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WEATHER

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Satanist Black Mass at Capitol sparks Catholic counter-protest



Photo by Meredith McCalmon | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

A Black Mass protester displays an inflammatory sign at counter-protesters outside the Capitol on March 28. The groups were kept on opposite sides of a barrier controlled by law enforcement.

TOPEKA — A group of about 30 Satanist protesters shouted “Hail Satan” on the front steps of the Kansas Statehouse while counter-protesters crowded barricades set up by law enforcement, singing songs and shouting gospel.

COLE BERTELSEN
editor-in-chief

KYRA CASE
news editor

“From this point on, you can still make your way to heaven,” Topeka resident Daniel Casteel yelled in his megaphone. “You just have to accept it. ... Hell is not fun. The devil will give you nothing more — you’ll be worshiping him in hell. Remember that.”

The Satanic Grotto held a Black Mass on March 28 outside the Capitol, sparking public outcry from religious residents and the Catholic Church.

After the Grotto’s president, Michael Stewart, released an announcement of the event via Facebook, a petition titled “Oppose the Satanic Black Mass Scheduled to Take Place in the Kansas Capitol Building!” gathered over 23,000 signatures.

According to the petition, “As faithful Catholics, it is our moral obligation to fight against this demonic sacrifice. Please use this short, secure form to add your name to this petition and demand Governor Laura Kelly immediately cancel the Black Mass!”

A press release detailing Gov. Kelly’s response to the Black Mass was issued March 12.

“I have been informed about

concerns regarding an event at the Statehouse on March 28, and I share those concerns,” it said. “There are more constructive ways to protest and express disagreements without insulting or denigrating sacred religious symbols. ... all events planned for March 28 will be moved outdoors to the grounds surrounding the Statehouse.”

SEE PAGE A2
“BLACK MASS”

YAF claims K-State suppresses conservative speech

MEREDITH MCCALMON
managing editor

The Kansas State chapter of the Young America’s Foundation filed a formal complaint to the Kansas City Office of Civil Rights in March, claiming K-State violates “Title VI, Title IX and Recent Trump Administration Executive Orders” by discriminating against conservative students and keeping Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging programs in place.

According to the civil rights complaint, “YAF activists face significant discrimination on campus, where extremist administrators and faculty use so-called and often self-appointed authority to block conservative speech.”

Thomas Adcock, founding

chairman of YAF at K-State, said student response to the complaint was mixed.

“I’ve had a number approach me and thank me for exposing all this,” Adcock said. “They weren’t aware [of] what was going on. A lot of them appreciate what we’ve been doing. We’ve also had some people who obviously disagree with us ... and people who are very upset that we’re attacking what they would call their precious DEI and stuff because they don’t understand the full extent of how it actually hurts people and that they themselves could be put on the chopping block of hurting because [they don’t] fit [K-State’s] vision, or someone else’s vision of diversity.”

Derek Jackson, associate vice president for community

building, said the university has not made any changes because of the civil rights complaint and plans to continue following government policy.

“For this moment in time, this is business as usual,” Jackson said. “I don’t think our student groups, I don’t think our university has acted inappropriately. I think we’ve done our jobs. If somewhere down the road, somebody tells us to do something different, then we will.”

Jackson said YAF made generalizations in the complaint that won’t result in structural change.

“They’re just throwing a big net, trying to get at whatever their agenda is,” he said.

Adcock said the complaint was partially inspired by

difficulties the group faced getting funding to bring conservative speakers to campus.

“Our first speaker we were trying to bring was Daniel Di Martino,” Adcock said. “He was a Venezuelan immigrant who escaped Venezuela, came to the United States, got his citizenship, and he speaks on why socialism is bad. Venezuela was turning into a socialist country, and he lived and experienced that. In order to

bring speakers on, or any kind of activities like that, most student organizations reach out to the Student Governing Association to request funds. Well, we found out there were two separate fund groups.”

SEE PAGE A3
“YAF”

Ranchers begin prescribed burns on Flint Hills prairie
THE COLLEGIAN

A fiery orange glow illuminates the Flint Hills, filling the air with the smell of smoke as farmers and landowners carry out prescribed burns to regulate prairie health.

According to the Kansas Forest Service, the burn season lasts from late February to mid-April, playing a “critical role in maintaining our grasslands health and reducing wildlife risk.”

SEE PAGE A3
“BURNS”

WEEKLY CALENDAR

4	Aggierville Showdown 2025 — Aggierville	5	Downtown Spring Art Walk — Downtown Manhattan	5	Easter Bash — Manhattan City Park
5	The Lazy Wayne Band — Johnny Kaw’s Yard Bar	7	2025 Spring Clean Up — Manhattan	8	Singo — Tanner’s Bar & Grill



"BLACK MASS"

CONTINUED FROM A1

"Again, no protests will be allowed inside the Statehouse on March 28."

"You will have to have us arrested to stop us from practicing our free speech and religious rights," The Satanic Grotto responded in a Facebook post. "Shame on you, Gov. Kelly."

Hundreds of Catholics held a ceremony of reparation at the south steps of the Capitol in counter-protest, including Logan Church, the national political director

for the advocacy group CatholicVote.

"A big part of what we do is encouraging Catholics to have their voice heard in the public square, and so this was the perfect opportunity to do that here," Church said. "We have a huge following in Kansas, so we decided that it was time to get everyone together and protest this horrible, horrible event today."

One anonymous protester was observed unplugging the speakers of the Catholic Church

during its ceremony. Audio was restored shortly after.

Jocelyn Frazee, a member of The Satanic Grotto, said negative experiences with Christians makes her untrusting of their message.

"I'm here to do my Black Mass so I can relieve my feelings of all this Christian hate that I'm experiencing right now — here especially," Frazee said. "I struggled with my own trauma with Christianity, be it when I was trying to practice it or, you know, it's always interrupted in my life, I guess you could say. It's always tried to control things I don't even believe in."

Protester William Heinen said while he isn't a Satanist, he doesn't agree with the limits that were placed on The Satanic Grotto.

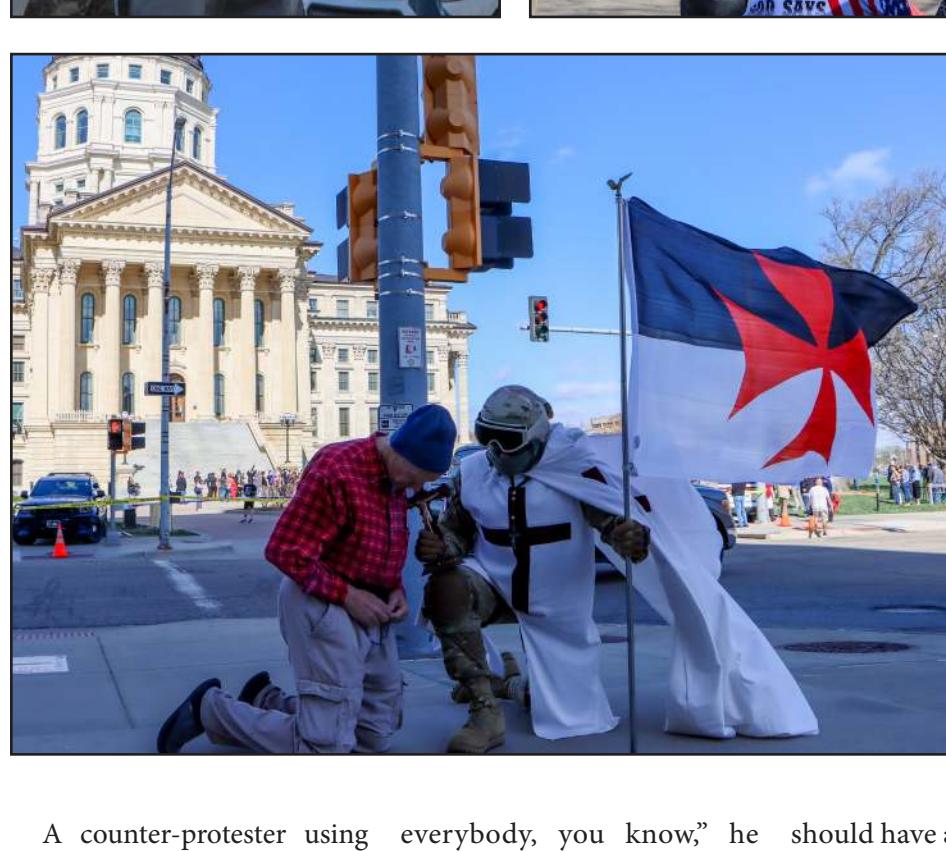
"... I believe in freedom of religion," Heinen said. "I'm a pagan, and I don't like the way we are turning into a theocracy in America — full of Christian nationalists who don't seem to understand what their Jewish God believed in. I just wanted to show my support and be a part of the counter movement."

Stewart attempted to move the Black Mass ritual inside the Statehouse at the rotunda, where 21-year-old

Marcus Schroeder tried to grab a paper Stewart was holding while chanting a satanic verse. In response, Stewart struck Schroeder in the face and was wrestled to the floor by Kansas Highway Patrol officers.

A total of four arrests were made, including Stewart and Schroeder. Grotto members 32-year-old Frazee and 50-year-old Sean Andrews were also arrested for unlawful assembly.

Stewart's wife, Maenad Bee, organized a GoFundMe page dedicated to raising funds to help pay off impending legal fees.



A counter-protester using the pseudonym "Templar," dressed in a mixture of tactical equipment and religious iconography, remained posted at a street corner near the Capitol. He knelt in prayer without moving for the entirety of the event.

The Templar said his intention was to promote "compassion, kindness, [and] peaceful, free assembly." Regarding violence against Satanist protesters by religious counter-protesters, he said he was praying for the protection of all people present.

"I'm just here for protection, for protecting

everybody, you know," he said. "So that's what we do, is we protect the flock. And sometimes the flock is black sheep, so sometimes we just pray for them, we corral them, we bring them in with love. And for those that fight back, that's just part of the flock. You get the bad ones with the good ones."

William Davis, who said Friday was his final day interning for Sen. Tori Marie Blew, was "shocked" by how much support the Christian protesters had.

"I honestly thought there would be more support for the Satanists," Davis said. "But being in Kansas, I

should have assumed that the Christians would beat it out. I think it's really disappointing because the Satanists are really out here trying to show that the laws [are] leaning one way ... They have the same rights just as everyone else, and the showing today really came out and showed them, it's not."

He said Senate President Ty Masterson (Rep.), Senate Majority Leader Chase Blasi (Rep.), Senate Minority Leader Dinah Sykes (Dem.) and Senate Agenda Chair Marci Francisco (Dem.) all declined to address the crowds outside.

Davis said the decision

to restrict the Grotto from holding a ritual in the Statehouse was inconsistent and showed favoritism toward Christianity.

"It is very frustrating, because every day before the Senate votes or before any Senate hearings, they always pray, and they always invite God into the Senate hearing to help lead the senators in the right direction and make them help them make the right choices," Davis said. "Yet they're not allowing people of other religions to have that same grace."

The counter-protest included representation from across the state. Manhattan pastor Jon

Hastings said Topeka wasn't a long way to travel to express what he believes in.

"We've got a smaller group chat that we post it on, saying that if anybody wants to come, they can come," Hastings said. "It's something like this that throws into stark reality that there are different worldviews that are radically opposed to each other. In a world that wants to be egalitarian, who want to get along, that's going to be difficult as long as people have massively different world views. And you can just see that in a powerful display."

Photos by Meredith McCalmon and Cole Bertelsen | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

"YAF"

CONTINUED FROM A1

Adcock said YAF requested funding from SGA's Diversity Programming Fund to bring Di Martino to K-State in 2023, but were met with roadblocks.

"The only difference between the two fund pools is that the DEIB one, you have to articulate and argue that your speaker or your event relates to diversity, equity and inclusion," Adcock, senior in history, said. "So, we tried to articulate to them [SGA], 'Hey, he is an immigrant. He lived in another type of government, and they're literally, compared to capitalism, like socialism.' We tried to articulate that and, 'Oh, he wasn't diverse enough.' ... Why are the SGA, which is paid with the student service fees, able to have students deciding what it can and cannot fund based off if they determine it is diverse or not?"

Andrew Le, chair of SGA's DEIB committee, said this protocol exists because students know students best.

"The university has given us a level of autonomy in the sense of how we operate business," Le, sophomore in political science and leadership studies, said. "The power that is bestowed upon us as a governing body is given to us exclusively by the university. Any day the university could get rid of SGA, but it's the fact that university administrators have trusted us as student leaders to be good stewards of student dollars, because that's where we get all our money from that we allocate to serve students."

Jackson said YAF's request to receive funding for its event was likely denied because it didn't meet the criteria required to access DEIB funding, an approximate \$137,000 pool.

"That DEIB fund, the student government allocates the money and then it's also then going through another level of support and scrutiny through that DEIB committee that works into the challenges and opportunities of how you spend the money," Jackson said. "There are specific rules in the student government about what that money can be used for and not be used for. They walk that line really closely."

According to the SGA website, funding through Diversity Programming is limited to campus events "with educational value that are intended to provide cross-cultural learning experiences or education on the topics of diversity, inclusion or discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, geographic location or age."

Events must also be held on campus and "free and open to all Kansas State University students."

However, YAF has utilized the Diversity Programming fund to bring other activists to campus, Le said.

"I think that's the one thing that I think is really important to note here is this last year we allocated about \$3,600 to them on Sept. 16 for Yeonmi Park to come talk about her life in North Korea, and last year

we allocated, I think, roughly around 5,000 or so to Young Americans for Freedom to bring Chloe Cole on campus," he said.

Amy Lee, accountant for SGA, could not be reached for comment. Le said the fact they provided YAF with funds supports SGA's aim to support all students, regardless of political belief.

"I will say, I think that's a testament to the work that we do as a committee, that we're open and accessible to everyone regardless of where their stances might be," he said.

Adcock said he was also dismissed by the university when he complained that students erased YAF's promotional chalking on Bosco Plaza, an act prohibited under section .070 of the K-State Publicity Regulations.

"All our chalk we did the day prior to our Seth Gruber event — we had spent eight hours chalking, got done around 10 o'clock at night, and by the next morning the entire plaza of our chalk was completely destroyed on there," Adcock said. "The school's impedance policy states such that you cannot destroy other people's chalk; it's called vandalism on there. This is the school's own policy, but yet the school has no way of enforcing their own policy."

YAF is also concerned that instead of removing DEIB programs to comply with executive orders, K-State is changing the wording of its websites and policies. According to the complaint, "Kansas State has renamed its DEI office in attempt to circumvent federal law. The DEI office continues

to divide people by impermissible methods such as race and sexual 'identities,' as evidenced in part by their 'social identity wheel.' The existence and practices of this DEI office violate Title VI, Title IX, Executive Order No. 14151, Executive Order No. 14173, Executive Order No. 14168 and the Dept. of Ed. Feb. 14, 2025 Dear Colleague Letter."

Le said SGA renamed its DEIB fund to the Community Engagement fund to comply with federal orders, and did so not to circumvent regulations, but to "further clarify the work that [they] do."

"I think a lot of people have the notion that our funding is only for multicultural student orgs and whatnot, but it's open and available to anyone — anyone and everyone," Le said. "In staying with the Committee Programming fund, it helps clarify the work that we do. The money is used to help student organizations host events that may want to offer a different perspective. Especially a lot of the MSOs host different cultural events for folks to kind of get immersed in these different perspectives and

We the People...

Title VI: Protects against discrimination based on race/color/ethnicity in programs and activities that receive federal funding.

Title IX: Protects against discrimination based on sex in education programs or programs receiving federal funding.

Information according to the Department of Justice.

Graphic by Haley Smith
COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

cultural differences, but also building community within K-State as well."

YAF's complaint states K-State violates Title VI, which "prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance" by prioritizing hiring people of color for faculty positions.

READ THE FULL ARTICLE ONLINE



"BURNS"

CONTINUED FROM A1

The Kansas Prescribed Fire Council developed a smoke management plan in 2010 to prevent inhalation by Flint Hills residents, as well as a training program to help landowners safely plan and execute prescribed burns.

The Forest Service recommends five steps for burn participants to stay safe:

Develop a plan: Obtain all necessary permits and equipment required to burn and contact your neighbors to sync up burns.

Prepare the site: Create areas where the fire will break, such as mowed areas. Cut down any trees or vegetation that may catch fire.

Observe the weather: Closely monitor the weather for when you'll be burning. The forest service recommends burning on days where winds blow 8-13 mph

and humidity is above 30%.

Monitor the burn: Notify your county dispatch 30 minutes prior to the burn, and keep a close eye out as it progresses.

Check and re-check the site: Patrol the burn's edge repeatedly after the burn is complete, extinguishing any remaining flames. Re-check the site for several days afterward.

Those interested in obtaining a burn permit may apply online at the Riley County website.



Graphic by Haley Smith | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

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THE BOOKMARK

FICTION BOOK CLUB

WITH KAITLYNN FABER



BOOK REVIEW | "The Handmaid's Tale" by Margaret Atwood

KAITLYNN FABER
staff writer

We live in an age of uncertainty. The aftermath of war, disease, political polarization and economic instability has invoked a nationalistic longing to return to a rose-colored past, but the uncertainty is not unfamiliar.

The similarities between the present United States and those of early twentieth century fascist regimes are not prophecies, but they are definitely red flags.

It's not a coincidence, then, that according to AP News, sales for the dystopian speculative fiction, "The Handmaid's Tale," by Margaret Atwood, spiked both times Donald Trump was elected president.

Its authoritarian regime and misogynistic society are unsettling, yet familiar. It's not a mirror, or a prophecy, but a speculation that often feels a little too close to home.

Margaret Atwood made one rule for herself when writing this story: everything

that happens in the book must have happened at some point in human history.

It's telling us what could happen, because it did happen.

It follows Offred, a formerly American woman forced to submit to the Christian fundamentalist regime that overtook the United States government. The new country, The Republic of Gilead, prioritizes very literal, Christian values to justify its oppressive agenda, including genocide, state-engineered rape and mass dehumanization.

Society in Gilead has oppressive rules against political, intellectual and sexual freedom. Women's entire identities are remodeled to shape their function to men. They are not allowed to read or go out by themselves, and women known as Handmaids are used by upper class men to bear more children. Offred, a Handmaid, describes herself at one point as "a two-legged womb for increasing Gilead's waning population."

Women's entire identities are remodeled to shape their function to men. They are not allowed to read or go out by themselves, and women known as Handmaids are used by upper class men to bear more children. Offred, a Handmaid, describes herself at one point as "a two-legged womb for increasing Gilead's waning population."

Offred's real name is intentionally never mentioned in the story. It's a combination of "Of Fred," preventing even her own identity from escaping who she belongs to. The name also, as Atwood states in her author's note, plays as another form of Offred being offered, as the words are very similar.

There's a terrifying familiarity to the story: sexist and crude language from politicians against women, a reduction of women's autonomy, the erasure of people beyond straight white men from the public eye, the separation of families at borders, the rise of Christian nationalism, and more. It's a speculation regarding things we're experiencing today, crafted by what's already happened before, and it isn't pretty.

We are not living in a replica of the past, nor was Atwood trying to create one, but Gilead's history is our history, and our systemic failings are growing scarily similar to those in the novel.

Atwood wrote this story in response to conservative opposition to the second-wave feminist movement, which pushed for more legal rights for women. The movement also faced a lot of internal fighting based on fundamental disagreements between different opinions about the sex trade, which I found similarities to at different points in the book.

"The Handmaid's Tale" asks what the U.S. would look like if the anti-feminist opposition prevailed, but more importantly, who would benefit from it?

Fun fact: it wasn't middle-class women.

In terms of prose, Atwood has a poetic, long-winded voice, full of keen observation.

The layering of her sentences was intentional and often read like poetry in sentence-form, but I will admit that I had a difficult time wrapping up some of the sentences while remembering where we started. I'm

not knocking off any points for that, because it had its value, it just was a hurdle I wanted to disclose.

I'd also like to clarify that this book is not anti-Christian, it's anti-fascism, demonstrating a scenario where face-value religious texts can be manipulated into justification for dehumanization. Even the people highest on the political hierarchy didn't fully believe everything they preached, often going against their own words when it benefited them.

Overall, I'd rate this book five stars. It's not the story of a hero who will save the day, but a woman who is trying to survive. It's not always a pretty read, but it is full of hope, even in its worst forms. More importantly,

I think it's still a bestseller because there is hope within readers, that we can unify against all these darker sides of history to fight not only for feminism, but also against fascism, nationalism and dehumanization.

Graphics by Kaitlynn Faber | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

STARTING NEXT WEEK UPCOMING BOOKS I'M READING AND REVIEWING		
MAR 28	APR 4	APR 11
THE HANDMAID'S TALE MARGARET ATWOOD	THE KITE RUNNER KHALED HOSSEINI	SUNRISE ON THE REAPING SUZANNE COLLINS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows young women through dehumanization in totalitarian government Toturistic dystopia Individuality and freedom Author based events on history Lost of power over identity, freedom and fertility Cautionary story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows a young Afghan boy from Wazir Akbar Khan, Kabul Historical Fiction Guilt, redemption & betrayal Story of love, family and friendship amidst destruction and war Politics and Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second Prequel to The Hunger Games Trilogy 24 years prior to The Hunger Games Dystopian Hunger Games' backstory Fighting and moving forward even when you're beat up for failure

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THE KANSAS STATE COLLEGIAN

PREVIEW | K-State's Showcase of Excellence puts fashion studies students in the spotlight

LEXI STUDEBAKER

staff writer

Kansas State's fashion department will host its annual Showcase of Excellence fashion show from 7 to 9 p.m. April 18 at the K-State Alumni Center. This showcase is an opportunity for students to show their hard work completed throughout the semester, all rolled into one night. The team of designers consists of 20 students enrolled in AT450 - Showcase of Excellence Event Planning.

"It's slightly more difficult to get into — it's a class you apply for rather than just choose to take," Natalie Peterson, co-director and junior in fashion studies, said.



AT450 requires the instructor's permission to enter, which is done through an application process. The class allows upperclassmen studying fashion to gain real-life experience in a less intimidating space than the professional industry. Each student is hand-picked by the professor to plan and organize the department's showcase.

This team is then split into smaller divisions to cover all areas of the show. From public relations to stage directions, every role in the show is crucial for the showcase to run smoothly.

Each area allows for the sub-segments of the fashion studies program to shine. In general, fashion studies are divided into 2 different categories — business and design — and this class allows both to work side-by-side to create the show. It is made up of K-State students' designs from the current year, but in this case, the show will consist of projects from the past two years.

"We try to have it annually, but it gets switched up a lot," Peterson said. "COVID-19 caused the show to be recorded and was a slightly smaller show. We also did not have a professor to act as the supervisor last year, so this show



Photo courtesy of Natalie Peterson

Members of AT450 - Showcase of Excellence Event Planning pose for a group photo. The group will host its annual Showcase of Excellence fashion show from 7 to 9 p.m. April 18 at the K-State Alumni Center.

will be comprised of projects from the last two years and be slightly bigger than in the past."

This year's show theme is tied to growth and renewal because of the inability to showcase pieces in the recent past. K-State students will showcase 67 designs alongside five middle/high school designs, eight alumni designs and three wedding dresses. The Showcase

of Excellence is made to help students find recognition from faculty, students and the public for their creations.

This could even lead to future internships or careers for many of the designers — especially if their work is seen by industry professionals attending the event.

The show is open to the public and tickets are purchasable on

the Showcase of Excellence website Fashion Studies Showcase of Excellence for \$20.

"The fashion studies program is something that not a lot of people know about, and the showcase is a really cool opportunity for people to get a glimpse into what fashion students are really up to — both on the runway and design projects," Peterson said.

REVIEW | 'I Said I Love You First' by Selena Gomez and Benny Blanco

LEXI STUDEBAKER

staff writer

The album "I Said I Love You First" by Selena Gomez and Benny Blanco served as Gomez's first album back into her musical career after a five-year hiatus. This album served as a love story between the engaged co-writers, recorded and written in their home. This album embodies the power couple deeply and articulately. In this album there are many stories to unfold, from past heartbreaks, mistakes and self doubts, every emotion can be felt in this 14-track masterpiece.

This album had several feature artists and collabs, including rising pop star Gracie Abrams and The Marias, and every song is very different from the last. Gomez took some artistic risks with this album. Several of the songs switched from singing in English to Spanish, and varied tempos and genres, such as house and EDM. A lot of the lyricism and flow were Lana-esque between the chord differentiation and gentle singing. This album felt complete and confident, which is the exact vibe Selena Gomez exudes in her adult life.

My personal favorites on the album are "Younger and Hotter Than Me" and "You Said You Were Sorry," which have completely different themes. Still, both songs pull on the heartstrings, reminding me of a first

love and the mistakes made trying to figure out first relationships. To me, this album represented growth. From appropriately dissing an ex to realizing the steps needed to get better after a breakup, the storytelling was precise throughout these two songs especially.

An idea Gomez honed in on during her time in the spotlight is being perfectly imperfect. Between her beauty brand, Rare Beauty, and her constant repetition toward younger audiences, Gomez preaches how the idea of "perfect" is unattainable through the song "Do You Want To Be Perfect." The song serves as a voicemail to a past self, containing the message, "There's literally no one like you" spoken throughout the short song, serving one purpose: to remind the audience of their natural inner beauty, encouraging them to continue to be themselves even as society crumbles.

This album had me feeling every emotion, from pride and heartbreak to empowerment all in a 49-minute time span. I really enjoyed this album and the storytelling that went along with it. I felt like I was riding side by side with Selena Gomez with the windows down, and a breakup in the rearview mirror. For a late-night drive or just to feel a little bit of everything, "I Said I Love You First" is just right for you.



Graphic by Haley Smith | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

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Letter to the Editor | Strengthening our community

JAMIE PEMBERTON
contributing writer

It is an understatement to say our state and federal governments are making the lives of transgender Americans difficult. As of March 14, the ACLU has identified 527 anti-LGBTQ bills proposed in state legislatures in 2025.

The Kansas legislature overrode Governor Kelly's veto and banned gender affirming healthcare for minors last month. In Iowa, a law recently passed to exclude transgender people from its state's civil rights protections. A bill proposed in Texas this month aims to make it a felony to commit "gender identity fraud." This is defined as transgender people asserting their true gender, not their sex assigned at birth, to their employer.

At the federal level, a flurry of executive orders are working to eliminate the government's recognition of transgender people. One order barred transgender athletes from competing in sports under the correct gender designation. This is despite the fact that there are less than ten known transgender athletes within the over 500,000 athletes within the NCAA. Another order has banned transgender people from joining the military. Congress has also introduced several anti-transgender bills, from restricting access to life-saving healthcare from transgender people

to prohibiting transgender people from restrooms corresponding with their gender. I doubt there is a single transgender person who has not experienced significant harm and distress from the recent actions of our government.

So, what can our Kansas State community do to support our transgender students, faculty and staff?

Refuse to comply with hate in advance

K-State has the moral obligation to maintain its offices, programs and support for all marginalized people, including transgender people. The recent dismantling of K-State's Office for Access and Opportunity is an excellent counterexample to this. If there is no legal order to take actions that will harm any of our students, faculty and staff, then K-State must refuse to take it. Rather than letting fear take hold, we all must stand unwavering in our protection and support of all of our Wildcat family.

Support LGBTQIA+ organizations and resources

There are a plethora of student-run organizations at

K-State that foster a space of acceptance and community for transgender students. Some of these organizations include Sexuality and Gender Alliance, oSTEM, Cultivating Change and Athlete Allies. Similarly, the LGBTQ* Faculty Staff Alliance is a great place for non-students to help advocate and advance transgender acceptance at K-State. The Spectrum Center, located in 207 Holton Hall, is open to everyone at K-State. They provide information and resources for people who want to learn more about how to support queer, transgender and intersex people. Supporting these organizations and the events that they

host, even if you are not transgender, helps to maintain a community of acceptance and resilience for transgender people at K-State.

Show your support for transgender people

While small, individual actions may seem insignificant, every demonstration of allyship to transgender people shows them that you are a safe person for them to be around. Including your pronouns into your K-State email signature, social media profile and when introducing yourself shows transgender

people that they are safe to tell you their pronouns, too. Similarly, putting a transgender pin on your backpack can show transgender people you encounter across campus that you are supportive. If you encounter someone that says something transphobic, regardless of whether it is intentional, malicious or simply uninformed, make a point of correcting their mistake. Oftentimes, transgender people notice these comments but are too afraid to speak up for themselves. All of these signs of support do not go unnoticed by transgender people and make a world of difference in our increasingly hostile political climate.



Graphic by Haley Smith | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

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Sports

Friday, April 4, 2025

K-State soars atop Big 12 and into Top 25, eyes hosting NCAA Tournament regionals

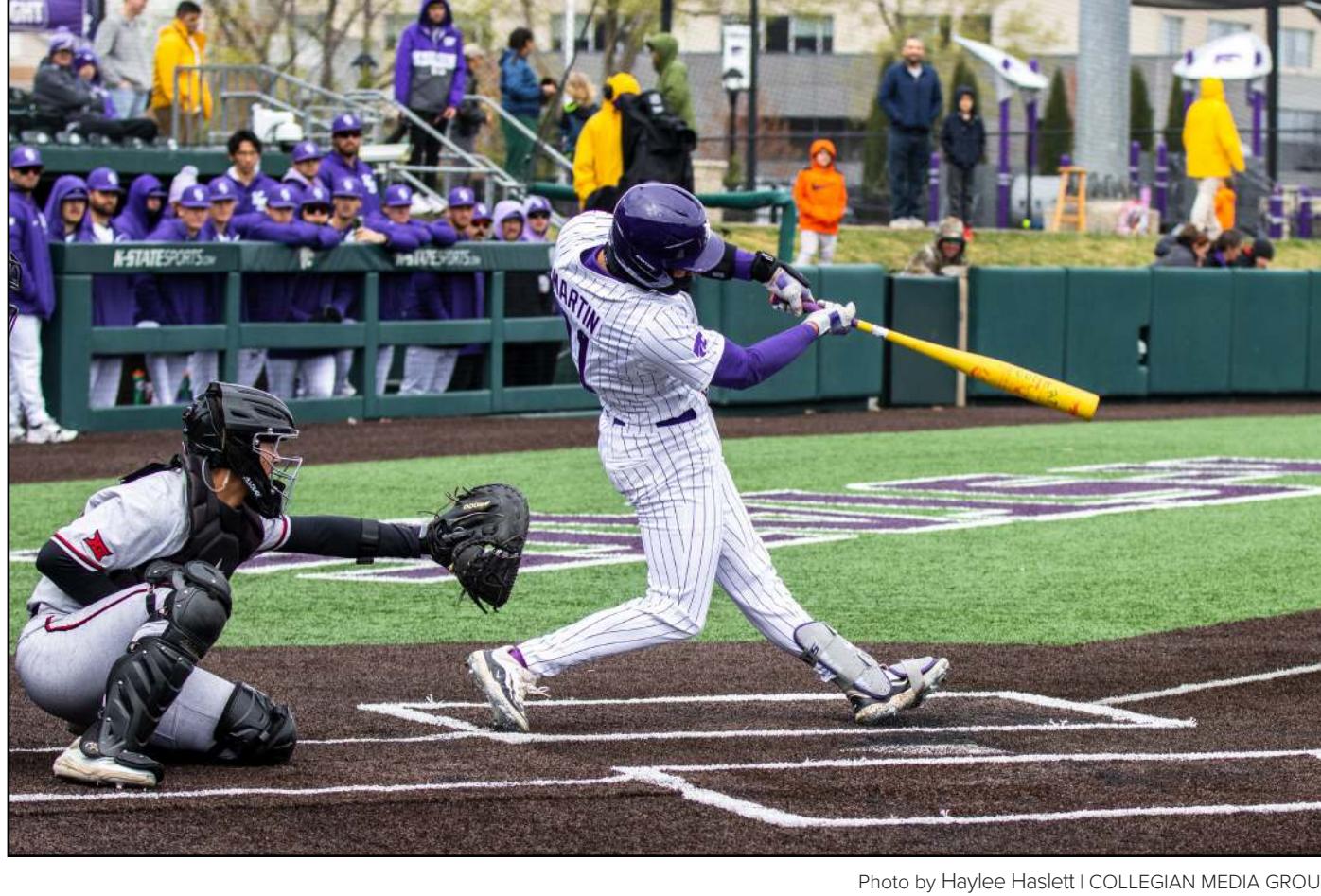


Photo by Haylee Haslett | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

Shortstop **Maximus Martin** swings during K-State walk-off win over Texas Tech on Sunday at Tointon Family Stadium. Martin and the Wildcats have set historic marks this year, starting 8-1 in conference play for the first time in program history.

BRAYDEN MESEKE

staff writer

Kansas State baseball has sat atop the Big 12 rankings for the past two weeks and is in the middle of its best stretch of the season.

However, the national media seemed to pay little attention to the Wildcats.

"We are the only Power Four team that leads their conference and are not in the Top 25," head coach

Pete Hughes said after Sunday's walk-off win over Texas Tech. "You're either gonna prove them right or prove them wrong. We have to keep winning games to change our perception out there."

This week, D1Baseball released its Top 25 rankings, and it included the 'Cats slotting in at the No. 22 spot. However, the Wildcats' goal wasn't to just reach the top 25; they want to host an NCAA tournament regional.

Athome this year, K-State is a perfect 10-0, having

outscored opponents by 65 runs at home.

"I want to host," Hughes said. "It's a heck of a home field advantage, and we are in a situation where we can do that right now. I don't want to just go to the national tournament, I want to host in this community."

This weekend K-State isn't at home, instead traveling to Stillwater to take on the Oklahoma State Cowboys for a three-game series.

The matchup follows a road victory at Wichita

State in which K-State's offense exploded for a 13-10 win.

Playing and winning games at home is fun, but to truly improve the 'Cats tournament resume, winning series on the road will go a long way in completing their goals.

"[It's] four more opportunities to improve our RPI," Hughes said when previously asked about the road trip this week.

SEE PAGE B2
"BASEBALL"

K-State falls in Sweet 16, bids farewell to historic senior class



Photo courtesy of K-State Athletics

K-State seniors **Ayoka Lee**, **Serena Sundell** and **Jaelyn Glenn** huddle together during the Sweet 16 on Saturday in Spokane, Washington. The No. 5 seed Wildcats fell 67-61.

TOBY HAMMES
sports editor

SPOKANE, Wash. — Seniors Serena Sundell, Ayoka Lee and Jaelyn Glenn each scored in double figures for one last time in Kansas State women's basketball uniforms as the No. 5-seeded Wildcats fell 67-61 to No. 1 seed USC in the Sweet 16 on March 29.

"This group has been with us a long time, it's hard right now," head coach Jeff Mittie said. "We didn't want this to end for a lot of reasons. You wanted to have one more film session, one more practice, one

more walk through — how long could you extend it? And when it ends, it ends like that."

Each earning honorable mention All-American in 2025, Sundell led the Wildcats (28-8) at Spokane Arena with 22 points, six rebounds and six assists, while Lee notched another double-double with 12 points and 10 rebounds. Glenn scored 10 points with two rebounds and two steals.

"I'm proud of the senior group," Mittie said. "I think they've done some good things — disappointed with

the outcome tonight — but I told them in the locker room, 'At some point your tears will be happy tears.' You start to remember the time you spent with your coaches, the wins, the bus trips, the plane trips, all the stuff."

Embracing Mittie in a tear-filled hug, Lee put into words how special her career was, taking K-State to new heights despite the adversity of multiple injuries over seven years.

"It means a lot," Lee said, still fighting tears.

SEE PAGE B3
"SWEET 16"

Passing the Torch | Next era of K-State WBB ready to shine



Photo courtesy of K-State Athletics

K-State sophomore guard **Taryn Sides** side-fives with fellow sophomores **Zyanna Walker** and **Imani Lester** ahead of the Sweet 16.

TOBY HAMMES
sports editor

SPOKANE, Wash. — Masked in the grueling goodbye to Kansas State seniors with Saturday's Sweet 16 defeat, there was a bevy of bright spots, courtesy of returning Wildcats.

Starting sophomore Zyanna Walker was not afraid of the moment, taking the challenge of a mighty No. 1 seed USC and turning it into her best tournament game. After recording just seven points total in the previous two rounds, the 5-foot-11 guard carded nine

points and eight rebounds, including a clutch 3-pointer.

"They have got a lot of experience under their belts already," senior Serena Sundell said of the next wave of Wildcats. "We saw girls like Zyanna Walker step up tonight in really big moments. We'll just pass the torch to them — I think it will be an easy transition."

Right alongside Walker, looking to bridge K-State into the next era without any drop-off, is fellow sophomore guard Taryn Sides.

SEE PAGE B3
"TORCH"

What's next for K-State stars Sundell and Lee?



Photo courtesy of K-State Athletics
K-State seniors **Serena Sundell** (4) and **Ayoka Lee** (50) encourage each other during K-State's Sweet 16 loss to No. 1 seed USC on Saturday in Spokane, Washington.

TOBY HAMMES
sports editor

SPOKANE, Wash. — A Sweet 16 loss to No. 1 seed USC marked the end of illustrious college careers for Kansas State All-Americans Serena Sundell and Ayoka Lee, but their futures remain wide open.

"I'm a big fan of Sundell," USC head coach Lindsay Gottlieb said. "I think she should be in somebody's WNBA camp for sure, if not drafted."

The 6-foot-2 point guard Sundell cemented herself as a pro, leading the nation in assists per game en route to becoming the Wildcats' leader for assists in a career. Her senior stat line finished at 14.1 points, 7.3 assists and 4.4 rebounds per game.

"That's a huge compliment," Sundell said of Gottlieb's comments. "I would just credit my coaching staff and teammates for helping me grow over the last four years."

SEE PAGE B3
"WHAT'S NEXT?"

"BASEBALL"

CONTINUED FROM B1

Rating percentage index is the main way the NCAA tournament committee decides which teams make the field, including seeding. RPI is a formula that takes into effect a team's winning percentage, the team's strength of schedule and the opposing team's winning percentage.

Right now K-State ranks No. 17 according to NCAA's RPI rankings, but as Hughes said, wins this week on the road at Oklahoma State — the preseason Big 12 favorite — would help boost that ranking as well.

K-State's games this weekend will broadcast on ESPN+, starting Friday night at 6 p.m.



Photo by Haylee Haslett | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

Right-handed reliever **Ty Ruhl** tosses a pitch on the mound against Texas Tech as the Wildcats defeated Texas Tech 5-4 with a walk-off on March 30 at Tointon Family Stadium. Ruhl threw 3 1/3 innings in relief.

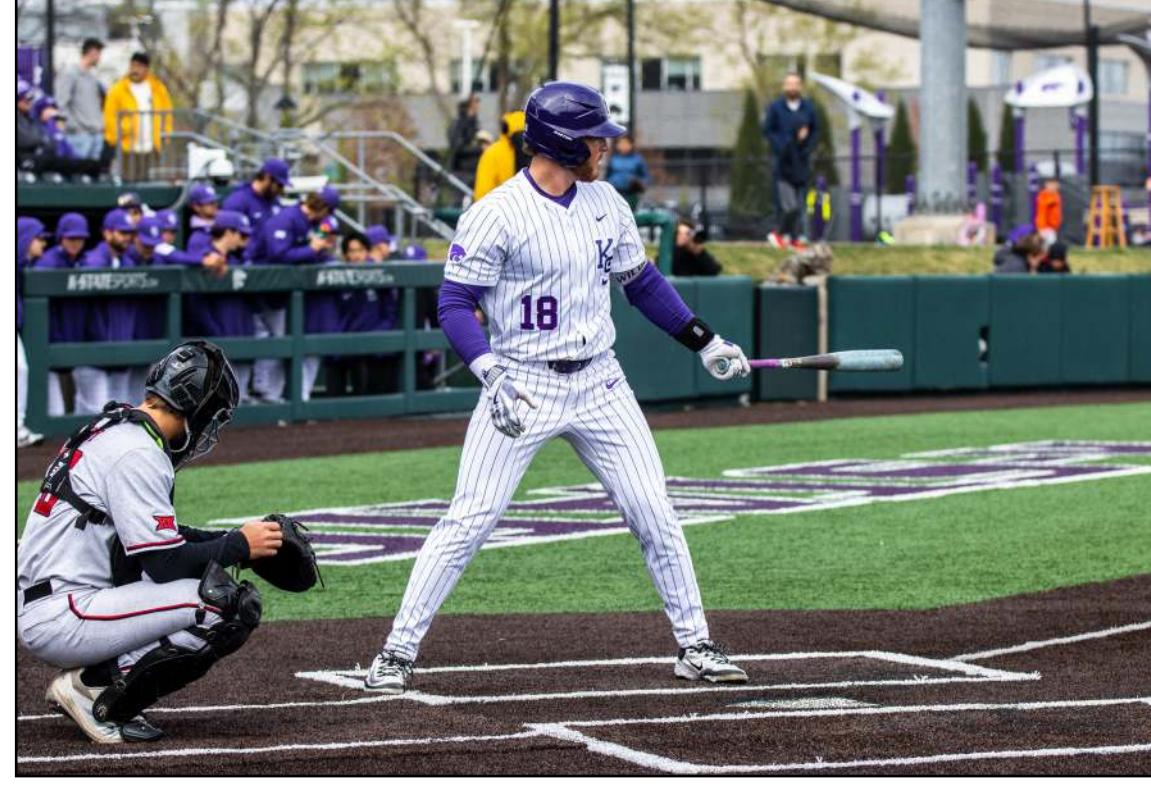


Photo by Haylee Haslett | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

Left fielder **Keegan O'Connor** steps up to the plate against Texas Tech. O'Connor went 2-for-3 with two RBI, including a home run in the Wildcats' walk-off win on Sunday.



Photo by Haylee Haslett | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

Left-handed pitcher **Lincoln Sheffield** follows through the pitch and watches the ball head toward the Red Raider batter on Sunday. Sheffield tossed 2 2/3 innings in a start at Tointon Family Stadium, allowing three runs while striking out two batters. On the season, Sheffield is 4-2 in seven starts with a 4.86 ERA.

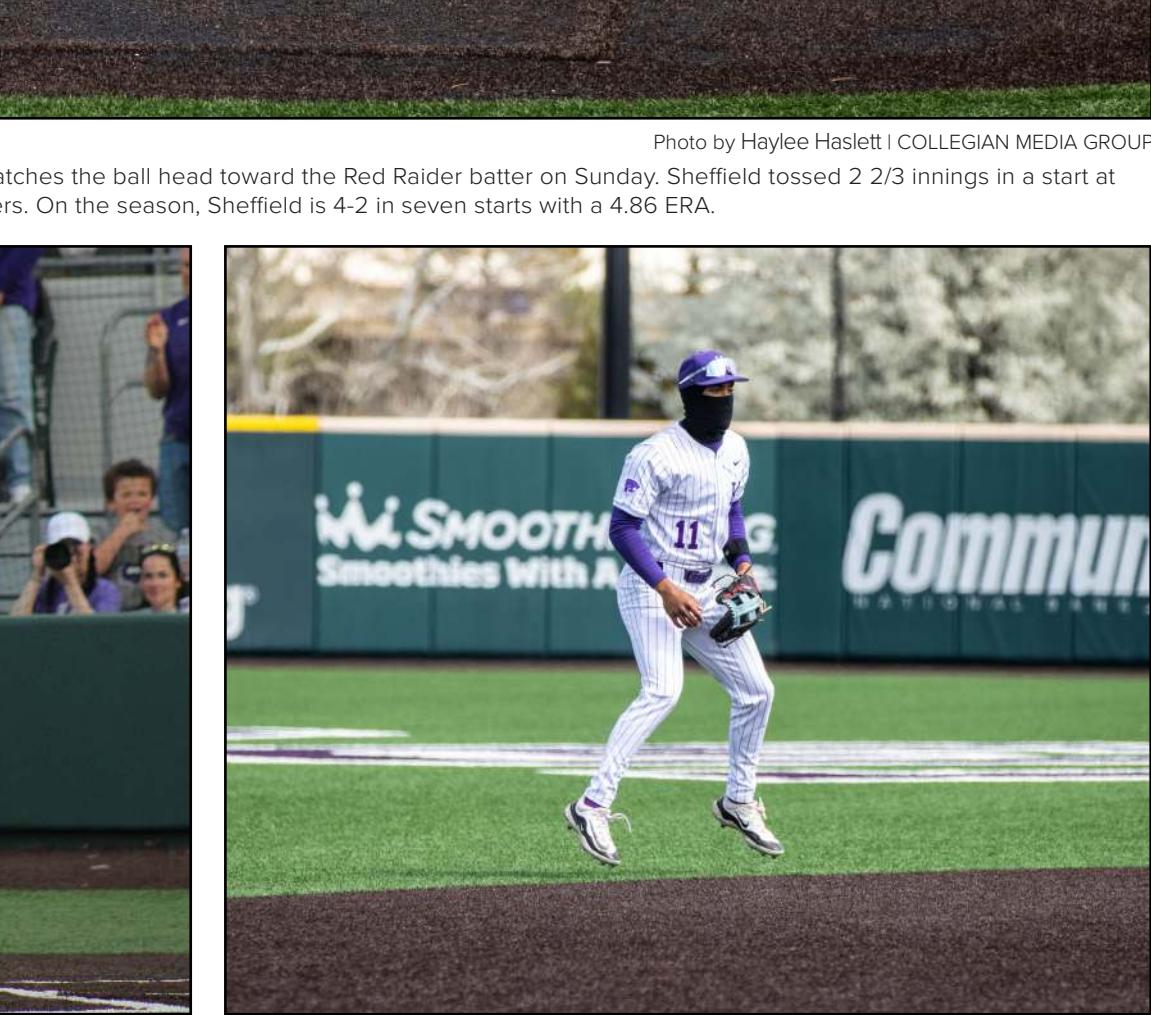


Photo by Haylee Haslett | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

K-State teammates huddle around shortstop **Maximus Martin** after he reaches home during K-State's series-opening 10-5 win over Texas Tech on Friday.

Shortstop **Maximus Martin** jumps in preparation to field the ball. Martin has collected two weekly Big 12 honors in his first season with the Wildcats.

Photo by Haylee Haslett | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

"WHAT'S NEXT?"

CONTINUED FROM B1

"I'm a much better player, and I have a lot more confidence than the 18-year-old I was when I first stepped on campus. Credit to the people around me. I'm grateful to be a Wildcat."

The WNBA draft, held on Monday, April 14 in New York, consists of three rounds. The first round is 12 picks, while the second and third have 13 selections each, totaling 38 individuals drafted.

Both Bleacher Report and USA Today have Sundell sneaking into the first round at No. 12 overall. In that situation, Sundell would team up with another versatile and tall point guard in consensus No. 1 pick Paige Bueckers.

Bueckers, whose No. 2 UConn team will face USC in the Elite Eight, averages 19.8 points, 4.7 assists and 4.4 rebounds as a similar player to Sundell.

"Sundell would be a steal to put behind Bueckers at No. 12 overall," USA Today's Meghan L. Hall said.

Even with expectation of being drafted, that doesn't ensure a roster spot in the smaller league. Although it is expanding, the WNBA has 12 teams, each with a maximum roster size of 12 players, resulting in a total of 144 roster spots across the league.

With most players returning each year, 38 new roster spots aren't always available across the league for the drafted rookies. An early round selection for Sundell would put the most security for a landing spot in the WNBA.

For Lee, who's been featured in mock drafts in recent years, hasn't established whether or not professional basketball is the next step in her life journey.

After seven years of battling injuries



Photo by Haylee Haslett | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

Guard Jaelyn Glenn (3), center Ayoka Lee (50), guard Serena Sundell (4), forward Temira Poindexter (2), and guard Zyanna Walker (1) huddle together. The starting five combined for 79 points in their 111-46 win over Milwaukee on Nov. 20, 2024.

in college, the NCAA's record holder for points in a single game has positioned herself to succeed off the floor as much as she has on the floor.

"She's already a family therapist and already seeing clients," head coach Jeff Mittie said. "She can see down the road. But she also knows how important it is to be in the moment."

During the emotional moments after the loss, Lee didn't have an answer for the future of her basketball career, saying, "That's a tomorrow question."

Lee has already earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in couples and family therapy. She is finishing a master's degree in personal financial planning.

"Her and I will have a discussion," Mittie said.

She said. "She told me, 'Let's get to when the season ends and we'll have [a talk].'" And she will make a decision."

Lee faced a similar situation last year, facing the option to go pro, return to K-State, or be content with leaving a lasting legacy and not lace up for another year. Lee chose Manhattan, and there's no doubt she gave everything during her final season, helping the Wildcats reach a place it hadn't been in 23 years.

Mittie put her commitment to the team, especially in times of adversity, into words.

"She got hurt Jan. 19 and there was a decision to be made," he started. "With all the [injuries] she's been through she could have said, 'Hey, I've given it everything I've got.' And nobody would

have thought twice about it. She made that decision to have a procedure done so that she could come back. She comes back, and then we have another problem with the other foot. And at that point nobody would have said boo about it if she would have said again, 'Hey, I've given everything I've got.' She decides to have another [procedure] to be in these moments. And I think it's just simply because she loves her teammates, she loves her school, she loves Manhattan. And she wanted this, it hadn't happened in her career, and she was going to do everything she could."

The future may hold different paths for the two Wildcats, but both leave legacies destined for the rafters at Bramlage Coliseum.

"SWEET 16"

CONTINUED FROM B1

"To have a coach that has just continued to believe in me through everything I've been through, and to have teammates like Serena who have just been game changers from the minute they stepped on campus. Not everyone gets a college career like that. I'm extremely grateful."

To the eye, it was a battle between two of the top teams in the country.

USC (31-3) limited its mistakes in comparison to K-State, which lost the turnover battle 16-9. The Wildcats allowed a 12-0 run in the third quarter, which proved too much to overcome despite a competitive fourth quarter finish.

"The third quarter hurt us, because we made shots, we shoot over 60%, but we only get eight shots," Mittie said. "Turnovers hurt us. They get 15 shots in the quarter, that's a big number to overcome. And the physicality, I thought we had trouble with getting movement in our offense."

The Trojans were without superstar JuJu Watkins, who tore her ACL in the Round of 32. K-State held USC's second-leading scorer, Kiki Iriafen, 12 points below her average at seven points on 3-13 shooting. Freshman Kennedy Smith and Avery Howell stepped up for the Trojans, scoring 19 and 18, respectively.

"That's the sting for us right now," Mittie said. "There were a lot of things we did well. We did a great job on her [Iriafen]. Our players had a great awareness, but credit to their freshmen. This is a big stage, and they're the No. 1 recruiting class in the country for a reason, and they stepped up."

How it happened

USC opened on a 7-0 run as scoring was a struggle for each team early on, combining to start 3-21 from the field. The Trojans led 7-2 midway through the quarter. Out of timeout, Glenn bottomed back-to-back buckets and a 3-pointer from Zyanna Walker kept K-State within one.

However, by the end of the first

quarter, Sundell, Lee and Poindexter were held scoreless and USC owned a 16-9 lead. Poindexter, similar to the previous start against No. 4 seed Kentucky, started 0-3 from beyond the arc but kept her poise and began to settle in.

Coupled with a triple from Glenn, Poindexter's first 3-pointer forced a quick USC timeout to start the second quarter. As a team, K-State opened the second quarter on a 10-0 run, jumpstarting a 21-12 period in favor of the Wildcats. Sundell scored 10 in the frame, including 6-7 at the charity stripe.

Without Watkins, Iriafen was on track to be the next player up after a 36-point performance in the Round of 32. K-State held the 6-foot-

3 forward to two points on 1-7 shooting in the first half and led 30-28 at halftime.

USC landed its 12-0 run amid a three-minute scoring drought for the Wildcats in the third quarter as the Trojans led by seven and took the game's largest lead.

"We talked about needing to win the

middle of the floor in that stretch — I thought USC won the middle of the floor," Mittie said. "From a basketball perspective, they won the middle of the floor more than we did tonight."

K-State fended off any further damage, and brought its deficit down to 48-45 entering the final frame, which became a battle to the end.

"There's no doubt — we wanted this one," Mittie said. "We wanted this one bad. We thought it was right there ... we're a shot away from flipping it."

With 26 seconds left, down by four, Sundell dove all-out on an in-bound attempt by the Trojans, forcing a turnover to give K-State the ball. The moment characterized the fight of the Wildcats' all-time leader in career assists.

"You're playing to go the Elite Eight, you better be diving on the floor," Mittie said. "You better be making those plays or you're not advancing, and even if you are doing those things, as we know, we sit here today, not advancing. But that doesn't surprise me. I'd have been more surprised if she didn't dive."

"TORCH"

CONTINUED FROM B1

"Everybody always asks that question [about gaining experience] as if there's a guarantee that next year's better than this year just because you're older," Mittie continued. "No, there's not. If you use it to get better, then it's a really good experience and it's worthwhile...This experience will be valuable for 'em, if they use it in the right way, and I'm confident that they will."

One of the reasons the duo has instilled confidence in Mittie is their work ethic — neither carries themselves as an underclassman.

"They put the time in the gym," head coach Jeff Mittie said. "Out of all of our players, Zyanna Walker and Taryn Sides are in the gym more often than anybody. If I go up to the office at nine o'clock on a Sunday night to grab something and I hear the music,

I'm going to bet on one of those two are in the gym."

The offseason continued to prove why the Wildcats have set themselves up for sustained success, including a four-star flip the day after the Sweet 16 loss. Brandie Harrod, a former Auburn commit, reopened her recruitment after a coaching change and landed on the Wildcats.

Harrod is the third four-star or better recruit in the Wildcats' recruiting Class of 2025, joining four-star signee Aniya Foy and five-star signee Jordan Speiser, who is currently representing K-State at McDonald's All-American festivities. Speiser won the Sprite Knockout

competition ahead on Monday, ahead of Tuesday night's official McDonald's All-American game.

Walker said she is ready to lead the incoming 'Cats, using the lessons she's obtained over her two years in Manhattan.

"Every possession matters," Walker said. "Every rebound, every box-out, every stop ... all of the little things matter, especially in big games like this. Now that I'm getting older, younger players, especially freshman, [I'll help] them instill that mindset that everything matters at this level."

K-State lost forward Eliza Maupin to the transfer portal, but it looks to retain a handful of Wildcats, especially players such as Kennedy Taylor, Gisela Sanchez and Brylee Glenn who have an extra year of eligibility remaining and could lead alongside Sides and Walker.

Sundell's message to K-State's future leaders is simple:

"Be confident. Don't be afraid to lead, don't be afraid to continue to push yourself, and just be confident."

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11th in Big 12

TOTAL HRs

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3rd in Big 12

BRAYDEN MESEKE
staff writer

K-State (20-8, 8-1)

Kansas State finished off a sweep of Texas Tech with a dramatic walk-off win last weekend. With the win, K-State moved into D1Baseball's Top 25, but the 'Cats have their eyes set on bigger goals, like hosting an NCAA tournament regional. The Wildcats have hit an impressive 49 home runs on the season so far, but can win with the small ball, too.

AJ Evasco has been a star in the making all year for the 'Cats. A freshman from Lincoln, Nebraska, he is hitting

.367 at the plate this year with five home runs. With Dee Kennedy, Shintaro Inoue and Maximus Martin all hitting right in front of him, Evasco has delivered big with his responsibility in his usual cleanup spot.

The bullpen for K-State was great in the series against Texas Tech, especially on Sunday. Leading the team out of the bullpen on Sunday were seniors Ty Ruhl and JJ Slack, who have both found nice roles. Both Ruhl and Slack play with a lot of energy and can pitch multiple innings in relief with great stuff.

Oklahoma St. (12-14, 1-6)

Oklahoma State was placed atop the Big 12 pre-season poll, but surprisingly found itself in last place of the league. However, the Pokes are not to be taken lightly, as they have the talent to take or sweep a series against anyone in the Big 12.

The Cowboys are led by first baseman Nolan Schubert, who was tabbed as the preseason Player of

the Year in the Big 12 and is seen as a possible first-round pick in the MLB draft this year. Schubert hits for power and average with a .302 line and six home runs.

Oklahoma State's best starting pitcher is Harrison Bodendorf. Bodendorf is 5-1 in his seven starts and boasts a 4.41 ERA. He is a towering 6'5" left-hander on the mound who has 41 strikeouts in just 34.2 innings this year.

WHO TO WATCH:

K-STATE: RF AJ Evasco, LHP JJ Slack / RHP Ty Ruhl

OSU: 1B Nolan Schubert, LHP Harrison Bodendorf

SERIES PREDICTION:

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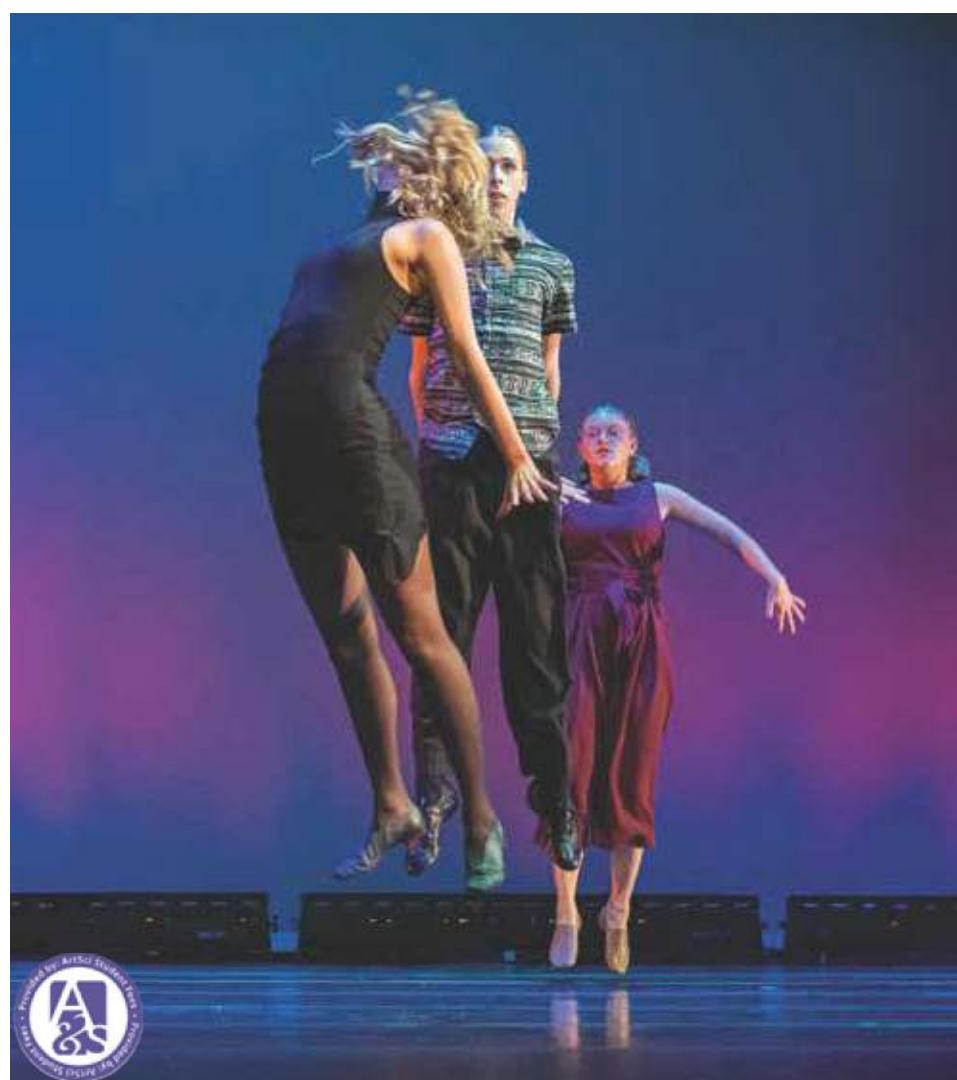


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