

Fueled by the Fans

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CWU's new and improved Nicholson Pavilion reopened to the public on Oct. 7. They did not stop there though as a brand-new student section was opened for students to establish new traditions and have access to giveaways. It has been an instrumental part in both the men's and women's basketball teams success as fans are packing the bleachers more and more.

While at home, both Wildcat basketball teams have at least a 70% win rate on the season. The women's team sits at 7-3 while the men's team is 10-1. This is drastically different compared to their away records of 4-4 for the women and 2-5 for the men. This is a testament to how important it is to be playing in front of your home crowd and the effect it can have on the team.

Senior forward and second leading scorer of the men's team Samaad Hector talked about the difficulties of playing on the road compared to home. "We have to find our own energy," he said. "We are all excited to be home because the fans really do bring us all that energy and we can just feed off them."

So far, the fans have brought their A-game to the section. They are showing up to games with posters, shirts with faces of some of the athletes, even some of the other CWU athletes from other sports have shown up to support. A few football players have shown up to the game shirtless with words drawn across their chest either praising CWU or making fun of the opposing team.

The fans have been electric in the time the student section has been added. Sophomore mechanical engineering major Nathan Nhye gave his opinion on the level of hype the student section has this season. "I think the vibes are really high right now, we have good energy that motivates the players and gives them morale to play better." Nhye said.

There are certain players who perform better in front of fans. They can get momentum going and once everyone in attendance is hyping them up, they tend to play with a different level of confidence. To both Hector and Nhye, senior guard Anjaylo Lloyd is that exact type of player.

"I've never played with a player who it takes the crowd to get him going and once he's going, he is unguardable, you cannot stop him," Hector said. "If he checks into the game and you let him hit his first two shots, you're going to have a rough time stopping him after that."

The student section may be loud, but it is not the only area of the court that is rocking during the games. CWU's band attends the games as well and are sounding great and taunting the opposing teams. They have been seen with hypnotizing wheels while the other team shoots their free throws in an attempt to distract them.

Sophomore drummer Andrew Byrd shared the reason for their gag of keeping newspapers with them to mess with the away team. "It became this joke with our director where when the opposing team is announced, we act like we're too busy reading the newspaper," Byrd said. He also spoke on the impact the band has on the game, "We definitely help set

the level as far as the energy of the game for sure. Us combined with the student section really brings some hype."

The student section could not be run without some other important people. Those being the members of the CWU cheer team. You will always catch them lined up in front of the student section hyping up the crowd and doing their stunts.

Junior Livy Sander is a flier and is in her first year with the cheer team. Sander spoke on the effect of the student section on both the team and the fans. "It helps us be louder, which is great for our players and it distracts the other team," Sander said. "And I think it makes other students who may be quieter feel like they can be a little louder too."

The distance between the fans and the cheerleaders is very different compared to football season and basketball games with the addition of the student section. Junior main base and captain of the cheer team Isabelle Zahnow is in her third year with the team and spoke on how different football and basketball games are with the fans so close.

"Sometimes it can be a little chaotic because you turn around and they are right in your face compared to having a gate," Zahnow said. "But it is way better because you get way more crowd involvement. It is way more fun because they are much more involved with us than football."

There is not much time left in the season to get to the student section with only two home games left for the men's team and three for the women. Next opportunity to be there will be Saturday Feb. 24 where your CWU women's team will take on Northwest Nazarene at 1:15 p.m.



Student section packed out.
(Photo courtesy of Jacob Thompson / Thompson Sports Media)



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