

## Briefs

### Team Miller Relay Shoot set

The Fourth Annual Team Miller Relay For Life Sporting Clay Shoot will be held on Sunday, Sept. 10 at Crocket Ridge near Ackley (33505 Birch Ave.). All proceeds from the shoot will go to Relay For Life. The shoot begins at 9 a.m. with an \$85 per shooter entry fee that includes targets, T-shirt and a meal. A \$125 entry fee per shooter includes shells in addition to targets, T-shirt and meal. To pre-register or to find out how to be a sponsor, contact Mike Miller at 319-231-4491. ●

## Schedule

### AGWSR CROSS COUNTRY

**THURSDAY, AUG. 24**  
Maynes Grove/5:30 p.m.  
Cadet Invite

**TUESDAY, AUG. 29**  
Mason City/4:30 p.m.  
Newman Invite

**THURSDAY, SEPT. 7**  
Marshalltown/4 p.m.  
Bobcat Invite

**MONDAY, SEPT. 11**  
Huxley/4:30 p.m.  
Ballard Invite

**THURSDAY, SEPT. 14**  
Independence/4:30 p.m.  
Mustang Invite

**MONDAY, SEPT. 18**  
Humboldt/4:15 p.m.  
Wildcat Invite

**MONDAY, SEPT. 25**  
Nevada/5:10 p.m.  
Cub Invite

**SATURDAY, SEPT. 30**  
Waverly/TBA  
W-SR Invite

**TUESDAY, OCT. 3**  
Dike/4:45 p.m.  
Wolverine Invite

**TUESDAY, OCT. 10**  
Fort Dodge/4 p.m.  
NCC Meet

### AGWSR FOOTBALL

**FRIDAY, AUG. 25**  
Ackley/7 p.m.  
AGWSR vs. Lake Mills

**FRIDAY, SEPT. 1**  
Conrad/7 p.m.  
AGWSR vs. BCLUW

**FRIDAY, SEPT. 8**  
Traer/7 p.m.  
AGWSR vs. North Tama

**FRIDAY, SEPT. 15**  
Ackley/7 p.m.  
AGWSR vs. Nashua-Plainfield

**FRIDAY, SEPT. 22**  
Calmar/7 p.m.  
AGWSR vs. South Winneshiek

**FRIDAY, SEPT. 29**  
Ackley/7 p.m.  
AGWSR vs. Wapsie Valley

### AGWSR VOLLEYBALL

**TUESDAY, AUG. 22**  
Grundy Center/5:30 p.m.  
Spartan Quad

**TUESDAY, AUG. 29**  
Reinbeck/5:30 p.m.  
AGWSR vs. Gladbrook-Reinbeck

**SATURDAY, SEPT. 2**  
Traer/9 a.m.  
North Tama Tournament

**TUESDAY, SEPT. 5**  
Ackley/7:30 p.m.  
AGWSR vs. Grundy Center

**TUESDAY, SEPT. 12**  
Ackley/5:30 p.m.  
AGWSR vs. East Marshall

**THURSDAY, SEPT. 21**  
Tama/5:30 p.m.  
AGWSR vs. South Tama

**THURSDAY, SEPT. 28**  
Eldora/7:30 p.m.  
AGWSR vs. South Hardin

**SATURDAY, SEPT. 30**  
Waverly/9 a.m.  
W-SR Tournament

**TUESDAY, OCT. 3**  
TBA/TBA  
NICL Tournament

**THURSDAY, OCT. 5**  
TBA/TBA  
NICL Tournament

For a complete list, go to www.northiowacedarleague.com.

Ben Puente played one more game in an AGWSR Cougar helmet as a member of the North Squad in the annual Shrine Bowl All-Star Classic. He said he will always remember the experience and is proud he got it.



# Another Cougar Enshrined

## Puente plays in annual game

BY COREY MEINTS  
CMEINTS@IAFALLS.COM

Ben Puente, AGWSR's All-State linebacker, reported to Coe College on Aug. 8. But before that, he played one more game as a Cougar.

Puente became the sixth player from AGWSR, and 13th between Ackley-Geneva and Wellsburg-Steamboat Rock, to be selected to participate in the Iowa Shrine Bowl All-Star Classic, an annual game featuring 92 of the best football players in Iowa. This was the 51st game.

Each year, head coaches get asked by the Shriners if they have any players that are worthy of a nomination of the Shrine Bowl. Those athletes nominated get put into a pool and the coaching staff that is selected picks their team from the pool of athletes nominated. AGWSR head football coach James Koop said the selection process is taken seriously because it is such a prestigious honor to get selected to play in a such a prestigious event.

"I found out that I was selected right around New Years," Puente said. "I was in total shock. I know that coach Koop nominated me and I thought I had just received a letter about being nominated, but was overwhelmed with happiness when it was an acceptance letter."

Koop said Puente was just what the Shrine Bowl selection committee looks for.

"Ben was a hard worker and a quality football player for us," Koop said. "I don't think there was a player on our team for four years that didn't like being around Ben. He was a great person to be around, to coach, to have as a part of our program, and his



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CJ EILERS/GRUNDY REGISTER

Ben Puente was introduced as the sixth player from AGWSR, and 13th overall from the combined AGWSR schools, to be selected to the annual Iowa Shrine Bowl All Star Classic. His week, which finished with a win as a member of the North Squad, included activities with the young patients that the game helps raise money for.

great attitude was infectious. The Shrine Bowl is a prestigious event and you want to nominate players that are worthy of such an honor. Ben was a top-five tackler in the state in all classes. So, in football terms, he was worthy of the honor. He also has the other qualities that the Shrine Bowl committee is looking for. So, we nominated Ben and obviously the coaching staff felt he was worthy of the selection to the team and saw in Ben what we had a sideline view of all season. I am excited to see what he will do at Coe in the future."

With Coe Kohawk football in his immediate future, Puente said he was excited to play one more high school game. Doing it with some of the best players across all classes made it even more special.

"I loved the fact that I got to compete with the best players in Iowa for an entire week and knew it would get me ready for college ball in the process," Puente said. "I was hungry rather than intimidated. Being intimidated never was a good thing and I

knew I was there for a reason. I loved competing and bettering myself around people who shared goals similar to me. I consider them brothers now."

Every player on the North and South rosters got to play in two quarters. Puente played in the second and fourth frames, getting in a handful of plays at strong side linebacker for the North.

"I chased the quarterback a couple times and forced some throws while getting in on a couple tackles," Puente said.

But it's more than just a game. During camp week, players prepare for the game while also learning the impact that the Shriners have on less fortunate children. The highlight of Shrine Bowl week is the Shriners' Children Mini-Camp. Hospital patients from across the Midwest join the players on the UNI Dome field and interact, play games, and share stories. On the eve of the Shrine Bowl game, organizers celebrate all of the game participants and their families at an Honors Banquet.

The week concludes with a parade on Saturday morning featuring the 2023 Iowa Shrine Bowl King & Queen, the 2023 Shrine Bowl Players, Cheerleaders and Coaches, joined by Shriners from across Iowa.

Funds raised during the Iowa Shrine Bowl are distributed to the Shriners' Children orthopedic hospitals and burn centers in the Midwest and to each Shrine Center's Transportation fund to transport patients to and from hospitals and clinics.

That part of the week, when the players had the opportunity to visit with the kids that the Shriners help, will stay with him Puente noted.

"They are truly an inspiration on how to overcome adversity and thrive no matter the situation," Puente said. "I knew that there were going to be kids who had some conditions, so I could say I was expecting a few kids who would kind of be quiet or shy or not as energetic as they were. They were intelligent and could explain their whole journey and have way more energy than

me. It was really nice to learn how much the Shrine has helped these kids and gave them the ability to live their best life. I got the lesson of don't let a single misfortune define who you are and don't let it be an excuse to not chase your dreams. Those kids helped us probably more than we helped them."

Now it's on to the Div. 3 level in Cedar Rapids to play for the 28-time conference champion and nine-time National Playoff qualifying Kohawks. He even enters with a salvo aimed at recent former Cougars who played at rival Wartburg.

"Words can't explain how excited I am to play for Coe," Puente said. "We will beat Wartburg while I'm there."

Puente, who wants to be a nurse, said he chose Coe because it fit him better than any other school.

"I loved the personalized visit and they have great nursing and football programs," Puente said. "It's a smaller college in a big city, so it's the best of both worlds. I'm more than ready to get to work and be the best me I can be." ●



# DIPSY DOO DUNKAROO

## Karsjens turns pro...in SlamBall

BY COREY MEINTS  
CMEINTS@IAFALLS.COM

When Nathan Karsjens was a prep at AGWSR, he was an intimidating figure. Standing 6-6 and weighing 240 pounds, he starred at quarterback for the Cougar football team and was a force in the post – with a nice outside touch – on the basketball squad. He is also the school record holder and a State champion in the discus.

After graduating from AGWSR in 2017, he moved on to Western Illinois where he looked like everybody else. The jump from high school to college football was big. Karsjens said he had to work for everything he got.

“The hardest jump was from having to play quarterback to tight end, honestly,” Karsjens said. “The biggest difference was just the amount of time that was needed to practice. I was used to having four different sports a year to a single one all year long. I think AGWSR helped me a lot in regards to acclimating me to college football. It was honestly extremely humbling throughout. It taught me equally as much on the field as it did off. I loved every second of it though.”

Always wanting to be a professional athlete, Karsjens was disappointed to not make the final call to anybody's camp when the NFL preseason started recently. But his dream wasn't dead.

Karsjens got a call to play professionally in another sport – a combination of other sports he had played growing up – SlamBall. Basically, the game is basketball with trampolines and protective gear.

This year marks the return of the league that originally began in 2000 but started a television deal in 2002. It disbanded after two seasons. It started again in 2008, lasting just one season. The sport was again in action in 2012 and 2016.

The current rendition started on July 21 with eight teams. Karsjens plays



Nathan Karsjens shows the unique court he now plays on as a SlamBall player. The court has four trampolines on each end, and a solid middle that has allowed him to make a name for himself as a three-point shooter. He is also seen with his parents Dan and Martha during Senior Day at Western Illinois. He still hopes to break into the NFL as a long snapper.



PHOTOS SUBMITTED



ACKLEY WORLD JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

Karsjens, seen here in his final season at AGWSR, is again using his basketball talents – along with his football skills – as a member of the Slashers in the SlamBall League.

for the Slashers. The season is expected to last six weeks with a postseason. The games themselves are 20 minutes long, split into five-minute quarters.

Karsjens is listed as a stopper – main defender – in the four-on-four format. Positions also include handler and gunner. The handler acts as a point guard in basketball, while the gunner is the main scorer. Scoring consist of two point baskets when the ball goes through the hoop without interference, and three points for slam dunks and three-point shots from the floor.

Karsjens grew up as a scorer. He finished his Cougar basketball career with 1,299 points. He also

scored 30 touchdowns in football. Defensively he was no slouch in either. He finished with 87 blocks and 686 rebounds in basketball. In football he booked 63.5 tackles, two fumble recoveries and two interceptions and was an All-State punter.

At Western, he finished with 26 receptions for 256 yards, and two touchdowns along with six tackles while playing tight end, long snapper and various special teams positions.

SlamBall incorporates all of those skills. Karsjens said what he learned in high school and later in college on both sides of the ball have been paying off now that he's a pro at

something that involves aspects of both sports.

Karsjens had been hoping to report to an NFL team, though. Entering his second year of grad school, his collegiate playing career ended on the MVFC Honor Roll four times. He was also an MVFC President's Council Academic Award winner as well as a team captain his final season in 2022.

A pro day in Chicago, trying out as both a tight end and long snapper, yielded no invites to NFL camps. But at 24, Karsjens said his dream is not dead.

“I think the lack of exposure and with somewhat below average times and stats is what made them unaware of me,” Karsjens said. “My goal is to play sports as long as I can so, yes, pro football is still the goal. But if my best opportunity is in SlamBall, I'm going to do that.”

Karsjens said it was almost happenstance that led him to SlamBall.

“My former head coach at western saw me shooting hoops and dunking one day after I had worked out and the next day he came to me and asked if I was interested in SlamBall because I hadn't been hearing much regarding football and I was open to the opportunity,” Karsjens said. “I emailed the league and got a response that night, got the call the next morning, and was on a flight the same day out to Vegas. It's been unbelievable, from having to fly out the same day I get

called and asked if I want to do it, to the few weeks I've had to get the game down and been around the facilities. It feels like a dream.”

Karsjens plays for the Slashers. All eight teams are based in Las Vegas. He and others gathered ahead of the season to get a feel for the game and the trampolines. After about a week, he said he was invited to practice with a couple teams before the Slashers offered him a spot as a stopper.

“The job is simple, stop the other team from scoring,” Karsjens said. “You protect the basketball a lot like a goalie would in hockey and get some opportunities on offense as well. Not as many scoring opportunities as a gunner or handler might have, but I definitely plan to score a few buckets here and there.”

Karsjens said he learned something along every step to this point. From AGWSR to Western Illinois, he said lessons learned have stuck.

“I feel that coming from a small school that everything you did you did with the same people, so it built this ideology that people are what's most important,” Karsjens said. “I could be struggling on the field or in the classroom, but I knew that I had my brothers in the team to support me. The thing from high school that helped me is being multitalented. SlamBall isn't just basketball with trampolines, even though

it looks like it. It's a combination of a lot of different sports, so being a multisport athlete helped me. The thing from Western is just being tough and resilient. Things get nasty on the court and you have to carry yourself a certain way to be respected.”

When his competitive days are finished, Karsjens will have his college degrees to fall back on. He majored in general studies with a minor in math and coaching. His graduate major is sports management.

“Originally, the plan was to be a high school math teacher and coach sports and eventually become an Athletic Director,” Karsjens said. “Now the plan might involve something a little higher up in the sports world.”

Until such time, Karsjens said his focus is on contributing to the Slashers and making the most out of his time in SlamBall.

Karsjens said SlamBall is the most fun sport he has played in years. And, he noted, that's completely fine with him.

“It's honestly the most fun I've had playing a competitive sport,” Karsjens said. “It's everything you love about basketball, football and jumping on trampolines, I feel like a kid again when I'm playing.”

All games air Thursday through Saturday on ESPN+ or ESPN2, with the August 15-17 playoffs played on ESPN. ●

**DON'T MISS A THING**

**Subscribe today!**  
Call 641-648-2521 **World Journal**

**NATURE EXPLORE**  
A Collaborative Project of Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research Foundation

Give a child the gift of nature and a lifelong sense of wonder.

One of the best things you can give your child or grandchild doesn't come from a store. It's time spent outdoors discovering the gifts of nature, right in their own backyard.

Nature Explore resources give you fun tools and activities to give the children in your life a love of nature, lifelong learning skills, and an everlasting sense of wonder.

Go online to [arborday.org](http://arborday.org).

Thank you for not driving buzzed last night. You saved my life.  
Liz Osaki

**SAVE A LIFE. DON'T DRIVE HOME BUZZED.**  
BUZZED DRIVING IS DRUNK DRIVING.

Ad Council U.S. Department of Transportation