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Today, expressing one’s true inner beauty is paramount. There is now an opportunity for men on campus to do just that.

Tomorrow is the first Mister Red Raider Pageant Northwestern has had in the past decade.

"Ten years ago Mister Red Raider was replaced by Dancing with the Professors, and now we are replacing Dancing with the Professors with the Mister Red Raider pageant, " said Justine Johnson, Student Activities Council event coordinator.

The council decided to replace Dancing with the Professors because of a lack of interest on the part of the student body and a lack of participation from the professors.

In search for an event to replace it, SAC searched their archives and found an old promo video for Mister Red Raider.

"The video was just terrible," Johnson said. "But we liked the idea of it."

Student Activities Council modernized the old version of the pageant to make it more appealing to the current student body.

The pageant is broken into three categories: formalwear, interview and talent.

"The talent can be pretty much anything as long as it is about two minutes long, " Johnson said.

Sam Nelson and Alea Stammer will run the interview portion of the pageant. The formalwear category will be whatever the contestants feel fit to wear. Judges said they want the contestants to be creative yet still appropriate.

There were 30 men nominated for the event, but only eight will be actual contestants. The final eight contestants were determined a week ago by SAC leadership.

They are Ben Guhl, Kyle Cleveringa, BJ Groskreutz, Brody Van Roekel, Josiah Veurink, Ben Loftis, James Teutschmann and Myles Anderson.

The four judges for the event will be Hannah McBride, Laura Furlong, Sally Edman and Emily Loveland.

The judges will score the contestants on a scale from 1-20 in each category. The scores will then be averaged together to see who is the ultimate Mister Red Raider.

"I'm excited for these guys to have to take themselves either seriously or not so seriously, to see how they respond to the pageantry pressure," McBride said. "For some of them, it's probably hard to be serious, and others, it'll be hard for them to be embarrassed."

Earlier this month, University of Missouri defensive end and NFL draft prospect Michael Sam made history by publicly announcing he is gay. Sam is the first athlete to come out as gay prior to starting a career in the NFL.

Sam boasts an impressive set of statistics. He stands at 6 feet 2 inches tall, he weighs 260 pounds, and in 2013 he recorded 48 tackles, 11 sacks and 19 tackles for loss. Named the Southeastern Conference's co-defensive player of the year and an All-American, Sam has few critics who doubt his abilities as an athlete.

Sam’s public announcement that he was gay came on Sunday, Feb. 9, however, many of his teammates at MU already knew. Considering the timing of the news just before the NFL draft, he is in a position to make history as the first professional football player who is openly gay.

Michael Sam shatters cultural stereotypes that gay men are effeminate. As a large and aggressive athlete—who happens to be gay— Sam takes notions of masculinity and sexual identity and flips them on their head. This is especially important considering he plays a sport that embraces an overtly masculine identity and because he will be entering a league in which recent news surrounding homophobia among certain organizations has sparked controversy.

Although national perceptions of homosexuality have been challenged in recent years, the conversation has not entered the arena of professional sports. For many years, the NFL, NBA, NHL and MLB have gone without any publicly gay athletes. It begs the question, why did Michael Sam choose to come out now?

"I just want to make sure I could tell my story the way I want to tell it … I just want to own my truth," Sam said recently in an interview with the New York Times.

Sam's decision was made in an attempt to get ahead of any rumors that might have been circulating about him. When the news first broke, many NFL players, coaches and representatives were quick to comment about the possibility of having a gay player or teammate. Some welcomed the addition of a gay teammate; others voiced concerns over his acceptance. Overall, opinions and responses were mixed.

See "Gay" on Page 8
Band of Horses harnesses new sound

BY JANA LATCHAW

Band of Horses has big news. The band recently released Acoustic at The Ryman, a 10-song live album that features songs from two shows recorded last April at Nashville’s Ryman Auditorium, a stage that has held the likes of Johnny Cash and Teddy Roosevelt. The band not only released this live album that features songs from two shows recorded last April

the quality of this record is incredible. In order to master the album, Band of Horses used the high-resolution Direct-Stream-Digital format, which is usually used by classical and jazz artists. If any mistake had been made, it would have been heard — but Band of Horses was able to play a seemingly flawless set.

Critics complained about the acoustic set lacking flow throughout because the band has cut out the majority of talking between tracks. Therefore, there is a rough chopping between each song that can seem abrupt. Even if Acoustic at The Ryman doesn’t flow like one natural performance, the cumulative effect of the record shows that Band of Horses is a talented group of musicians more than capable of playing live without sonic camouflage or superfluosness.

The album can be streamed at bandofhorses.com/stream.

Rating: ★★★★★

Key Tracks: “Older,” “No One’s Gonna Love You,” “The Funeral”
Too much tale for ‘Winter’s Tale’

MOVIE REVIEW
BY JACKSON NICKOLAY

Imagine waking up and finding out that all that remains of you is your face, brain, lungs, heart and right hand. Can you imagine? Meet Robocop.

Although it may be rather difficult not to compare it to the original, this film has its own merits; it brings forth an intellectual story that brings up questions of ethics and justice in our society.

The movie explores the same issue as the original 1987 film. A Detroit cop — Alex Murphy, currently played by Joel Kinnaman — falls victim of attempted murder, and his body parts are used by a robot corporation, Omnicorp, to construct a cyborg.

In this remake, the CEO Raymond Sellars, played by Michael Keaton, is being forced to try to sway American public opinion by passing a law that will allow for robots to roam the streets to combat crime and in turn generate huge profit for his company. But when Murphy’s love for his family rises and the yearning to achieve justice for the people he serves in Detroit begins to overpower the robotic system, he gives Sellars a run for his money.

In this remake, acting is better than in the original and Murphy’s character is well developed. The movie set up emotional complexities for the character and provoked the audience to reflect and relate the issues to today.

For example, the movie sheds light on how easy it can be to influence public opinion, yet how difficult it can be to get to the heart of a matter.

Unfortunately, some action scenes in the movie are so heartless that it detracts from the complexities the movie presents. A contributing factor to this may be its rating. “Robocop” is rated PG-13, but it doesn’t seem that the audience it intends to capture will understand the magnitude of the problems the character goes through, much less the array of problems it alludes to within our own society.

The original was rated R, and it should have stayed an R-rated movie. Perhaps it would have lived up to its expected violence and action. It would have also given the screenwriters an opportunity to further portray the ethical and justice-related issues in the fighting scenes.

Rating: ★★★
Jackovich helps students journey abroad

BY KARA NONNEMACHER

"A ship in harbor is safe, but that’s not what ships are built for." This quote by John A. Shedd is one of Justine Jackovich’s favorites. Jackovich is in her first year working for Northwestern, and recent visitors to the Franken Center might have seen her hanging around the Global Education Office. The quote, in a nutshell, explains what Jackovich’s role in the NW community is and why she is so passionate about it.

Her official title is a mouthful — Coordinator for Global Education Programs — and she works primarily with students interested in studying abroad. Study abroad opportunities include semester programs such as Romania or Oman, summer programs and the Denver semester program. Jackovich works in all of these areas.

Her position includes a wide range of activities and a lot of student interaction.

“I enjoy encouraging people around me, so my favorite aspect of my job is being in a position to encourage NW students to step outside the comfort of their own culture to explore a different land and live among people that have different backgrounds from theirs,” Jackovich said.

As the year has progressed, she said she has slowly been able to meet students, and she is hoping to meet more and continue to build relationships.

God has taken Jackovich on a journey that has placed her at NW for the time being. She grew up in Eldridge, a town outside Davenport that is similar in size to Orange City. For college she migrated to the Dutch town of Pella and attended Central College, where she graduated in May 2013 with a biology major and Spanish minor. While in college, Jackovich’s experiences abroad were what piqued her interest in subjects related to her current position.

For five months, Jackovich had her own study-abroad experience in Spain for five months during the spring semester of her junior year, and her time there was transformative. It was there that she really “fell in love with culture and language study.” In the summers and semesters following, she was able to travel to Morocco, Great Britain, France, Italy and the Netherlands. She also had the opportunity to travel to Guatemala through Central’s Alternative Spring Break, which is synonymous with NWC’s Spring Service Project.

Jackovich was able to facilitate the trip and act as a student leader.

Following graduation, Jackovich was offered the position at NW, so she packed up and headed to yet another Dutch town. Prior to Jackovich’s hiring, Boryana Dobreva held a position similar to Jackovich. When Doug Carlson retired, Dobreva became the Director of Global Education, and Jackovich came to fill the open position.

Although she has many responsibilities, there is one adventure that she would like to include in her position as Coordinator for Global Education Programs. Someday Jackovich would really like to work with a faculty member and help lead a Summer Study Abroad program.

Students strike gold with internships

BY ASHLEY VANWYHE

Since 2000, Northwestern has placed 549 students into practical and helpful internships. These internship opportunities are available for or without credit and in a variety of majors. These majors include communications, business, accounting, chemistry, computer science, biology, human ecology, psychology, theatre and writing and rhetoric. Also, many of the internship sites include local businesses such as Diamond Vogel Paints in Orange City and places much farther away such as the United States Department of State in Washington, D.C.

This spring, 18 students can be found interning with various businesses and organizations. One student, Lindsey Vander Velde, a senior business administration and art double-major is interning as an administrative assistant with Interstates, an electrical engineering company out of Sioux Center. Vander Velde said she enjoys working in an office environment, and one of her responsibilities involves organizing engineering and drafting binders for clients.

Nathan VanGinkel, an agri-business and finance major interning with Northwestern Bank, also said he is enjoying his internship.

“I have been able to meet some great people that have a desire to share their knowledge of banking,” VanGinkel said. “Being able to hear some of their own experiences has helped with the dos and don’ts of the industry.”

Sometimes internships not only fulfill credit hours and class requirements but also turn into actual jobs.

Lee Stover, a 2010 public relations graduate, interned with RISE Ministries out of Sheldon and was later offered a position with the organization. As an intern, Stover began writing devotional material, helping with the missions programs and planning RiseFest. After becoming an employee, Stover was given even bigger responsibilities.

“I’ve been able to travel out of the country leading mission teams,” Stover said. “I’ve been on TV and radio, and I’ve had the opportunity to emcee RiseFest multiple times.”

Stover encouraged students to try out an internship.

“I highly recommend them,” Stover said. “They’re a perfect way to metaphorically get your feet wet in the real world and, if used correctly, can help prepare you for what work life is like after college.”

Stover also gave some advice for future interns.

“Be a sponge,” Stover said. “Soak up every aspect of your internship, and just dive in. You’ll go a lot further in your internship and in life if you go above and beyond the status quo.”

Fall semester graduates Jodi Stahl and Carly Farrington both found full-time jobs from summer internships at Lawrence and Schiller, an advertising firm out of Sioux Falls, SD.
Ann Lundberg said she is excited to have the opportunity to teach abroad.

Ann Lundberg, professor of English, is currently on what she likes to call a “miscellaneous sabbatical.” During her sabbatical, Lundberg has been a park ranger in western Nebraska, has worked on researching and writing an article and has been preparing for a five-day class that will take place in New Zealand.

The Creation Care Study Program is a study-abroad program that has an emphasis on Christian environmental studies. There are programs in New Zealand, Belize and Cascadia, Wash. Lundberg will be working with the New Zealand program to teach environmental literature. Students from colleges around the United States with a variety of majors participate in this study-abroad program. In Lundberg’s class there are history majors, outdoor education majors, various science majors and even an accounting major.

Lundberg heard about this program through Laura Furlong, professor of biology, who works with the Belize and New Zealand programs. Furlong suggested that Lundberg contact the Creation Care Study Program around the time that Lundberg was looking forward to and planning her sabbatical. Two years after she had first contacted CCSP, she was assigned to an opening in environmental literature in New Zealand.

Planning a typical class for a whole semester can be a daunting task. Between trying to arrange lesson outlines, deciding how much reading the students have to do for class and figuring out what homework to assign, professors have a lot on their plate. Now imagine trying to fit that class into just five days with only five hours of class time each day. This will be Lundberg’s task.

Kellie Goedken, a Northwestern student, took western civilization in a similar format called a seven-by-seven. For seven days, students attend class for seven hours to complete the course.

“The days are really long,” Goedken said. “It can be a struggle to keep your focus for that long.”

Goedken said this option is ideal to fulfill general-education requirements as it minimizes the time spent in the classroom on a required course. She recommended taking it with a friend to prevent boredom.

Lundberg’s class will take place from March 31 to April 4, but she will arrive in Kaikoura, New Zealand two days before the class begins and stay two days with the students after the course is finished.

According to Lundberg, preparing for this class is both exciting and frustrating.

“It is a challenge trying to figure out how to make such a course work in a place I have never been to before with students I will only just meet the weekend before,” Lundberg said.

The closest Lundberg has come to planning a course this short is an eight-week course offered at NW.

“It has been a little frightening thinking about the five-day limit,” Lundberg said. “I have been told to take the amount of reading down that I initially intended to assign, which is hard for a literature professor because we want people to read more.”

The class itself has an unusual structure. The class is actually a three-credit course split into two sections. Lundberg will teach the first section about American environmental literature, and the second half will be taught by another professor who will focus on New Zealand environmental literature.

What makes this trip special to Lundberg is the opportunity to fulfill a father’s wish.

“My father has always wanted to go to New Zealand and has never gotten the chance,” Lundberg said. “It became his wish for me to go, even if he couldn’t,” Lundberg said.

After her course is finished, she will spend two additional weeks traveling throughout the country and admiring the vast and diverse landscape that New Zealand has to offer including the “amazing mountains and coastlines and some incredibly strange birds.”
Mental illness ignorance

BY JANA LATCHAW

Why is it that being physically sick is a legitimate reason to miss class but mental illness is not? Why is there a direct correlation between mental illness and shame? These are important questions that should be discussed on campus.

Depression. Anxiety. Panic Attacks. Seasonal Affective Disorder. These are mental illnesses that students deal with every day. From my own personal experience and through several discussions I’ve had throughout campus, I have come to the conclusion that we have a problem.

We are afraid to confront the issue of mental health. There is fear surrounding the topic because we are afraid to acknowledge what is socially seen as a weakness. We are afraid to be judged, to be victimized and for others to assume that it is an excuse — and a bad one at that.

“It has only been recently that I’ve been able to tell my professors what’s going on with me,” Emily Wohlers said. “I would either just skip or suffer through it. It was horrible. It felt like I was about to literally explode, and I had to act like it was all fine.”

It seems to be that when a student informs a professor of sickness, it is a perfectly good reason, but when any sort of mental health issue is mentioned, there is doubt in the honesty of the student. Now, fortunately we are blessed with understanding professors here at NW who love and care about us, so this isn’t always the case.

“If a student told me she’d been up voomiting all night, I’d tell her to go back to bed,” said Karen Barker, theater professor. “Why would I not say the same thing to a student who has been up all night with a panic attack?”

When we are denied a “skip day” due to depression, it doesn’t mean the professor does not care but rather that they lack a full understanding. On more than one occasion I have received an email from a professor saying that my reasoning is invalid and it is therefore an unexcused absence and that it shouldn’t happen again. This is one of the biggest issues that we have got to work out.

Depression is real, and “moping around” is simply not an option. Even if a professor does not call out a student for missing class, there is a common fear that the professor will not understand or even want to understand, so we continue to say things like “I’m running a fever” when we are really having a panic attack. We say, “I slept through my alarm,” instead of “I couldn’t get out of bed because I’m breaking inside.”

“I’m sure professors, especially the more experienced ones, have heard plenty of excuses worth an eye-roll and a docked grade, but perhaps there needs to be a conversation on campus between professors and students struggling with mental illnesses, anxieties and depression,” NW graduate Keeley Wright said. “There needs to be clarity on both sides that (1) needing to miss class in order to maintain or better your mental health is ok and (2) the student won’t be judged or looked at negatively because of their struggle.”

“We have to take a step forward and destroy the shame that comes along with mental illness. It is not a weakness, and I am here to tell you — if you deal with depression, anxiety or any other mental illnesses or disorders, you are not alone. Your mental health is important, and you’ve got to take care of yourself — just as you would with any physical illness.”

Listen. If you take a few moments to just sit in the Learning Commons, the Rowenhorst Student Center, The Caf or really any area on campus where there might be interaction and listen to the daily exchange of words passed among any two or more Red Raiders, you will hear something that goes a little like this:

“Hi (insert name here).
How are you?”

“I’m good, you?”

“That’s good!”

Only a few moments passed, and the conversation is over. Said classmate, professor or acquaintance is long on his or her way to the next destination. Pay attention, and you are bound to discover this exchange multiple times in your day.

I was a bit unsettled upon discovering that this conversation has become a routine in my daily interactions with others. More so, on a campus where community is a characteristic we are blessed to represent, the routine conversation of being “good” is striking me as superficial and just “not good” enough.

How do you truly get to know someone is doing if the response given is always “good” regardless of if they are actually feeling that way? Of course, there are cases where “good” is the only word that works. However, as I believe we are more creative than that.

Living in community is about being real, being vulnerable enough to admit that we are not ok and being willing to share one another’s burdens. Similarly, if we are feeling on top of the world, why should we have to confine our joy to such a simple term?

We must think we are bound to one word when describing how we are in regard to small talk. We must think the people who ask us really don’t care how we are; they are just being polite. We must think our conversations are limited by the short time we have when we encounter others in passing.

Perhaps the underlying problem is that we are just “too busy” to be anything but good. Business is the norm, and when productive time is used describing how we are or how the last test was; sometimes it just works best. Be aware that when people ask how you are, they usually want to know, so let them into your life. Encourage one another to be better than good, and when we are not, don’t be afraid to say so.

BY HALEY CHAMBERS

The opinions published in print and online are the opinions of the authors only. Beacon staff members do not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this section. Research and editing (other than formatting and light copy editing) of articles is the responsibility of the authors rather than the editors.

Respectfully,
the Beacon staff
The Northwestern track and field team took the vans to Sioux Center on Saturday to compete in the Dordt Invitational. Of the athletes who competed, eight Raider entrants qualified for the national indoor track and field championships at the event. Among the qualifiers were senior Taylor Bodin, sophomore Kyle Anderson and senior Matt Huseman, who all met the automatic mark in their individual events.

Bodin, who had already met the provisional standard this year, placed first in the 800 meters with a time of 1:55. Anderson placed first in the 1,000 meters and broke the school-record time. He ran a 2:30 and had met the provisional mark the week before.

Junior Logan Hovland ran in the 1,000 meters as well and finished in second place behind Anderson in 2:32. That time also met the automatic mark in their individual events.

Northwestern's women's basketball team bounced back in dominating fashion against rival Dordt after a tough loss at Concordia. The No. 9 ranked Raiders beat Dordt 102-70 Wednesday night at home. It was an all-out team effort with seven players scoring in double figures.

Junior Karen Hutson scored all but two of her team-high 16 points in the first half to spark the team's offense early on. Hutson also grabbed a team-high eight rebounds.

Senior Alli Engebretsen and sophomore Arianne Gesell put up 14 points. Gesell also had seven rebounds. Senior Kenzie Small added 13 on 4-for-5 shooting from beyond the arc. Sophomore Whitney Vander Maten scored a career-high 13 points off the bench for the Raiders.

Senior Sam Kleinrasser had 12 points and junior Paige O'Neal had 10 points and five assists for the Raider women.

“When we have everyone competing at a high level is when we are at our toughest,” junior Paige O’Neal said. “Everyone was especially pumped to play Dordt. It’s always fun beating them.”

NW never trailed in the game, as they jumped ahead of Dordt early 26-9 in the first seven minutes. They continued to dominate, extending their lead to 20 by halftime, 55-35.

The second half was much of the same as the Raiders’ lead peaked out at 39.

The women’s 4-by-400 meter relay ran a 4:03 and placed second in the event. Junior Megan Walhof, sophomore Emily Culver, senior Jackie Niewenhuis and sophomore Lauren Spranger comprised the team.

Stevens finished with a personal best time of 8.7 seconds and won the 55-meter hurdles. Heidebrink met the provisional mark in the 55-meter hurdles and placed second with a time of 7.8 seconds. Dunk placed first in the 55-meter dash. He ran the sprint in 6.45 seconds, which was not only a personal best but also a school record.

“The team overall, did really well, and we peaked at this last event,” Dunk said.

In addition to all the national qualifiers, senior Dawn Gildersleeve won the 1,000-meter with a time of 3:04, and sophomore Lawton De Jong placed second in the shot put. He launched the shot 46 feet, 9 inches.

The Raiders turned in a total of 25 top-five finishes in their last event before the conference meet.

The athletes who qualified for the GPAC indoor championship will compete in that championship in Crete, Neb., today and Saturday. National qualifiers will be determined following the meet.

On Wednesday, the men’s basketball team fought hard but lost 91-80 to arch-nemesis Dordt. With the loss, the Raiders fell to 7-12 in the conference and 14-15 overall with one conference game remaining. It also marked the fourth-straight loss for Northwestern.

The Defenders jumped out to a 47-38 lead at halftime, but NW rallied in the second half to eventually take a 55-49 lead off of a 17-2 run that culminated in a jumper by senior guard Zack Leeper. Dordt went on a run to recapture a 57-56 lead. Sophomore guard T.J. Buyert put NW back on top one final time with a three-pointer to bring the score to 59-57.

“Going into the game, coach (Korver) told us we needed to give a 120 percent effort,” freshman post Jordan Baker said. “We had the No. 1 team in the GPAC on our home court and a chance to beat them.”

Over the next four minutes, Dordt went on a 14-0 run and never looked back. The Defenders were up 71-59 after a bad defensive spell for the Raiders.

“We executed very well for the most part, but we had a few lapses that cost us in the end,” Baker said.

Baker led the charge for NW with 20 points and shot 10-13 from the field. Baker also led the team with eight rebounds. Leeper added 19 points and four assists. Sophomore point guard Joey Habtemariam scored 12 points. Junior forward Levi Ettleman rounded out double-figure scoring with 10 points.

“My teammates did a great job of getting me the ball in positions where I could score,” Baker said. “Most of their attention was on Zack, which helped free things inside.”

For the game, NW shot 43 percent from the field and only 22 percent from three-point. In comparison, the Defenders shot a red-hot 47 percent from the field and 50 percent from three-point. Dordt also outscored NW 44-36 in points in the paint.

Last Saturday, NW fell 95-75 on the road against conference foe Concordia.

It was a neck-and-neck game most of the contest, NW was tied at 58-58 with the Bulldogs before they went on an 11-3 run.

Leeper led the Raiders with 17 points, and Habtemariam added 15. Baker scored 13 points and grabbed eight rebounds.

For the contest, NW shot a respectable 47 percent but only 35 percent in the second half. In contrast, Concordia shot 53 percent for the game and was lights-out in the second half at 63 percent. In addition, the Bulldogs shot 63 percent from three-point.

The Raiders will close out the regular season with a home matchup Saturday against Hastings. Tipoff will be at 4 p.m.
Students compete for Mr. Red Raider

Gay athlete causes controversy

FROM PAGE 1

“I did it for the entertainment factor,” Anderson said. “I hope people know this is supposed to be funny.”

The SAC has made an effort to make sure the student body understands the pageant is not to be taken seriously.

“We have been attempting to emphasize that (the pageant) is a spoof,” Johnson said. “We would really like it if people came just to enjoy the event. We will not be making fun of the contestants. The contestants have full knowledge of what they are signing up for.”

Even though this event has brought up more controversy than intended, McBride said she doesn’t think that is necessarily negative.

“I guess I feel like events like this always bring up controversial topics,” McBride said. “It probably brings up really good points that we don’t discuss enough on our campus. Differences between gender roles, what objectification is, what it is not, maybe how we view opposite-gender relationships. I think all those controversies come up and maybe not in the healthiest ways. So I think that when we do these things and allow for some of those points, it makes for healthy conversation on our campus.”

The Mister Red Raider pageant will be at 9 p.m. in Christ Chapel. Admission is free.

FROM PAGE 1

“I admire Michael Sam’s honesty and courage,” the NFL said in an official statement. “Michael is a football player. Any player with ability and determination can succeed in the NFL. We look forward to welcoming and supporting Michael Sam in 2014.”

For the most part, the media have reported on responses from within the NFL and a few coaches in college sports. Some NW student-athletes had their own reactions to the story.

Volleyball player Kautilin Floerchinger said that the decision by Sam seemed extremely brave.

“(Coming out) must have been difficult for him to do, especially in such a ‘masculine’ sport,” Floerchinger said.

Ben Loftis, a member of the Red Raider football team, said that he was not surprised at the news.

Baseball player Isaac Horigan also said that it was not shocking but simply something that was bound to happen eventually.

Even though the news that a professional football player is gay does not shock many people, this story brings up many never-before-discussed ideas. This story is not, and probably will not remain, isolated to the NFL. In the future, it seems likely that an increasing number of gay and lesbian athletes at the high school, collegiate and professional levels will make the same decision to publicly announce their sexual orientations.

What does it look like for the future of sports — especially one strongly associated with masculinity such as football — to accept openly gay athletes?

“I think that it’s stupid that a sexual orientation can determine how masculine or feminine a person is,” Floerchinger said. “There’s more to an individual than their sexual orientation.”

The openness of athletes such as Michael Sam provides an opportunity for discussions on gender, sexual orientation and identity. From these discussions we can gain an understanding of how complex these issues are and discuss whether or not individuals can be wholly defined by a trait such as gender or sexual orientation.

Team sports bring together a group of individuals with different beliefs, backgrounds and personalities and forces them to spend time together. The relationships built between teammates can help them overcome a number of differences. Former NW soccer player and current women’s soccer coach Ben Karnish said that, for any sport, team dynamics can be challenging and complicated.

“There are so many conflicts you could have with teammates if you really wanted to,” Karnish said. “We all have personal differences, but when you get out there and get to play, there are 11 people playing for one goal.”

“It’s really hard to get 120 football guys to see eye-to-eye,” Loftis said.

Karnish and Loftis are not alone in their opinion that in any team setting with a large group of people there are going to be mixed opinions, views and convictions. Trying to predict the way that individuals will react is nearly impossible, and trying to get them to agree would prove equally challenging.

Michael Sam’s position as the only “outed” gay athlete in professional football will not last for long. It also might not be long before a similar situation hits closer to home.

Michael Sam, who was named the Southeastern Conference’s co-defensive player of the year, recently revealed that he is gay.

The SAC stage events team members Justine Johnson, Michael Johnson, Olivia Cook and Elle Helmkamp planned tomorrow evening’s Mister Red Raider event.

PHOTO BY EMILEE BERRY