MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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We have much to celebrate! The University of Manitoba’s motto is Floreat, and we are proud to see our Bisons flourish. With the 2018-19 season behind us, we have time to reflect on the achievements and efforts of our extraordinary student-athletes, coaches, staff, fans and volunteers.

A number of Bisons became U SPORTS national champions: Kelsey Wog (gold in 50m, 100m, 200m breaststroke and 200m individual medley), Alhaji Mansaray (gold in men’s high jump) and our men’s middle-distance track team of Simon Berube, Connor Boyd, Jack Taylor and Matthew Van Schepdael (gold in Men’s 4x800m). The success continued in the classroom, where Bisons continued to excel. We set a U of M record of 126 Academic All-Canadian awards for student-athletes achieving a GPA of 3.5 and higher.

As community involvement is a pillar of Bison Sports, our University of Manitoba Athletes Council (UMAC) drives initiatives aimed at making our communities better. We have a front row seat watching Bisons emerge as engaged and compassionate leaders. We are so proud of these contributions including Bison Book Buddies and Bisons Against Bullying.

Our fantastic staff, coaches, and volunteers deserve gratitude and credit for their high levels of effort and execution in their work. This is evident by the progress of our student-athletes and events such as hosting the successful U SPORTS National Track and Field Championships at the James Daly Field House on March 7-9, 2019.

We are looking forward to the start of a new competition season — a time of challenge, opportunity, and excitement. The Bisons are excited to host the U SPORTS Men’s Volleyball Championship in the Investors Group Athletic Centre (IGAC) from March 13-15, 2020.

I want to thank our Bison Sports staff for their vision and hard work in creating our first Annual Report. It is an opportunity for us to tell our story and is the start of something special!

On behalf of the Bisons Family, I want to thank all of our supporters for helping us to be successful, for cheering us on, and for driving our success. Welcome to all our new Bisons. We look forward to meeting you and seeing you flourish. Go Bisons!
To be a Bisons athlete is to be an engaged member of the communities where we live and play.

This work includes the community impact made when Bisons athletes, coaches, and staff get involved with Winnipeg charities, local schools, and youth sports programs.

It includes the community support of bringing passionate fans out to games, entertaining them with theme nights, and hosting large-scale championship events.

Finally, it includes maintaining a relationship with Bisons alumni, ensuring those bonds stay strong after graduation and beyond.
COMMUNITY IMPACT

Whether it’s through Bison Sports staff, the University of Manitoba Athletes’ Council (UMAC), or personally driven initiatives, the Bisons family is constantly engaging with and making an impact in the community. These five areas from the 2018-19 season are worth highlighting.

BISONS AGAINST BULLYING

Bisons athletes visit schools and deliver a one-hour presentation on the issue of bullying. Athletes talk about bullying and strategies for victims and bystanders in an interactive format. All presentations are provided to school free of charge. During the 2018-19 season, Bisons Against Bullying visited five schools and organized a “Pink Shirt Game” to promote anti-bullying tactics on February 8, 2019.

BISON BOOK BUDDIES

Bison Book Buddies is a program where Bisons athletes visit schools to increase and emphasize literacy in students in grades one to four. The program starts at the end of January and runs through to March/April each year. Bisons athletes create a fun learning environment where students are interested and motivated to read. Bison Book Buddies visited eight schools during the 2018-19 season, with two additional visits for I Love To Read Month.

SILOAM MISSION

During the holiday season, Bisons athletes give back to the Winnipeg community by donating time and resources to Siloam Mission. This includes teams building holiday hampers, sorting clothes, and other work at the Siloam offices. This past year, we profiled Bisons’ charitable work around the holiday season in a special edition of Bisons TV.

HEAD OF THE HERD

Launched in 2018, Head of the Herd is a program designed to give young athletes the chance to be alongside the Bisons for a day. One athlete is selected for each home game to take part in the warmup, lead the team onto the ice, court or field, introduced as part of the team, stand alongside Bison players for the national anthem and be with the team for the game. A new project, Head of the Herd received 102 applications and had 58 participants in 2018-19.

JUNIOR BISONS

Junor Bisons is the instructional and high performance organization of choice for athletes ages 8-18 who seek and promote personal and team development skills, while raising the level of awareness and competitive play in junior high, high school, club and league environments. High Performance programs are offered in Volleyball, Basketball, Swimming, Football, Track and Field and Soccer. Junior Bisons programs had 1,362 participants during the 2017-18 season.
Bisons teams have been entertaining their fans for over 100 years. Each season, we try to up the “wow” factor at Bisons events to ensure the best possible experience for our fans. Here’s how we did so in 2018-19.

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

**TOTAL ATTENDANCE**

20,372

**HIGHEST ATTENDED GAME**

BISON FOOTBALL VS. SASK
SEPTEMBER 7, 2018

2,175

**THEME NIGHTS**

Themed games encouraged attendance through charities, cultural celebrations, and more. New endeavours in 2018-19 included Spirit of the Bison Night to celebrate Indigenous heritage and Pride Night to support the 2SLGBTQI* community.

**HOSTING CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Part of the ambition of Bison Sports is to host national championships and do so effectively. In 2019-19, the University of Manitoba was host to the 2019 U SPORTS Track & Field Championships, which brought the best varsity athletes in the country to the recently renovated James Daly Fieldhouse.
Every season, Bisons alumni have the opportunity to return to campus and reconnect with past players from their sport. During the 2018-19 season, 119 alumni participated in Alumni Nights in men’s and women’s volleyball, hockey, basketball, and women’s soccer. In addition, turnout was excellent for a track and field alumni gala ahead of the 2019 U SPORTS Track & Field Championships, hosted by UM.

» **Bisons in the NFL and CFL:** Defensive lineman David Onyemata played in his third season with the New Orleans Saints in 2018. North of the border, nine Bisons were on CFL depth charts on opening day in 2018, while the program had seven selections in the 2019 CFL Draft.

» **International Hovi:** Women’s hockey alumna Venla Hovi went from national championship to more international success, as Team Finland finished with a silver at worlds in 2019. Hovi was also recently added to the Winnipeg Jets Development Camp coaching staff.

» **Men’s Basketball Overseas:** Four members of the 2016-17 U SPORTS Final 8-bound Bisons men’s basketball team played on pro contracts overseas in 2018-19. Justus Alleyn played in the Czech Republic before joining the Saskatchewan Rattlers in the inaugural CEBL season. Keith Omoerah played in the Ukraine and made the senior national team for Nigeria, while also teaching camps in Winnipeg during the summer. Finally, A.J. Basi and Ilarion Bonhomme played in Italy and Spain, respectively.
Whether it’s on the field, the court, or in the fieldhouse — Bisons athletes aspire to win at the collegiate level.

The 2018-19 season featured a lot of winning for the Bisons. Third-year swimmer Kelsey Wog, named the Bisons Female Athlete of the Year, was a four-time gold medallist at nationals and the Female Swimmer of the Meet at the conference level. The Bisons men’s track and field team earned their first podium finish in 23 years on home turf at the James Daly Fieldhouse, earning bronze medals — while five Bisons earned individual golds.

In team sports, the Bisons women’s hockey team qualified for nationals for the second straight year, earning a fifth-place finish in P.E.I. Bison football, both Bisons basketball teams and women’s volleyball all qualified for conference playoffs as well.
Year after year, the University of Manitoba Bisons are in the conversation for different national championships due in part to the character and work ethic of recruits.

In a number of cases, athletes who don the brown and gold have grown and developed through the Junior Bisons club program, which is offered for individuals aged 8-18. The mission of Junior Bisons is to “be the instructional and high performance organization of choice for players and coaches who seek and promote personal and team development skills, while raising the level of awareness and competitive play in junior high, high school, club and league environments.”

Spearheading this initiative is coordinator Lisa Peters, who was hired roughly eight years ago. At the time of her appointment, a well-established girls volleyball program existed under Bisons head coach Ken Bentley, however Peters was tasked with expanding Junior Bisons’ reach.

“The hope was basically to grow [Junior Bisons] into all of the sports that we offer here at the varsity level,” Peters says.

“This was for a few different reasons. Number one was to have a feeder system to hopefully get some athletes through here starting in their youth and then turn them into Bisons athletes, two was to develop assistant coaches and give them more opportunity to make some money and work with the junior programs as well as to develop athletes in coaching so that they could transition to that if they want when they’re done playing.

And then the third was to provide some money to support Bison Sports. Fees are built into Junior Bisons and a small portion goes to contributing to scholarship funds.”

Peters’ ambitions have paid off. Currently, on top of girls’ volleyball, the U of M offers club teams for basketball, hockey and swimming. The approach each team takes varies, depending on kid’s interests in the community.

For example, girls’ hockey has seen a big shift. When the program was first started around eight years ago, there was only one other club in Winnipeg. Now, there’s five or six different options for kids.

With that in mind, last year the model was changed to go to a skills academy setup in the spring and summer for both boys and girls. Sessions go twice a week and run from early April to mid-May in the spring and early July to mid-August in the summer. This dynamic provides a coach to player ratio of 1:8 in order to ensure adequate feedback and skill development at all times.

There are also fall and winter breakfast clubs that occur before school from 6:45-7:45 a.m. for kids ages 6-16 who want to come out and get some extra work on their individual hockey skills.

“The biggest thing is to know our community and know our network,” says Peters.

“(Women’s hockey head coach) Jon Rempel has kids in the program as far as hockey goes, so we’re in the rinks and we’re recruiting kids already at bantam ages. I’m at the rinks meeting parents, we have parent meetings every year where I chit chat with parents and chum with them. It’s about adapting and kind of knowing our surroundings.”

Another example of adaptation can be found in the Junior Bisons High Performance Summer Camps. Occurring annually for the past seven years, they provide further skill development in an “intense and challenging environment.”

Running from mid-July to late August, the camps — which this year features track and field (girls and boys ages 8-18), boys’ basketball (ages 8-13), girls’ basketball (ages 8-15) and girls’ volleyball (ages 11-14 and 14-18) — are led by U of M head coaches, assistant coaches and current and former Bisons. They offer athletes a solid base once their school seasons are done and also further enhance the relationship between player and coach.

“It helps you recruit good people,” Peters says.

“You know them, you’ve travelled in vans with them for club season and they’ve been here for camps and clinics, so you get that rapport. Your parents are trusting of the organization and the entity and the coaches.”

The 2019-20 recruitment class for Bisons women’s volleyball, where six of nine student-athletes have Junior Bisons experience.

Women’s volleyball is a great example of this. On top of his university duties, Bentley has coached club for over 30 years and has seen a number of individuals that he’s coached continue their athletic careers with the Bisons.

This is partly due to the fact that Junior Bisons volleyball offers year-round skill development for girls beginning in grade two with the Mini Volley program, and continues with summer camps and club teams that range from 13U to 18U.

“The main driving force for me was always athlete development and recruitment. Simple. It was black and white,” Bentley says.

“It’s a big risk, because not everyone I coach I’m going to be able to get to come to the University of Manitoba. But to be competitive at the top levels, a lot of our success has been rooted in club volleyball and development.

Each and every year we’re just trying to improve the delivery and efficiency of it all. Lisa Peters is obviously a huge force behind the scenes with this thing. I absolutely couldn’t do this without her, there’s just too much going on. I also have a great group of coaches who are dedicated to athlete’s long-term development. Without them there’s no Junior Bisons program and I’m so lucky to have them.”

Proof of success with the Junior Bisons program can be found in the number of recruits who’ve chosen to stay home. This is most notable with girls’ volleyball, as six of nine recruits for the 2019-20 season have experience with the club.

“I think [Junior Bisons] has been helpful because I’ve been coached under Ken for a long time,” says incoming recruit Light Uchechuwku, a 17-year-old middle from Vincent Massey Collegiate who began playing club volleyball at the U of M when she was 11.

“I like the way that we’ve built a nice relationship and I like the girls that I’ve played with. I’ve never had any problems with Junior Bisons. I love what we stand for and being all about discipline.”
TOP 5 MOMENTS OF 2018-19

**Men’s 4x800m Relay Team Wins First Gold Since 1996**

The Bisons’ 4x800m relay team knew they had something special in 2018-19. Comprised of first-year Jack Taylor (first leg), fifth-years Connor Boyd (second leg) and Matthew Van Schepdael (third leg) and fourth-year Simon Berube (anchor leg), the foursome developed an incredible bond which peaked at nationals on their home track.

Sitting in third place heading into the final 800, Bérubé — Bisons’ Male Athlete of the Year — turned on the jets and helped the squad earn their first gold in the 4x800m in 23 years. The moment was particularly special for Boyd and Bérubé, who have been friends since their younger years.

“When you’re training you have those questions of is it working, am I doing what I’m supposed to do,” Boyd said after the race. “And then moments like this you could float on cloud nine and say I did everything I could and it finally paid off.”

**Mansaray Caps Career with Gold on Home Field**

Fifth-year high jumper Alhaji Mansaray will go down as one of the best to ever do it for the Bisons. The multiple-time medalist at nationals and holder of the senior men’s provincial indoor record with a leap of 2.20 metres was at it again on home field this year, bringing home the second gold of his U SPORTS career after a jump of 2.15 metres. Not far behind him were teammates Oyinko Akinola and Sidiki Sow, who finished second and fifth overall.

It was a fitting end to the university career of Mansaray, who fought through a patella tendon injury during most of his time with the Bisons — forcing him to bow out of the 2017-18 season — but never gave up.

“When I came back this season, I was very rusty,” Mansaray said shortly after nationals.

“I was out of shape and everything was bad. But then we had a base season, which lasted four months and was lots of running and exercise. That got me into shape. And then coming into the track doing runs and jumps, I could see that I was getting back to where I was. It was nice to see that I could run or jump without any pain.”
Bujan Sets New Digs and Digs Per Set Records

An impact player during the entire duration of her U SPORTS career, fifth-year women’s volleyball libero Cassie Bujan finished things off in style by breaking two conference records in 2018-19. While her 448 digs are impressive on their own, it’s her 4.87 digs per set that stand out as that average broke a 12-year record previously held by Trinity Western alum Julie Blackburn.

Bujan was a stable force all season for a team that dealt with injuries to begin the season. Her ability to sell her body out to keep a rally alive resulted in many critical points for the Bisons and her veteran leadership also didn’t go unnoticed. She was also honoured at year’s end as the squad’s MVP.

“As a libero role, normally it’s overlooked, but my team respects me so much and I’ve earned quite a bit of that just through my work ethic every day in practice and games,” Bujan said.

“Their trust in me is crazy, because I take up quite a bit of the court and I’ve earned enough respect that I can kind of lay down the law and speak up.”

Men’s Track Secures First Top Three Finish Since 1996

The 2018-19 track and field season was one for the memory books. In all, the Bisons earned medals in six different events on home soil, including the gold medal the relay team, Mansaray’s gold and Akinola’s silver in high jump, an, Miguel Morrison in the 600m. The men’s 60.5 points also placed them third overall, an improvement from sixth in 2017-18 and 14th in 2016-17.

“It was the perfect storm this year and super exciting,” head coach Claude Berube said after the meet.

Wog wins Four Golds at U SPORTS

Third-year swimmer Kelsey Wog capped off an amazing season with four gold medals at the U SPORTS national championships. Dominating the pool, Wog swam to gold in the 50, 100 and 200-metre breaststroke events and the 200-metre individual medley. She set new U SPORTS record in the 200-metre breaststroke with a time of 2:25.50.

“I just had a really good time this year,” she said regarding her nationals experience. “I took a more relaxed approach than I have in previous years and had a lot of fun with it. A lot of my friends were there so I was just hanging out with them.”

Wog went on to compete in the Canadian Swimming Trials in early April, qualifying for the FINA World Championships with a silver medal in the 200-metre breaststroke. Her time of 2:22.82 was also the second-fastest in the world in the event at the time.
Succeeding both on and off the court is important to Bisons student-athletes. In 2018-19, a record 129 student-athletes achieved U SPORTS Academic All-Canadian status (3.5 GPA or higher), the ninth straight season that at least 85 Bisons have received this honour. What’s more, 62 of those student-athletes (48%) had GPAs of 4.0 or higher.

Bisons worked hard in the community as well over the past season. Jayden McKoy from football, Daniel Heschuk from men’s cross country, James Wagner from men’s basketball, and Tegan Turner from women’s track and field were all selected by the Canada West conference for the 2018-19 Student-Athlete Community Service Award — the most ever for the Bisons.
2018-19 ACADEMIC ALL-CANADIANS

Women's Basketball
Deidre Bartlett, Asper School of Business
Keziah Brothers, Faculty of Arts
Claire Harvey, Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth & Resources
Dana Inglis, Faculty of Science
Nicole Konieczny, Faculty of Science
Tiara Lisci, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Lana Mackic, Faculty of Science
Tianna Mighty, Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth & Resources

Men's Basketball
Joel Adu-Quaye, Faculty of Science, St. Paul's College
Cameron O'Hara, Faculty of Science, St. Paul's College
James Wagner, Faculty of Science
Risto Zimbakov, Faculty of Science

Football
Cole Adamson, Faculty of Engineering
Macho Bockru, Asper School of Business
Derek Dufault, Faculty of Science
Kyle Gordon, Faculty of Arts
Colby Kyliau, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Jared Lazarenko, Faculty of Arts
Kyle Wilfer, Faculty of Arts, St. Paul’s College

Men's Golf
Jeff Bleue, Faculty of Arts
Anthony Leicht, Faculty of Science
Bobby McNair, Extended Education
Steve Young, Asper School of Business

Women's Golf
Dayna Dubnicoff, University 1
Brynn Todd, Asper School of Business

Women's Hockey
Alexandra Anderson, Faculty of Arts
Jenai Buchanan, Faculty of Agricultural & Food Sciences
Kaitlyn Chatyrbok, University 1
Brielle Daquay-Neveux, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Lauryn Keen, Faculty of Agriculture
Taryn Kokesch, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Erin Kuchearvy, Asper School of Business
Emilie Massé, University 1
Megan Neduzak, Faculty of Science
Courtlyn Oswald, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, College of Nursing
Sheridan Oswald, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, Max Rady College of Medicine
Erica Rieder, Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth & Resources
Allison Sexton, Faculty of Arts
Alanna Sharman, Asper School of Business
Chloe Snith, University 1
Jordyn Zacharias, Faculty of Arts

Men's Hockey
Keaton Jameson, University 1
Brandon Paradoski, Faculty of Science
Justin Paulic, Faculty of Engineering
Brett Stovin, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Dasan Sydora, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management

Women's Soccer
Gabrielle Clark, University 1
Stephanie Friesen, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Katelyn Isfeld, University 1
Drew Kennedy, University 1
Lauren Martens, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Bruna Mavignier, Graduate Studies
Katherine Meo, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Michaila Pilcher, Faculty of Arts
Alanna Shaw, Faculty of Agriculture
Brenae Smith, University 1
Hayley Ward, Faculty of Science
Madison Wilford, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Amanda Wong, Faculty of Science

Women's Swimming
Dora Modrinc, Faculty of Engineering
Victoria Tess, Faculty of Arts

Women's Cross Country / Track & Field
Quinn Anderson, Faculty of Agriculture
Keara Andrew, Faculty of Science
Erika Britton, Asper School of Business
Madison Chapel, Faculty of Science
Darby Goodall, Faculty of Science
Bryarre Gudmundson, Faculty of Science
Kirsten Hurdal, Faculty of Science
Eva Jensen, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Jennifer Kent, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Amy Klappensteen, Asper School of Business
Madison Lawrence, Faculty of Science
Kate Loepky, Faculty of Agricultural & Food Sciences

Women's Volleyball
Kearley Abbott, Faculty of Science, St. Paul's College
Allison Alcock,, Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth & Resources
Sydney Booker, Faculty of Science
Laura Findlay, Faculty of Arts
Laura Hill, University 1
Kelsey Jordan, Faculty of Science
Sydney Kurth, Asper School of Business

Men's Volleyball
Jon Laube, Faculty of Engineering
Grant Legaree, Faculty of Science
Kyle Martens, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Kevin Negus, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
David Penner, Faculty of Science
Dustin Sparing, Faculty of Education, St. Paul's College
Dylan Sutherland, Faculty of Engineering
Brendan Warren, University 1

Emily Watson, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Erin White, Faculty of Arts
Janine Zajac, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Men's Cross Country / Track & Field
Justin Benjamin, Faculty of Science, St. Paul's College
Luc Deleau, Asper School of Business
Quinn Desrochers, Faculty of Engineering
Alec Dickson, University 1
Marcel Dufault, University 1
Jamie Dumaran, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Braedy Farmer, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Divyot Grewal, Faculty of Arts
Daniel Heschuk, Faculty of Science
Justin Hochman, Faculty of Arts
Darian Hole, Faculty of Science
Stefan Hreno, Faculty of Science, St. Paul’s College
Joshua Hutchinson, Faculty of Arts
Josh Joseph, Faculty of Engineering
Deric Kornelson, Faculty of Science
Bradley LeDrew, Faculty of Science, St. Paul’s College
Thomas Penner, Faculty of Science
Jean-Luc Perron, Asper School of Business
Rob Pilschke, University 1
Harjaspreet Poonia, Faculty of Science
Owen Ready, Faculty of Engineering
Sebastien Regnier, Faculty of Science
Max Speiser, Faculty of Engineering
James Tschuk, Faculty of Arts, St. Paul's College
Reegan Wiebe, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Michael Wood, Faculty of Science

Men's Basketball
Justin Benjamin, Faculty of Science, St. Paul's College
Luc Deleau, Asper School of Business
Quinn Desrochers, Faculty of Engineering
Alec Dickson, University 1
Marcel Dufault, University 1
Jamie Dumaran, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Braedy Farmer, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
Divyot Grewal, Faculty of Arts
Daniel Heschuk, Faculty of Science
Justin Hochman, Faculty of Arts
Darian Hole, Faculty of Science
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