

Building Bridges



David Eide
Opinion Columnist

This Saturday will see the 27th annual student led Building Bridges Conference; Knowledge is Power: Dismantling Systematic Bias in Educational Institutions. The Building Bridges conference is one of the most significant events held during the Gustavus academic year; not only is it an educational event that examines many of the important and topical issues facing us, but it is also entirely student run.

I cannot claim to be a totally neutral source as I am a member of the Building Bridges planning committee and I also sit on the executive board which may lead to a bit of bias on my part. However, I think that I can still make a very effective case for the importance of Building Bridges as an institution and why specifically you should try to attend this Saturday.

My appreciation for Building Bridges actually goes back before I was even a student at Gustavus. In fact, Building Bridges was one of the main motivators for me deciding to attend Gustavus in the first place. Back when I was a high school senior, Gustavus invited me and several other seniors to come and stay at the school over Building Bridges weekend to get a good picture of what campus life actually looked like.

The theme for that year was immigration justice and it had a very profound effect on me. I can vividly recall many of the speakers and several of the educational pieces that I attended throughout the day. There was one educational piece that attempted to provide a simulation of the conditions faced by immigrants on the southern border in detention camps. I remember that event to this day due to how upsetting it was. The effort and passion that I saw from the Gustavus community that day was one of the driving factors that led to me choosing to attend which should be enough to demonstrate how life-changing Building Bridges can actually be.

One of the most notable aspects of Building Bridges is that it is entirely student run; students plan the conference, students invite the various speak-

ers, and students put on the conference when the fateful finally arrives. In a sense, Building Bridges fulfills the same role in the second semester that the Nobel Conference fills during first semester. Unlike the Nobel Conference, Building Bridges is planned and executed by students and perhaps as a result, often reflects upon topical events. Consequently, Building Bridges allows students to explore topics that they are personally interested in, helping them develop their own perspective which should be the goal of any liberal arts institution.

Furthermore, actually planning Building Bridges provides a great deal of useful experience for when students leave college and enter the work world, from learning how to cooperate with others to figuring out the logistics of hosting

a massive conference amidst a global pandemic. The people who put on Building Bridges are not paid for their work, they do it out of a sense of duty and a desire to bring an excellent educational experience to campus. Building Bridges embodies the best of the Gustavus student body, showing their commitment to public service which are the traits that Gustavus seeks to encourage.

This years Building Bridges conference covers an especially important topic, namely the presence of inequality and discrimination within the various aspects of the educational system, from schools to museums. This is becoming increasingly relevant as our schools come under increasing pressure from politicians for purely electoral reasons and educational inequities are being exposed at a quicker and

quicker pace.

From the revelation of the horrible mass grave sites in the Canadian residential schools to the rising debate surrounding how museums present their artifacts and whether some should be returned to their indigenous cultures. The speakers arrayed for Building Bridges highlight key aspects of the numerous injustices present within the educational system. For example, there is Dr. Michelle Tovar, the Director of Public Engagement at Holocaust Museum Houston, one of the most well-regarded museums regarding the Holocaust in the United States.

There is also Dr. Christian Uwe, an Assistant Professor of cultural studies and comparative literature at the U of M who has written a good deal about the politics of publishing and knowledge exchange.

There can be no doubt that these keynote speakers will highlight critical points of injustice that exist within our educational system, whether those be in schools, museums, or any other educational institution.

Building Bridges is a crucial piece in the mosaic of our campus community, giving students the chance to shine a light on issues that matter to them and that may otherwise be ignored. It serves to enrich our minds, widen our perspectives, and yes, build bridges between ideas that may seem unconnected at first but actually have a deep through line. It is for reasons why I think that Building Bridges is definitely worth your time, it changed my life and who knows, it might just change yours.



Building Bridges poster.

To read or to heed: classics edition



Clare Greeman
Long Suffering English Major

We all know that high school English classes are a breeding ground for some lackluster discussions of classic literature: the old, the racist, and the white. But for bereaved English majors the fun never stops, including the lackluster discussions. So here's your guide to some classics so if god forbid you're caught staring down the barrel of one of these crusty "woe is me" slaver stories, you'll know whether to read it or ruin it.

Brave New World

Truly the bottom of the barrel when it comes to the dystopia craze, and I'm including both the dystopias of the last century and the ones from last decade, but don't think that doesn't mean I don't have a bone to pick with

the Divergent series.

Brave New World takes place in a world where everything is streamlined in an assembly line-like world; everyone is born into a different faction that determines their appearance, their intelligence, and the line of work they are destined for. Their god is Henry Ford (yes, that Henry Ford- but I'm not sure good ol' clit snipping Ford would've have approved of all of the prepubescent sex described in this book). We follow Bernard Marx as he ventures out of the walls of the city to live with "savages" (aka. Non-white people) and brings them back to disgust and entertain the rest of his society.

The whole work is a comment on conformity and the dangers of an all powerful technological state which I imagine excites those who love the dystopian genre, but I can only hope and imagine that the same themes are present in other books that are written better without all of the misogyny, racism, and disgusting sex scenes. Heed, and a cry for help.

To Kill a Mockingbird

It's unfortunate that I hate white saviorism, because I love this book. And Gregory Peck as Atticus in the 1962 film isn't bad either.

The book is based on Harper Lee's own experiences of growing up in the South during Jim Crow. She grows up with her brother and her lawyer father as she loses her naivety about the

adult and racist world that she is surrounded by. We follow her through a mundane and joyful year, until that bubble is shattered when her father agrees to defend a black man from from a rape accusation of a white woman, for which both her father and Scout are attacked for. The innocent man is acquitted, Scout loves her father, and I am crying.

20 minutes later I am wondering why such a panderous piece of white trash has gotten to me. The novel does a truly great job of depicting a young girl coming to adult consciousness, and the book is full of heart, no matter how misplaced that heart is. On the surface level, I call this book a read, just with the caveat that you understand its faults and don't perpetuate them.

The Scarlet Letter

Despite its popularity, this is one of Nathaniel Hawthorne's weakest works. There's certainly things to love about this book; there are important messages about puritanism and fallacies in the Christian doctrine that still feel current. There is also the classic tone and the melodramatic plot of the gothic novel to give it merit, though all are buried under piles of superfluous prose that makes the book look deceptively small.

The book follows Hester Prynne through the diaries of an unnamed narrator as she is made to wear a red 'A' across her chest to mark her as an adulterer. Questions arise as to who

is the father of Pearl, how and if Hester's husband's identity will be exposed, and why is Pearl so gosh darn evil?

The synopsis, which is so small, spans across almost 150 only due to the mountains of old-timey language Hawthorne buries us under; his prose, which is usually beautiful, threatens to suffocate you, causing you to lose the plot and lose your mind in the process. Heed, unless you like being smothered by your books, for some reason.

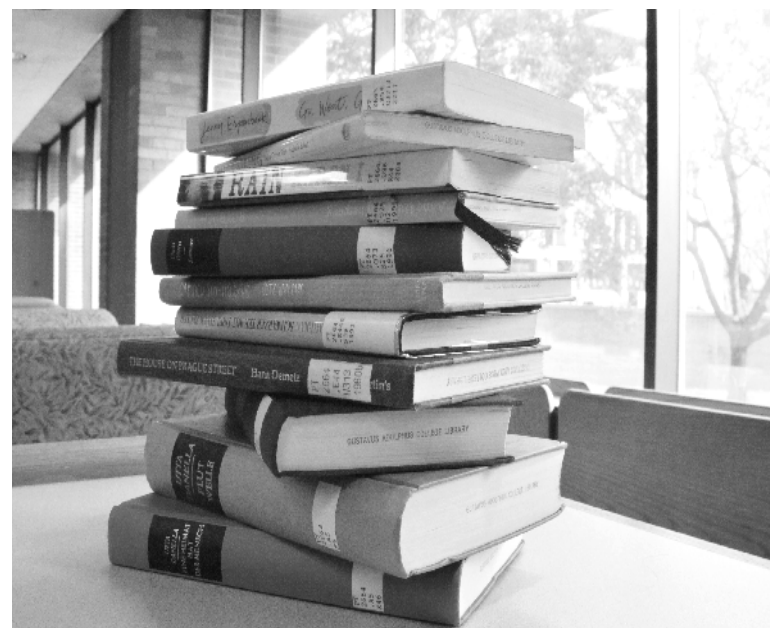
Their Eyes Were Watching God

A wise man once said save the best for last, and so I did.

Their Eyes Were Watching

God follows a woman named Janie as she enters and leaves three major relationships with men. Though this book's trajectory could be described as just that, the book really follows Janie as through these relationships she grows and changes. The book discusses gender roles, slavery, black perception in the south, and liberation.

Hurston writes with astounding prose that won't bury you but will leave your heart aching. The story of a woman attempting to get out from under her relationships stands the test of time in the worst and best ways, I can't recommend this book enough. Read!



Stack of books.

Jayne Mapstone

Early bird gets the midterm



Jonas Doerr
Opinion Columnist

The worst sound in the world is not nails on a chalkboard. It's not metal on metal. It's not whiny children. It's the sound of my alarm going off at 5:15 every Tuesday morning. See, every Tuesday morning I get up early to open up the Lund Center, and every morning I glare at my alarm with hatred as I try to turn it off before my roommate wakes up. There is something intensely vile about alarms going off early in the morning, but I push through

my grogginess and wake up every Tuesday.

This complete abhorrence to early morning alarms is certainly not limited to just me. Plenty of Gustavus students dread having to get up early in the morning, whether for an 8 a.m. or an early morning workout session. Maybe they even dread having to get up for a 9 a.m. or a 10:30 class, if the night before was particularly long. No matter what time that alarm goes off, it's not a very welcome sound.

But getting up early actually has some profound benefits. You see, after I push through the repulsive moment of waking up, the morning usually goes pretty well. First of all, I get to enjoy the quiet of the early morning; it's just me, the birds, the breeze, and the occasional custodians who somehow woke up even earlier than I did. If you ever have a chance to thank the custodians for their work, please do. It's a difficult and thankless job, and they do a lot of it while most of us are still sleeping.

The calm of the early morning campus usually has a relaxing

effect on me. After getting worked up about the alarm, the complete peacefulness of 5:30 a.m. feels almost meditative. In fact, this sets me up perfectly to be extremely productive. Since nothing is going on this early in the morning, there are few distractions to steal me away from what I need to get done. Nobody is awake to text, the stresses of the day are still far off, and most news sites haven't even posted their articles yet. This solitary universe creates an environment in which it is simple to focus and chug away at piles of homework.

And with such a fantastic start to the day, is it a surprise that the rest of the day will often go well too? There's a reason there are so many proverbs about the merits of getting up early. "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man happy, healthy and wise," Ben Franklin said. Although I don't know how he can justify that waking up early makes one wise, the happy and healthy part is accurate.

After beginning the day so productively, the rest of the morning seems to fall into place

like a pre-made jigsaw puzzle. Hard things seem easy and easy things are a joy to do. There's a feeling you get of really living when you're up before the sun. When the afternoon comes around, a little bit of tiredness sets in, which sets up a brief siesta perfectly. When you awake well-rested and refreshed from your short nap, the afternoon and evening will fly by. You really will feel happier and healthier.

That's not to say this is easy to do. Like I said before, hearing that alarm go off in the morning is an awful sound, especially if you aren't in the habit of waking up at that time. It takes a strong effort the night before to go to bed early enough, especially since college lifestyles often encourage late nights. It takes even more willpower to get up and hop out of bed when that ringtone that you thought was cool when you chose it but now hate starts ringing.

The good thing is, studies have found that your willpower is like a muscle that gets tired and can get stronger. After firmly resisting a scrumptious plate of cookies, it'll be a lot harder

to avoid the pie too, but on the other hand each time you do you get a little better at resisting the next time. Your willpower works the same way for getting up in the morning, too. The first time is the hardest. The second time is still hard. But by the thirtieth time, people wonder what superpower you have to be able to get up so early every day.

Getting up early isn't for the faint of heart. Yet there are many benefits to doing it. It feels peaceful, it starts your day off well, and it strengthens your willpower. It will even make you more productive just in time for those midterms coming up in two weeks. As long as that realization doesn't keep you up tonight, consider waking up early, because after all, the early bird gets the midterm.

Ranking Reese's



Hailey Brune
Opinion Columnist

Now that Valentine's day is over, stores are preparing for the next holiday which is Easter. With the preparation of Easter comes a slice of heaven. And that slice of heaven is in the shape of an egg. I am in no way a huge fan of Reese's Peanut Butter cups, in fact I'm allergic to peanut butter, but that doesn't stop me from worshipping their egg shaped wonders. I have a very specific ranking of Reese's that I know is correct. We'll stop at the top because they deserve to be mentioned first, and then we'll go down the ranking. I understand that they'll probably be some differences in opinions, but no criticisms will be taken. Only due to the fact of there only be-

ing one right answer of course. So, let's get cooking.

At the top of the list, of course, is the egg shaped Reese's. There's the perfect amount of chocolate to peanut butter. It's very easy for the chocolate to be too much, or for there to be so much peanut butter that you can't tell that there is chocolate. Easter brings along the reason I decide to forget I have a peanut butter allergy even though I don't like peanut butter.

The second best would be the original sized Reese's. The chocolate to peanut butter ratio is good, though not as good as the eggs of course. There's just something about the originals that are too much. You eat one and have to take a break before being able to eat the second. The eggs and original Reese's are the best, and I understand it may seem like there's no reason to go on. Since, we already talked about the best, but at last I will go on to the average, middle of the road Reese's.

In the middle are the mini Reese's, the pumpkins, and hearts. The pumpkins are by far the third best. They're cute and in general are pretty equal. There's a little bit too much chocolate but their cute little pumpkin bumps make up for it. After that is the heart: they're just oddly shaped,

and there's something off with the peanut butter and chocolate ratio. They're not bad, but they don't shine a light on the eggs. The hearts also hold a weird taste that the others don't have.

The last shape we have in the average section is the miniature Reese's. In general they're pretty good. The outside chocolate is a bit thick for how small they are, and it doesn't quite line up with the amount of peanut butter in them. I will definitely eat them still, because rolling up the aluminum after opening it is worth putting up with the ratio. Though, there tends to be one other problem that puts them at the bottom of the average list. Almost every time I have one they have an odd taste to them. It's almost as if they're all been sitting in a mixed candy jar for the past three years. They're not awful, but it doesn't feel exactly trustworthy. With that, the average Reese's have been ranked, and we can talk about the bottom of the barrel.

The two worst Reese's are the bats and the Christmas trees. There are bat shaped Reese's and they're just too less of everything somehow. Not enough chocolate, peanut butter, or taste. It leaves a lot to be wanted. On the other side of the spectrum are the Christmas trees.

The amount of peanut butter in the Christmas trees is enough to make an entire peanut butter and jelly sandwich. One good thing about them is that they are large. So, you get what you pay

for. Everytime I see them for 75 cents I think I can handle it. Then I take a bite and remember why I dislike them. You take a bite and want to wrap it up and take another bite next year.

The Good, the Bad, and the Meh



The Good

Warm weather is melting the snow.



The Bad

Drowning in puddles.



The Meh

You're getting splashed, but you can splash people back.



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Cipher

Can you decode these phrases? All three are separate phrases, but use the same code.

CQQ CLZ HY YRUAOEZHSO CVI H GVPT ZFHY UOECRYO H PVEO NOZ C NCV TFP IHIV'Z QHGO ZFO KLHVEOYY ULHIO.

EPVSHVEHVB DPRL DPRVBOL YHUQHVB ZFOD'LO CIPKZOI HY KOCG EPNOID, CEZRCQQD.

HX DPR'LO LOCQQD IOEPIHVB ZFHY, IOCL LOCIOL, ZFOV H CN HV QPSO THZF DPR.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

WHAT IS SWANK?
Swank is a free streaming service provided through the Campus Activities Board here at Gustavus. It contains a wide array of well over 100 movies, many of which are not found on Netflix or Hulu, and is completely legal to use. Access it by going to www.gustavus.edu/moviestreaming

Movies from Swank: *Where the Wild Things Are*
Will Sorg

Maurice Sendak’s classic children’s book *Where The Wild Things Are* has been a central book in the lives of American children since its release in 1963. It is a simple, yet deeply engaging picture book about a rowdy young boy named Max who travels to an island filled with monsters, known as Wild Things. Sendak tried to adapt the book into a film several times, first as an animated film made by Walt Disney Animation Studios which never made it past a screen test. In the early 2000s, Universal Studios acquired the rights to adapt the book, and after several years of pre-production, uncertainty, and another production switch to Warner Brothers, Spike Jonze was personally selected by Sendak to adapt the ten sentence, forty page children’s book into a feature length film.

In the end, Jonze and Sendak decided to not make a children’s film out of the book. Instead a film about childhood was made; it depicts all of the experiences that happen during that period of our lives, the good and the bad. It isn’t just happy romps around the forest with eight foot tall monsters, although this film has that in spades. It is also about loneliness, anger, confusion and sadness. Those moments in your childhood where you begin to realize that your parents or siblings aren’t perfect, that sometimes you can be selfish or hurt other people through your actions and that has consequences. We see Max escape to the island of The Wild Things not just as a fun moment of escapism, but also because being a kid is overwhelming. As he discovers the complexity of the world he decides to try and run away to a place where he can be king, where he can build giant forts with his big, tough, hairy monster friends, where he can play with them all he wants and they can all sleep on a big pile of each other.

Yet it becomes abundantly clear that the island is not free of the realities of life either. The Wild Things are growing apart from each other. Disagreements and bitter grudges are pulling apart their strange little family. This distancing is even manifested in the island by an encroaching desert that has been slowly destroying the island. It may seem a little silly to think that a film about a little kid running around with a bunch of monsters could be one of the most honest and emotional depictions of friendship, familial dysfunction and growing up, but I have been moved to tears both times I have seen this film and I will likely cry the next time I see it as well.

This is a rare film that is able to reignite that wonderful energy of childhood while also managing to be deeply in tune with the emotions of both children and adults. So if you have an hour and forty minutes to spare, check it out on Swank. It truly is a wild time.



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Men's track & field finishes indoor season

Team ties with St. Scholastica for sixth in MIAC

Luke Siegle
Staff Writer

As the month of February came to a close, the Gustavus Men's Track team had one more chance to make their mark on their indoor season with the conference meet that happened this past Friday and Saturday, February 25 and 26. A team that was hungry for top results and all-around success had to overcome some significant injuries to some of its top runners but still battled to get as many points as they could. When everything was all said and done the Gusties placed tied for sixth.

"We're a scrappy team and we went in there and tried to claw out as many points as we could. Wanted to try to take points away from other teams and I think we did that very well even with injuries. And even the guys that weren't hurt jumped up and got points for us which was spectacular," said team captain and Senior sprinter, Wyatt Quiring.

Quiring had a successful meet himself as he placed 6th in the 400 Meter Dash on Friday and then ran three races on Saturday. It started with the 4x200 Meter Relay which included Juniors Seth Zeitchick and Peter Oviguian, and First-year Nathan Le. Along with Quiring, the four ended up finishing in third place, which was impressive given the fact that two of the usual starters in the 4x200 Meter Relay were out with injury.

Quiring then ran the 200 Meter Dash where he placed 7th with a time of 22:95. He concluded his conference meet in the 4x400 Meter Relay where he, Zeitchick, Senior Noah Johnson, and Junior Jack Mar-



Jack Degonda runs in the pack during the Distance Medley Relay.

Gustavus Sports Information

ble teamed up for a 6th place finish with a time of 3:31.21.

"I thought we showed a lot of heart as a team. I'm very proud to be a part of this team and a captain on this team. The injuries were tough but I was very proud of the way that our team stepped into their roles," Quiring said after the meet.

Another Gustie that performed well at the conference meet was Senior distance runner Jack Degonda. He set a new personal record (PR) in

the 1 mile run with a time of 4:26.59 which was good for a 13th place finish. He also ran the Distance Medley Relay alongside Zeitchick, First-year Markus Rupnow, and Junior Tucker Wallin. Together the four runners finished in 4th place with a time of 10:32.58. Degonda wrapped up his weekend with the 1000 Meter Run where he finished with a PR time of 2:37.59.

All in all, Degonda's success was a testament to his

consistency all year. "I never really had a race that wasn't good. All my races I was proud of and I was proud that I was able to put the effort out there that I did because in previous years it's been tough for me to begin and end a season in the same spot. I usually get tired or burnt out, but I was able to stay on top of injuries and listen to how my body was feeling and that ended up paying off," Degonda said.

Sophomore sprinter Matthew Skelly also had a successful conference meet in his first season with the Gusties. Skelly, a transfer from Grand Canyon University ran a blazing 6.78 second 55 Meter Dash to finish 14th overall in the race. "My goal was to PR again and do better than my seed time," Skelly said. He did just that, as he was seeded 16th going into the race, but placed a couple of spots higher and also outdid his seed time of 6.80 seconds to earn a new PR.

For Skelly, this is only the beginning as he continues to get faster in his first year back on the track since his junior year of high school. "Once I got in shape, I started to work on getting my speed back and I still have a lot of room to improve. I think the outdoor season will give me the opportunity to increase my top speed and show that I can improve in it," Skelly said.

With the outdoor track season starting up in the next couple of weeks, the team is excited to get going and goals are high. "Moving onto that bigger 400 track with wide turns feels

amazing, weather starts warming up which naturally puts everyone in a good mood. As for our goals, I think as a team we can definitely place top three. We gain some pieces from guys coming from winter sports like hockey and basketball. So I think we're a team that adds a lot of pieces. So with that, we just keep on improving, getting our pieces back, and hopefully, we will be at full force by the time that May conference meet comes around," Quiring said.

However before the team completely shifted their focus to the outdoor season it was important for them to reflect on the great indoor season they had and give shoutouts to their exceptional coaching staff. "I just want to say a big thanks to our coach, Becki Staley. She's our rock and a great coach and sets high expectations for us. She's the reason we were able to keep focused and make it this far this season and pull as many points as we did as a mid-distance crew," Degonda said.

"For me, Coach Aaron Lund was extremely welcoming and supportive. He has helped me through all the steps and has always been there for me," Skelly said.

"I just want to give huge praise to the team. The coaches are all phenomenal. You could shout out all of them. I see them putting their whole heart into this team every week," Quiring said.



Three Gusties get set to run the 400m race.

Gustavus Sports Information

Women's track & field takes second in MIAC

Gusties finish behind Royals as conference runner-up

Parker Burman
Staff Writer

This past weekend, February 25 and 26, the Gustavus Track and Field team traveled to Northfield to compete in the MIAC Indoor Championships at Carleton College. After day one of the two-day event, the Gustavus women were sitting in fourth place with 57.5 points, only 15.5 behind leading Bethel. When competition came to a close Saturday the Gusties had closed the gap to 9 and took second overall on the women's side behind Bethel.

The women's team received numerous All-Conference performances on the track from Sophomore Captain Birgen Nelson and Senior Captain Elizabeth Donnelly. While on the field they received an All-Conference performance from Junior Erin Beer along with strong performances from Sophomore Madi Kes and Junior Captain Annika Poe.

"It was super exciting (atmosphere), you could feel the difference compared to a normal meet. There is so much energy with so many more teams competing. Everyone is so competitive and supportive of each other," Kes said.

On day one of competition the Gusties started strong. Nelson came in second in the 55-meter hurdles with a time of 8:14. While in the 800-meter run Donnelly finished second coming in at 2:14.13, just being edged out of first by less than seven-hundredths of a second. In the field, Kes posted a personal best in the long jump with a distance of 17-02 placing her sixth in the event.

Heading into day two, the Gusties were looking to build off of their strong perfor-



Birgen Nelson and Megan Gereats race to the finish in the 200m in front of their cheering teammates.

Gustavus Sports Information

mances from the first day of competition. Although trailing in overall points the women looked to make a big jump up the leaderboard with many of their field athletes not having had the chance to compete on day one.

Nelson's strong season in individual events was capped off with a title in the 200-me-

ter coming in at 25.77, beating teammate First-year Megan Gereats by two-hundredths of a second. "My thought going into the event was whether I got first or she got first, either way, it's a Gustie on top," Nelson said. In addition, she was a part of a second-place finish in the 4x200 relay with a time of 1:45.78 just shy of a school

record.

Donnelly and Nelson teamed up to lead the 4x400 relay along with teammates Gereats and First-year Mekenna Huetten. When the race had finished they had broken a 22-year old school record with a lightning-fast time of 3:57.09, taking second in the race. That time places them in the Top-10 in Division III this season.

"I personally love running those relays, I really love my teammates. I think we provide a lot of support for each other," Nelson said.

"I didn't expect to break that one, we were all running on tired legs. I have broken school records individually before, but I feel it is more fun to do it with a relay because you are doing it with all your friends," Donnelly said.

Donnelly wrapped up her performance at the Indoor Championships in the 600-meter, recording a time of 1:34.72 to secure the title.

In the field, Poe took home the title in the shot put with a throw of 45-3.5 securing the victory by more than a foot. Kes, following a personal best on day one, claimed the victory in the triple jump setting a facility record with a jump of 37-2.25.

"It was exciting. I was kind of pressured on the last jump because it was a deciding fac-

tor between first and second place. I just went for it. It was my last jump so I thought just do your best, which turned out really well," Kes said.

Over in the high jump, Junior Erin Beer was entering just her second meet this season after battling an ankle injury and started as the number 18 ranked high jumper. There was no place but up for Beer who left it all out there moving from spot 18 into a tie for third place.

"No one expected me to do much so it was an opportunity to go and do what I can do. It really took the pressure off so it was nice to just get out there and compete" Beer said.

Securing a second-place finish and falling by just nine points to Bethel, the Gustavus women are confident and looking forward to their next competition. "I think being just nine points from a win is really going to get us working hard. I am really excited about the direction this women's team is going," Nelson said.

Poe shared the same sentiment as Nelson. "Overall I thought the girls did really well. We were right on their heels," Poe said.

This coming weekend Gustavus will compete at the Wartburg Qualifier on March 4 and will then send athletes to the NCAA Indoor Championships March 11-12.



Kate Carlson waiting for the gun to start her 55m dash.

Gustavus Sports Information

Women's basketball makes a statement

Win over Augsburg earns the program its first MIAC title

Alli Joerger
Staff Writer

After a convincing win over Augsburg University on Sunday, February 27, the Gustavus Women's Basketball team earned their first MIAC postseason tournament title in program history. The 65-56 victory represents everything that this particular team has been working towards all season, as well as what the program has been working to create since its inception. Along with giving the Gusties the MIAC postseason title, the win also grants the team a ticket to the NCAA Tournament where the team will be competing against Simpson College on Wednesday, March 4.

The victory itself over Augsburg was one loaded with emotions and bore the culmination of what the team has been working towards. Individuals on the team expressed the seeming unrealness of the entire experience. Senior Grace Benz explained that she was holding onto teammate Sophomore Izzy Quick's hand to remind herself that the situation was in fact real.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime and unexplainable feeling that you will never forget. We all had tears of joy and tackled each other right at the horn. I replay it in my mind over and over. It was the moment we had all been working so hard for since October," Benz said.

Claiming the MIAC title also meant that everything the team had invested over this season and seasons past has paid off. "Personally, it felt like all of the hard work over the last couple



Players and coaches pose with their MIAC Championship banner following the game.

Gustavus Sports Information

of years had paid off in an enormous way, and I think that that's true for everyone else on the team too," Junior Anna Sanders said.

These sentiments are indeed echoed throughout the team, with Benz emphasizing that "The season is long and it is easy to lose sight of the end goal. To know that all of the long days of practice, lifting weights, sacrifices, and hard work paid off just makes it even more special,"

Benz said.

With this being the first time in the program history that the Gusties have claimed the MIAC postseason title, the win emphasizes the uniqueness of this particular team and how they were able to overcome doubt early on. With the team being so young, it was difficult to anticipate what could be accomplished and how well the athletes would be able to perform together.

Head Coach Laurie Kelly explained that the lack of experience was more than made up for in team chemistry and effort. "If someone would have said that this team, with no returning starters, a lot of inexperienced freshmen and sophomores, would do what they have done, I am not sure that even I would have believed it. They are incredible people both on and off the court, and our team chemistry is one of our greatest strengths," Kelly said.

The chemistry of the Gusties was evident in their performance against Augsburg. The Gusties never lost the lead for the entirety of the game, and capitalized on their fundamentals to defeat the Auggies. Gustavus simply outscored Augsburg, shooting 49.3 percent from the field to Augsburg's 32.3 percent. Not only that but the Gusties gave themselves plenty of second chances and transition opportunities by out-rebounding the Auggies 42-36.

Strategically, the Gusties knew that their defense needed to be a priority. "I can't say enough about our team's defensive efforts over this season. In my 10 years, the best we have ever had. We are one of the top defensive teams in the country and that has really been the difference for us. It takes pressure off our offense to score and allows us to get looks in transition," Kelly said.

Another strength of the team is their depth throughout, which has previously enabled

fewer minutes for the starters and more balance overall. Interestingly, however, the MIAC Championship game revealed a different strategy for the Gusties as only three bench players made court appearances during the game.

This did not stop the bench from contributing directly to the success of the team. "I believe that our bench is the best in the MIAC. On Sunday, I think it really helped having those 3 players come in and make really big plays at big times for us and the entire game it was exciting and comforting to look over and have our bench so invested in the game regardless of what was happening," Sanders said.

Winning the MIAC gives the Gusties both short and long term ambitions to work towards. The success of the defense will be critical in facing Simpson College, one of the top offensive teams in the country, Coach Kelly explained. Additionally, the investment and passion of the team as a whole will surely continue to be a game changer for the Gusties as they enter the NCAA Tournament.

Winning the MIAC also creates a new precedent for the program as Coach Kelly hopes that this title will be far from the last for the program. The team is "peaking at the right time," Benz said, which will allow the Gusties to embody Kelly's conviction that "our best basketball is ahead of us."



Grace Benz gets physical as she goes up to make a basket.

Gustavus Sports Information