized," said Reis.

Though there are downsides, social media has given student athletes a great place to promote themselves, and their team.

"I think the most important aspect of social media while being a member of a team is the team account.

Rather than post about myself, I repost a lot of stuff that the Owl's softball page posts to get the word out there," human services major Julianna Corbett, a freshman said.

Other student-athletes

ders major, Megan Mercer, a senior and volleyball player said. "We really like the energy at home, and it plays a big role in getting us amped up while playing. That can impact a win in a big way."

while 29 percent said they use Instagram the most. This is compared to only 17 percent of athletes saying Twitter is most popular and 10 percent for Facebook. "I have noticed that social media is very adapt-



PHOTO | RILEY JOHNSON

Athletics' Student Success and Experience Coordinator Jen Dawson outside Conn.

try to find a balance of self-promotion while being a member of a team.

For sports management major Harrison Smith, a senior it is important in remembering that he is a part of a team.

"making sure that you are doing what's best for yourself to continue to be successful in your athletic future," Harrison said.

For some student-athletes there is one thing that is just as important as the game itself: the fans.

"Having a fan base at home is really important to us," communication disor-

The fans provide the energy for the team to play harder. By promoting her game, Mercer helps herself play a stronger game.

"I like to post on my Snapchat story so that my close friends can see, but Instagram is best for reaching a bigger audience. When the fans amp us up, that gives me the energy to play harder, and when I play a better game, it helps me get myself out there," said Mercer.

In a Field House Media study, it says "42% of student-athletes said they use Snapchat the most,

able. I think it's really placed a lot of emphasis on allowing student athletes to be more involved and getting out there," Athletics' Student success & experience coordinator Jen Dawson said. "For example, I could have an athlete record a video and post it on their socials rather than having them show up for a 30-minute info session at the Student Center. Working with student-athletes I have seen how much time they put into using these apps to network and communicate what they are doing."

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Former Disney actresses release new music

By Sarah Shelton
Features Editor

Two songs came out over the last two weeks that I have been anticipating for so long and I feel I must talk about.

Dove Cameron, singer, actress and more, recently came out with her song "Boyfriend," which before the release was blowing up on the social media app Tik Tok.

Cameron is mainly known for her Disney show "Liv and Maddie," which I honestly did not watch unless it was just

on TV during a sick day in high school, and her Disney movies, such as "Descendants." She has also been on Broadway and was in "Hairspray Live!" with Ariana Grande.

I have been following Cameron on Instagram for a few years now and I like her songs, but "Boyfriend" is an entirely new level.

Cameron started sharing snippets of unreleased songs on Tik Tok back in January, and many people took a liking to her song "Boyfriend," which featured the lyrics, "I could be a better boyfriend than him," and the sound was used for

over 156.6K videos on the app before its release. After the release, it became the number one trending song on Tik Tok.

She left a comment on the original video, "remember when you asked me to write a sapphic anthem."

Many people from the LGBTQIA+ community took a liking to this song. Cameron is a smaller artist, mainly known for acting, who has identified as Bisexual and was on the cover of "Gay Times." A lot of comments point out how the song empowers women and the LGBTQIA+ Community.

A few days before the release, Cameron added some newer backing vocals and a lyric "ladies first, I insist," and she tweeted about how happy she was the fans enjoyed the snippet.

When the song came out, I was very happy with it, I did not expect the beginning to sound the way it did.

The lyrics were a little repetitive, but as someone who loves pop music, that is pretty normal nowadays. The bass line and beat were also great.

Once the bridge of the song hit, her vocals were so amazing. Right after the bridge, she has the chorus with different/quieter background instruments

and snapping with a different vocal tone; this is honestly the best part of the song.

About three days after the release, Dove Cameron posted: "was just told that boyfriend has been added to today's top hits & we are about to hit 9m streams this morning after less than 4 days...only in my wildest did I think a song I wrote could have a life like this in the outside world. gonna have to cry about it."

I love that Dove is making her way into music, instead of only being an actress.

Another actress who is a singer who also came out with a new song is Sabrina Carpenter.

About five months ago, Carpenter released a song called "Skinny Dipping," and at the end of a music video, you see a different version of herself ride up to the camera on a motorcycle. This is where the new song starts.

"Fast Times," the music video already had 11K people watching four minutes after the video premiered at midnight.

From the snippets I heard, I thought I was going to like "Fast Times" more than "Skinny Dipping." I was right.

The music video started as if it was an action movie,



Sabrina Carpenter in her new music video on YouTube.

already a lot bolder and cooler than "Skinny Dipping."

Carpenter has a great voice and tone. In my opinion, she is a very underrated pop artist.

This song is definitely a new era for her, she is very known for her Disney show, "Girl Meets World," and she has had more grown-up songs since then, but this just sounds very different.

I liked the music for the bridge. This is a very catchy and repetitive song, I do not know what other lyrics she could have added at that part.

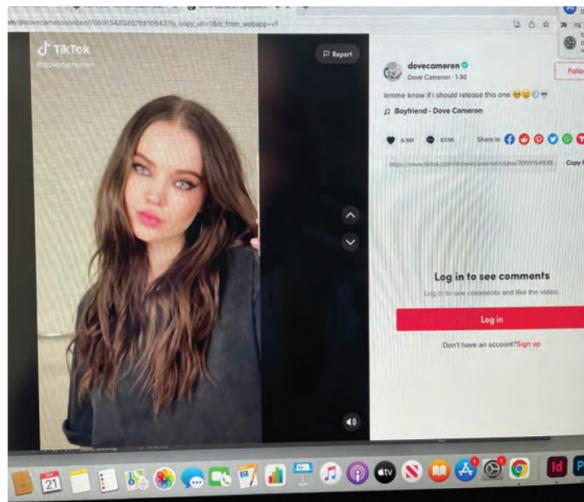
I honestly like her other

songs more, such as "Paris," "Feels Like Loneliness," "Alien" and "Diamonds are Forever," but this is up there on the list of her best songs.

It is also her best video yet, in my opinion. She had great choreography, cool backgrounds, and awesome visuals.

I actually saw Sabrina in concert, and met her, back in 2017, and if she keeps releasing music like "Fast Times," I will be very interested in seeing her live again.

Both of these actresses are making a big impact in the music industry and I love to see it.



Dove Cameron's TikTok teasing her song "Boyfriend."

Paranormal activity seen in campus dorms

By Sofia Rostani
Editor-in-Chief

The university is known for many things, being haunted is not one of them. According to some students, they would say the opposite.

"Farnham is the current oldest residence hall," director of residence life, Rob DeMezzo said.

According to DeMezzo, "Seabury Hall" was the first dormitory on campus. The dormitory was near the current School of Business which was the destination of the prior Adanti Student Center.

Seabury Hall has now been demolished and Farnham Hall was built around 1964, making it the oldest dormitory left on campus. Following Farnham Hall is Wilkinson, Chase, Hickerson and Neff Hall.

In 1969, Schwartz Hall was an apartment purchased by the university, around 1993 it was renovated. Brownell Hall was

built in the early 1980's. North Campus mid-rise, a former apartment building, was purchased around 1991. West campus is the newest building completed in 2004.

North campus resident English education major, Tayler Cowles, a senior, explained how she has been seeing and feeling odd energy in the dorm since she moved in.

"In my room at 3 a.m. I woke up to my bathroom light on, but I live in a room alone so no one but me uses the bathroom. I felt a primal fear at that moment. Usually, I'm pretty skeptical but that made me believe real fast," Cowles said.

Prior to that encounter Cowles had nightmares in the dormitory since she moved in.

"In the beginning of the year I had a weird dream that someone was dying in my room. When I looked it up, there was a death in the building a few years back," Cowles said.

Neff Hall resident, a



Outside of Schwartz Hall dormitory located on campus, purchased in 1969.

studio art major Alaina Pierce, a sophomore, believes in the paranormal and has said she has felt an ominous presence on campus.

"I can't exactly pinpoint paranormal activity on campus. But sometimes I do get the feeling I'm not alone. In the dorms in the middle of the night I hear

this loud knocking on my dorm," Pierce said.

While she believes and has felt a presence on campus computer science major, Miles Meade, a junior, does not believe in the paranormal. He said his friends have told him they have witnessed paranormal activity on and off campus.

"I don't believe in it at all, but horror movies are still fun to watch," Meade said.

Like Cowles, Pierce has had nightmares while on campus.

"I have these weird dreams but when I wake up, I can't remember them. I wake up and my hearts racing, and I shoot

up and I feel uncomfortable. Or they're just really weird and you're like why would I even dream of that," Pierce said.

She does constantly feel like someone, or something, is watching her which makes her paranoid.

"I think that West Campus is definitely the most haunted," Pierce said.

Paranormal activity has become a more popular topic among the younger generation with horror films being discussed among peers.

"Much more disturbingly, students have recounted experiences of being followed by a dark apparition. One student in particular told me that when the apparition caught up with him while he was walking, he became immobilized for a brief period of time, such that he was unable to avoid the encounter. The spirit had literally moved through him and held him in place," according to Haunted New Haven.

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Room 222

New Haven, CT 06515

Issues printed by: Valley

Publishing, Derby, CT

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Swimming and diving wins title Both mens' and womens' teams win NE10 titles together at the home

By Morgan Douglas
Sports Editor

The swimming and diving teams won both the men's and women's NE10 Conference Championships this past Sunday at home in the Bruce Hutchinson Natatorium.

It took four days and a lot of swimming and diving, but the Owls came out as the ultimate victors in the end, marking the first time since 2018 that both men's and women's teams came in first place.

"I am crazy overwhelmed," swimmer Arianna Arturi, a freshman, said. "This is probably the most excited I've ever been in my whole life. I've never felt more like part of a team in my life. The excitement is just crazy. We bonded so well, so fast. This is a crazy moment, I've never had so much adrenaline in my life."

Arturi led the women's team in medals with six total, including two golds as part of a couple of relay teams.

Rather than breaking down all the events and throwing out a multitude of scores and times, it would be better to just describe the atmosphere, because it was a mood unto itself.

There was a lot of noise, a lot of smiles and even a few tears shed.

The conference championships began last Thursday and went all the way through Sunday night with events wrapping up close to midnight.



PHOTO | MORGAN DOUGLAS

The mens' and womens' swimming and diving teams posing for a photo opportunity after winning the NE10 Conference Championships.

Competitors' voices were more spent than their bodies after countless hours of cheering on teammates.

"This is pure adrenaline," swimmer Olivia Strelevitz, a junior, said. "There's nothing left. My voice is absolutely gone. It was gone night one."

Strelevitz collected four medals, including three gold as part of the Owls dangerous relay teams.

The women's team held the lead for all four days en route to their second consecutive NE10 title and have won four of the past five NE10 Conference Championships, continuing their dominance in the conference.

The men had a

tougher path to their championship win, trailing rival Bentley University Falcons heading into the final day of competition.

Over the past decade, it has been a battle of the birds as the Falcons and Owls have routinely traded places atop the NE10 perch, with both programs coming in either first or second place every year since the 2012-13 season.

The men's team came prepared on Sunday and none of the other seven schools there mattered. Only Bentley, the team in front of them.

Determined to topple their rivals, the Owls brought it on Sunday.

"Everything counts," diver Andrew Buehler, a

junior, said. "Races, dives, relays, everything."

Buehler's two gold medals in the one-meter and three-meter diving respectively helped the Owls in achieving their goal.

The energy in the building was palpable. The walls of the bleachers were adorned with signs in support of the competitors. The Owls section in the bleachers had a cheer megaphone, a flag, and signs featuring a picture of swimming's head coach Tim Quill.

The chants were both entertaining and engaging, with the most original chants emanating from the Owls section.

There were no spectators allowed, so it

was all on the teammates to cheer each other on.

"We're very close when it comes to putting in the work in these meets, we come together," Arturi said. "We will not let anything stand between us. We block everything out. It's just us. We focus on just each other. We're cheering for each other 24/7."

The men's team began to pull away early on day four and capped the victory off with a strong second-place finish in the final event of the proceedings, a relay race.

After receiving their championship hardware and gear, both teams celebrated by jumping in the pool, championship shirts, hats and all.

After some coaxing, the teams even convinced their coaches to jump in, in what was a really special moment for a group who had accomplished the ultimate goal. Winning together.

"This is the closest team I've ever experienced by far," Strelevitz said. "We are absolutely family and I'm so honored to be a part of it. These are my siblings. They're friends forever and I can't wait to see them do amazing things because the work for next year starts now."

Fortunately for the Owls, there was no class on Monday due to the holiday, giving them the proper time to celebrate their tremendous accomplishments.

"I can't wait to spend the rest of the night with them," Buehler said. "We're partying hard tonight."

NBA—East

By Morgan Douglas
Sports Editor - Opinion



I would have to look back in my memory bank extensively to remember a time when the Eastern Conference was this strong.

For over a decade, the Eastern Conference in the NBA has been considered inferior to its Western counterpart due to a lack of depth in good teams.

Below .500 teams would often find their way into a low-seeded playoff spot in the East as the team who just missed the cut in the West with a better record looked on in envy.

Now, the East is stacked. If the season ended as of this writing, the reigning NBA champion Milwaukee Bucks would be hitting the road as a five seed to start the playoffs.

The Atlanta Hawks, who made it all the way to the Conference Finals one year ago would not even be in the playoffs. Things have changed.

For one, the Chicago Bulls are back. The writer of this column has been a Bulls fan in hiding ever since the Jimmy Butler trade back in 2017, but now he is ready to strut about once again in red plumage.

The Miami Heat are good. They seemingly always are. Erik Spoelstra was well-deserving of his spot on the recent 15 greatest NBA coaches in the history list.

The Cleveland Cavaliers would have to be the real surprise. For the first time in his life, Cavs' owner Dan Gilbert has a talented team that does not include LeBron James. They are currently fourth in the conference with a 35-23 record.

Perhaps the most compelling storyline in the East stems from the Ben Simmons for James Harden trade between the Philadelphia 76ers and the Brooklyn Nets.

I am not here to debate who won the trade, leave that for Stephen A. Smith and Chris 'Mad Dog' Russo. I am here for all the petty little drama NBA players love to stir up. Specifically, Kevin Durant, who has spent much of the past five years debating with average Joes on Twitter.

It will be interesting to see how soon Durant and Simmons can take the court together for the Nets, who are in desperate need of some reinforcements right now, barely able to keep their heads above water, currently clinging to the eighth and final playoff spot in the East.

I am not as excited to see Harden paired up with Embiid in Philly. I have seen it before. He is teamed up with half a dozen future Hall-of-Famers to no avail. Harden and Dwight Howard. Harden and Chris Paul. Harden and Russell Westbrook. Harden, Durant and Kyrie Irving.

What about Harden and a finals win? I would not hold my breath waiting for it to happen.



PHOTO | MORGAN DOUGLAS

Womens' swimming and diving receiving their hardware for winning the NE10 Conference Championships.



PHOTO | MORGAN DOUGLAS

Mens' swimming and diving receiving their hardware for winning the NE10 Conference Championships.



PHOTO | MORGAN DOUGLAS

Athletic Director Chris Barker congratulates the champs on their successful season.



PHOTO | MORGAN DOUGLAS

Swimmers McAllistar Milne, Collin Doyle, Connor Skarzynski and Athletic Director Chris Barker cheer on.