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The Benko Briefing

Georgia Southern University

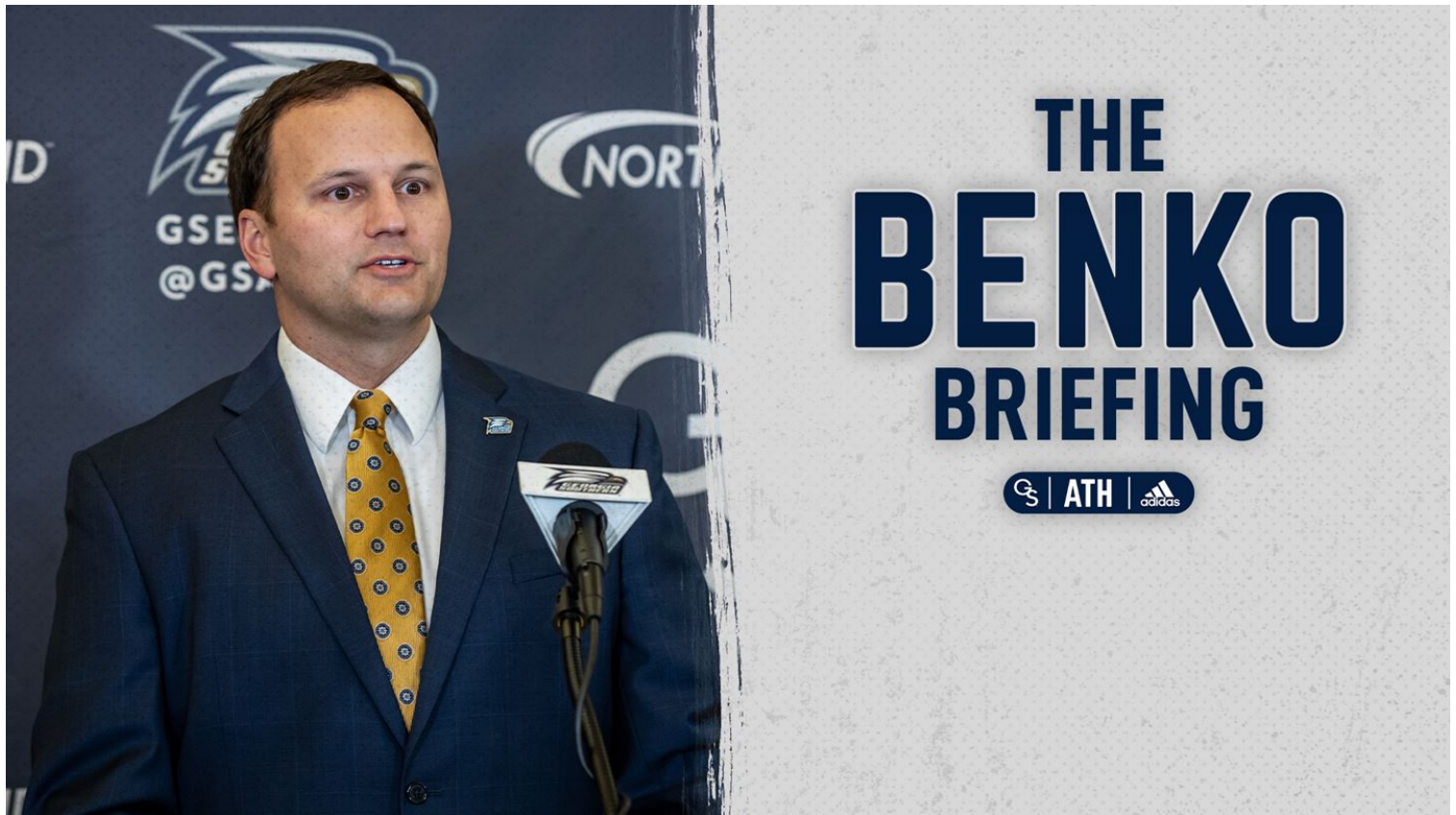
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Georgia Southern University Athletics



The Benko Briefing
AD addresses Eagle Nation in letter form
General
Posted: 3/8/2021 2:00:00 PM
Eagle Nation,

I pray this note finds you and your family safe and healthy. It is hard to believe that we are already in March and spring is just around the corner! This time of the year is one of my favorites as practically all of our teams are competing. A lot has transpired since my last letter on Jan. 11, so I will do my best of summarizing several updates within the Athletic Department and the Athletic Foundation.

Our men's and women's basketball programs concluded regular season play this past Friday in Pensacola at the Sun Belt Conference Tournament. The 2020-21 seasons for both teams were filled with some highs-and-lows, but both squads return a majority of their rosters next year for what is sure to be some exciting basketball ahead.

Georgia Southern baseball team started off its season with consecutive Top-25 series against No. 19 Tennessee and No. 22 East Carolina at home and more than held their own. Coach [Rodney Hennon](#) has assembled one of the toughest schedules in the program's history that is sure to pay off as the Eagles enter regular season play.

This year's squad features an abundance of pitchers and a roster full of experienced position players.

Softball had a big weekend, winning four of five games at its home tournament these past few days. Coach [Kim Dean](#) has put together a tough schedule and is already seeing the dividends pay off. I'm excited to watch them continue to gain confidence and victories as the season moves along.

Our men's golf team has continued its fall momentum where it ended being ranked No. 11 in the country. [Carter Collins'](#) squad has already carded two top-12 finishes in its past two tournaments and their best golf is still ahead. Our women's golf team has also experienced success this spring with its recent second-place finish at the Strutter Gus Invitational. Emily Kufield has a roster filled with some very talented golfers.

Our rifle team claimed the 2021 Southern Conference Smallbore title this past weekend en route to an overall second-place finish. Ashley Judson notched a second-place finish in the smallbore finals and placed fifth in the air rifle and was named co-air rifle athlete of the year. With four sophomores and six freshmen making up that roster, great things lie ahead for Coach [Sandra Worman's](#) team.

Men's tennis started its spring on a hot streak with six consecutive victories. [Sander Koning's](#) team will continue working towards the Sun Belt Championship, which will start on April 22. Our women's tennis team has also seen success this spring, highlighted by a 5-2 win over the College of Charleston. The Eagles' win over the Cougars snapped a 19-match losing streak against the College of Charleston.

Women's track & field opens its 2021 outdoor season on March 12-13 as we host the Georgia Southern G.A.T.A. Classic at Eagle Field. Scovia Ayikoru finished second in the 400-meter at the Sun Belt Conference Indoor Championships in February. Hannah Wise also ran the second-fastest time in school history in the 3000-meter race.

Our swimming & diving team had a record-setting meet at the Coastal Collegiate Sports Association's (CCSA) Swimming and Diving Championship in February. Freshman Annamaria "Amy" Hornyak won the 200-meter medley relay and the 50-meter breaststroke en route to being named Freshman Swimmer of the Year. Additionally, diving coach [Collin Vest](#) was named Diving Coach of the Year.

Traditionally, our soccer and volleyball programs have only competed in NCAA-sanctioned matches in the fall. However, due to COVID-19, our women's soccer and volleyball teams have extended their seasons into the spring. [Chris Adams](#), our new women's soccer head coach, recorded his 200th career win on Feb. 13 with a 2-1 win over Stetson.

Our 2021 football schedule was released on March 1 and features three home games with teams that finished the 2020 season in the Associated Press' Top 25 ranking. In all, the Eagles will face seven teams that were selected for bowl games last season. Season ticket sales have started off strong, so I would encourage you to renew and/or purchase your tickets as soon as possible to reserve your spot in Paulson Stadium!

Football is scheduled to kick off its spring practice on March 25 with the Blue/White Spring game taking place on April 24 at 1 p.m. On another football-related note, we were excited to announce on March 6 a home-and-home series with Army that takes place in 2030 and 2031.

The Athletic Foundation announced the creation of its four (4) new [Giving Societies](#) on Feb. 3: The Oak Circle, Beautiful Eagle Creek Society, Talon Society and revamped Champion Society. These new societies recognize lifetime giving instead of just current year contributions. These new societies further promote philanthropic giving and are a great compliment to the Erk Russell Fund.

Lastly, it was exciting to announce on Feb. 23 the reintroduction of the [Eagle Clubs](#)! We currently have 18 events scheduled with our first one on March 23 in Emmanuel County and our last one ending in May. Please check your calendar and join us as the tour comes through your area!

In closing, in order for Georgia Southern to reach its desired goals, I will continue to strategically highlight three (3) things that individuals and companies can do to help us:

1. Financially support the [Athletic Foundation](#) and the [Erk Russell Fund](#)
2. [Buy season tickets](#) and create a home-field advantage
3. Get others to do the same!

Our Athletic Ticket Office is ready to assist you in purchasing tickets and can be reached at 1-800-GSU-WINS or via email at tickets@georgiasouthern.edu. For those wishing to donate, please go to GSEagles.com/Foundation.

Hail Southern! GATA!



[Jared Benko](#)

Georgia Southern Director of Athletics