

# Sports

## It's not a choice, but a lifestyle

By Tyler Porter

It has been a little over two months since Emily Nielsen's competitive swimming career reached its end. For an athlete who had been swimming since the mere age of nine, that's quite the milestone. Much of her spare time at Millikin University has been spent at the McIntosh Pool where she participated in strenuous practices as a means of improving her swimming skills. The sport has become an integral part of Nielsen's identity; it was more than just a hobby, it was a way of life.

"Swimming is kind of like breathing, at this point," said Nielsen.

Nielsen, a full-time student majoring in English Writing, finds herself preoccupied with an abundance of reading and writing assignments on an almost weekly basis. In addition to her studies, she serves as News Editor at Millikin's student-run newspaper, The Decaturian, and oversees Event Marketing for the publishing company Bronze Man Books. As a member of Alpha Chi Omega, she's also actively involved in Greek Life; holding two terms of an executive position in her time as a member.

Somehow, Nielsen managed to make time for the sport that she loves. Many individuals would crack under the pressure, but Nielsen interpreted her substantial workload differently; rather than a

burden, she considered it an asset.

"I always thrive on having a schedule. If I don't have a schedule, then it becomes easier for me to put things off. I think when I have swimming, when I have a busier schedule, I have to plan things out accordingly and it's actually easier for me to stay on task and stay focused rather than when I'm not swimming," said Nielsen.

Nielsen's success as a swimmer predates her time as a member of the Millikin swim team. She's been a gifted athlete since the age of twelve. That talent has only developed since she enrolled at Millikin.

When inquired about her first experience with competitive swimming, Nielsen recounted a rather humorous victory from her pre-teen years.

She was twelve years old and it was one of her very first meets. As she was preparing to dive into the pool for her matchup, her coach declared that the upcoming event was a "free," swimmer jargon for freestyle, but Nielsen mistakenly heard "fly" leading her to believe that she was swimming butterfly instead. At the onset of the event, Nielsen plunged into the pool and swam the entire 100 Yard Freestyle with a butterfly stroke. It wasn't until she emerged from the depths of the pool in fourth place that Nielsen had recognized her mistake.

"Well turns out I wasn't disqualified because in

freestyle you can swim whatever stroke you want. So I was a twelve year old who kicked the butt of a lot of fourteen year olds," said Nielsen.

Her success as a swimmer would continue well into her high school years when she and three teammates broke the school's 400 Freestyle Relay record. To this day, Nielsen's record remains intact. She regards it as one of her greatest accomplishments in the sport.

Along with the success has come plenty of pain. During her junior year of high school, Nielsen was diagnosed with multidirectional instability in her shoulder. The condition, most commonly observed in swimmers and baseball pitchers, results in the loosening of the shoulder joint which produces extreme swelling. In order to ease the injury, Nielsen is forced to wear a shoulder brace.

When it comes to her injury, Nielsen doesn't complain nor does she ask for pity. Instead, from her vantage point, it's an example of overcoming one of life's many obstacles.

"I've learned that a physical limit cannot limit you the way that you think it can; it can only limit the way you do something. I think the last four years have just been a learning experience on how to cope with the rest of life," said Nielsen.

This is another illustration of Nielsen's allegiance to swimming. Her body doesn't always

agree with her choices and Nielsen herself admits that permanent damage is "imminent and to be expected," but that hasn't prevented her from giving her all in practice or fiercely competing in swim meets. Her love for the sport outweighs her health concerns.

Nielsen's answer makes one wonder: Has she ever once considered quitting the sport? After all, such persistent physical suffering would have to take a significant toll on the body and mind.

When asked if the thought ever crossed her mind, Nielsen said "There's been a couple of times actually...But I was raised by two parents who say 'there's always a way to do everything differently.' So while I've always thought about quitting because it would be easier, it would be less on myself, I could let my shoulder heal naturally instead of stretching it out and dislocating it, it's never been an option."

Nielsen refuses to be defined by her injury. Things certainly would have been easier if she quit after initially learning of her injury, but she isn't one to take the easy way out especially when it concerns a sport she feels so passionately about. The unrelenting pain never motivated Nielsen to quit swimming because, rather than allow her injury to determine her decisions, she wanted to forge her own path.

Continued on page 3



Photo from Millikin University

### Millikin tennis

By: Jasmin Hallowell

The Millikin men's tennis team lost in their final match in Hilton Head, South Carolina to St. Olaf College by 6-3. The Big Blue fell just short of claiming 2 of 3 doubles matches. For the second day in a row, Emilio Tejada/Juan Carlos Santamaria won at number 2 doubles. Going into singles, Millikin was looking to find a way to win four of the six singles matches. After losses

by Emerick Fulton & Connor Sacks, the Big Blue needed to sweep the rest of the singles matches. Millikin then one two of those matched by Jacob Hamilton & Greg Schwoeppe claiming victories at number 4 & 5 singles respectively. Millikin down 6-4, 5-0, Dane came back to win the second set in a tiebreaker before dropping the third set match tiebreaker 10-8.



Photo from Millikin University

### Softball dominates on florida trip

By: Jasmin Hallowell

The Millikin University softball team ended their Florida trip with a split of two games on March 25 in Clermont, Florida. In the first game, the Big Blue defeated the University of Maine-Farmington 10-1. Millikin University had their contributions throughout its lineup led by Brooke Heimerl who was 3-4 with three runs scored and one RBI and Alyssa Visvardis was 2-4 with two doubles. Alyssa Voegele was 2-3 and

added two RBIS with Amber Morgan with 2-4 and driving home two runs. Whitley Baker was the winning pitcher for the Big Blue which limited the Beavers to four hits over six innings with 11 strikeouts. In the second game, Millikin lost by 5-0 to Eastern Connecticut State. Summer Cipriani held the Big Blue to five hits on no runs over seven innings to lead the Warriors to the win. Millikin went to 6-4 in Florida and is now 9-7 overall.

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Photo from: Millikin University

### Baseball splits doubleheader in Fort Meyers, Florida

By: Jasmin Hallowell

The Millikin University baseball team split a doubleheader with Saint John's University on March 25 on their last day in Fort Myers, Florida. In the first game, the Big Blue took a first inning lead on a two-run home run by Frank Barnes. Millikin added two runs in the second inning with the help of two Johnnies' errors. A two run single by Julian Gutierrez gave the Big Blue a 4-2 lead after four. The teams then exchanged runs in the sixth inning

with Kaleb Krigbaum scoring after stolen base and a Saint John's throwing error. Krigbaum and Keith Askins each added two hits for the Big Blue. Phil Ganley was the winning pitcher with five throws and two-thirds innings allowing five hits and three runs. Ben Peters gained the save holding off a late Johnnies rally. In the second game, Millikin University jumped out to a 3-0 advantage after two innings. Seth Coffey singled and Gutierrez doubled within the first inning. Barnes had a

fielder's choice RBI and Gutierrez scored on a wild pitch. In the second inning, Devin Crews doubled and scored on an RBI single by Joey DiLeo. Gutierrez and Crews each added two hits for the Big Blue. The Johnnies scored two runs in the fourth and four in the sixth to pull out the comeback win. Pat Lloyd was 3-3 for the Saint John's with an RBI. Millikin University is now 8-3 on the season while Saint John's goes to 11-5.



Photo BY: Emily Nielsen

Continued from pg 1  
In eighth grade she dislocated her shoulder playing football, and when they pushed it back in, they suspect that it caused her labrum to tear. She, like many athletes kept on playing until two years later her rotator cuff tore while playing volleyball. She knows

the look that these injured players have in their eyes because at one point, she was sitting in their exact same spot.

The professionals and students that surround an injured athlete are tough. They have to be in order to deal with angry, sometimes inconsolable, people who have way too much energy and

free time to plot the demise of those who keep them benched. They deserve a huge amount of credit for being able to thwart those plans and get that athlete back into play as quickly as possible, if only to save themselves from the wrath.

### Upcoming Events

- April 8th-
  - Baseball @ Greenville College

Netflix Review  
Continued from page 4

Jeffrey Wright blew away all expectations and played Jean-Michel Basquiat flawlessly and director Julian Schnabel creatively told the story of Basquiat in a new light. The movie allows room for Basquiat's usual

message to reach its audience, like his quote, "Your life is your message to the world. Make sure it's inspiring."

Overall, the movie teaches, entertains and even inspires in a way not many movies can do. "Basquiat" is definitely a movie that should be added to your Netflix list.

