

# 2024 PSU HOMECOMING



THE MORNING SUN

# PSU Homecoming

## It's Homecoming Week!

Homecoming Week and its various events are a reminder not only of the close relationship that exists between the Pittsburgh community and Pittsburg State University, but also of our shared history. For the past century, the university and the community have supported each other, through good times and bad. It's a relationship that other communities envy. We and the advertisers who helped bring you this special Homecoming tribute hope you enjoy this special week in the life of our community.

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# gorilla groove

HOMECOMING 2024



## Monday, Oct. 14

- ▶ **HOMECOMING KICKOFF**  
6:00-8:00 PM GORILLA VILLAGE
- ▶ **ROYALTY VOTING**  
OPENS AT NOON ON GORILLA ENGAGE

## Tuesday, Oct. 15

- ▶ **JUNGLE JUMP**  
5:00-7:00 PM STUDENT REC CENTER
- ▶ **BANNER DECORATING COMPETITION**  
VOTING OPENS AT 5:00 PM ON ENGAGE

## Wednesday, Oct. 16

- ▶ **RAFT RACE RELAYS**  
5:00-7:00 PM UNIVERSITY LAKE

## Thursday, Oct. 17

- ▶ **YELL LIKE HELL**  
7:00-9:00 PM CARNIE SMITH STADIUM
- ▶ **ROYALTY VOTING**  
CLOSES AT NOON ON GORILLA ENGAGE

## Friday, Oct. 18

- ▶ **TASTE OF PITTSBURG**  
6:00-8:00 PM OVERMAN STUDENT CENTER
- ▶ **HOMECOMING CONCERT**  
8:30 PM GORILLA VILLAGE

## Saturday, Oct. 19

- ▶ **HOMECOMING PARADE**  
9:00 AM DOWNTOWN PITTSBURG
- ▶ **GORILLA FEST**  
10:00-1:45 PM GORILLA VILLAGE

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, HOMECOMING FOOTBALL GAME**  
2:00 PM CARNIE SMITH STADIUM

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Pittsburg State University

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# Gorillas romp to homecoming victory

By Jim Henry

jhenry@morningsun.net

Pittsburg State University capped off the 2023 Homecoming celebration with a convincing win.

The Gorillas, coming into the game ranked No. 2 in Division II, turned in a complete, four-quarter performance and celebrated homecoming with a 55-6 victory over Sioux Falls on a cold, rainy Saturday afternoon at Carnie Smith Stadium.

The Gorillas (9-0) tallied three second-quarter touchdowns to open a 27-0 halftime advantage. They added two TDs in each of the final two periods and almost cleared the bench as 74 players saw action.

The Gorillas played four quarterbacks, and all four completed a pass. Eight players had a rushing attempt, 10 caught a pass, and 31 made a tackle or defended a pass.

Sioux Falls (3-6) averaged 30 points per game, but it

failed to reach the end zone for the first time since a 55-0 loss to Carroll College in the NAIA championship game on Dec. 3, 2005, in Helena, Montana.

The Cougars scored on Nick Hernandez field goals of 35 and 36 yards in the third quarter -- their first two field-goal attempts of the season.

After the first field goal, Kolbe Katsis took the ensuing kickoff two yards deep in the end zone and raced 102 yards up the right sideline for a touchdown.

"I'm proud of how our team came out and played today," Gorillas coach Brian Wright said. "I'm proud of how our team worked this week. I don't feel like our team tried to take a week off. I felt like they came to work all week long, and we had good practices, good attention to detail. When you prepare the right way, you come out and play well. Our guys did that today."

"It was an overall

good team win," said linebacker Alex Gaskill, who had nine tackles and an interception. "Everyone was dialed in. We had a good week of prep."

Carson Otworth also had an interception for the Gorillas, and Jaylen Fuksa made three of the team's seven pass breakups.

Jake Barkley, Luke Jennings and Cole Sample all had five tackles, and Durbie McReynolds and Jasper Ogburn made four.

The Gorillas' three-headed running back committee made a quick impact as each scored a touchdown for a 21-0 lead one minute into the second quarter.

Antwan Squire's three-yard run off a direct snap capped a nine-play, 56-yard drive for a 7-0 lead with 5:57 left in the first period.

The next two scores came just 14 seconds apart.

Cleo Chandler went seven yards untouched around left end for a 14-0 lead on the second play of the second quarter, ending an

eight-play, 60-yard drive.

Gaskill intercepted Camden Dean's pass at the Cougars' 33-yard line on the first play of the ensuing series.

"We knew they were a heavy (bootleg) team because of the quarterback's ability to run and spread it around," Gaskill said. "Coach (Lynn) Nutt and all the coaches have been preaching all week if he 'boots' out, just get to the sideline because it was going to be a route I could get underneath. I trusted it, was able to get underneath, and he threw it right to me."

On the Gorillas' next snap Ty Pennington threw a strike down the seam to Noah Hernandez circling out of the right side of the backfield for a touchdown and a 21-0 lead.

Chad Dodson and Devon Garrison connected for a 14-yard touchdown pass and a 27-0 lead at halftime. Dodson hit 10-of-14 passes for 152 yards, and

Garrison caught four passes for 68 yards.

On the third play of the second half, the Gorillas faced third down-and-inches at the 39-yard line. Squire broke free off right tackle for a 61-yard touchdown, the Gorillas' longest run of the season.

"If it wasn't for Trace (Jeffries, tackle), he was coming around and he just completely (knocked) a dude out of my way," said Squire, who finished with 96 yards on 10 carries. "So, I had a clear lane because of him and the entire O-line. They played great today."

Pennington's 10-yard pass to Kam Gillespie and Eric Virgil's four-yard run provided the Gorillas' fourth-quarter scores.

The Gorillas' balanced attack finished with 454 yards total offense -- 216 rushing and 238 passing -- while the Cougars had 241 yards, including just 85 passing on 15-of-29 accuracy. The Cougars

entered the game averaging 252 yards through the air.

The Gorillas return to MIAA play this week and play Saturday at Missouri Western (7-2), which blanked Northeastern State 44-0 on Saturday.

Sioux Falls 0 0 6 0 -- 6  
Pittsburg St. 7 20 14 14  
-- 55

#### First Quarter

PSU--Antwan Squire  
3 run (Austin Schmitt  
kick), 5:57

#### Second Quarter

PSU--Cleo Chandler  
7 run (Schmitt kick),  
14:16  
PSU--Noah Hernandez  
33 pass from Ty Pennington (Schmitt kick),  
14:02  
PSU--Devon Garrison  
14 pass from Chad  
Dodson (pass failed),  
3:17

#### Third Quarter

PSU--Squire 61 run  
(Schmitt kick), 13:24  
USF--Nick Hernandez  
35 FG, 7:56  
PSU--Kolbe Katsis 100  
kickoff return (Schmitt  
kick), 7:42  
USF--Hernandez 36 FG,  
2:31

#### Fourth Quarter

PSU--Kam Gillespie 10  
pass from Pennington  
(Schmitt kick), 13:25  
PSU--Eric Virgil 4 run  
(Schmitt kick), 7:54  
A -- 9,348



# Happy Homecoming Week!

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# Homecoming royalty to be named at Yell Like Hell

**Staff reports**

news@morningsun.net

A century ago, students at what is now Pittsburg State University held bonfires and pep rallies before

the big football game. There was even a night-time snake dance through downtown Pittsburg, all covered extensively by the Pittsburg Headlight newspa-

per. Today, we can see those traditions reflected in Yell Like Hell. This modern version of the old pep rallies pits fraternities, sororities and oth-

er student groups against each other in a contest that blends dance and cheer. Points are awarded for different aspects of each routine. At this event, the votes

are tallied for Homecoming King and Queen.

The annual Yell Like Hell convocation, held this year at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 17, in Car-

nie Smith Stadium, is free and open to the public.

**This year's Homecoming King and Queen nominees are:**

SEE **NOMINEES, 13C**



Addie Hinterwege



Emily Fuerborn



Emma Polly



Hannah Eckstein



Jenna Clark



Jordan Hawarth

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**10a-1p** Holiday Art Market at

Frisco Event Center

**6:30p** Tree Lighting Ceremony at

Pritchett Pavilion



# One of a kind

*PSU's beloved Gorilla mascot is like no other college mascot in the U.S.*

**Staff reports**

news@morningsun.net

We couldn't celebrate Homecoming without Gus, who is beginning his second century as Pitt State's beloved mascot.

Generations of proud PSU alumni have embraced the Gorilla mascot, affectionately known

as "Gus," but many are at a loss when asked how it came to be that a university on the edge of the Kansas prairies adopted this majestic primate from Africa as its unique symbol.

To reveal that story, university historians take us back to the early days of Pittsburg State University, to

the year 1920.

In one account, Gene DeGruson, an early PSU historian, writes that a group of about two dozen young men who were dissatisfied with the state of school spirit exhibited by the general population of students at campus athletic events, organized themselves into a

group with the purpose to "accelerate college spirit and enthusiasm until it shall permeate the State."

With that lofty goal in mind, the group, under the leadership of Harold "Babe" Alyea, submitted a number of editorials to the school paper.

"The only thing that is wrong with this school," they wrote in one of their editorials, "is that the student body is made up of a bunch of would be school teachers who are trying to get their

SEE **GUS, 9C**



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## GUS

CONTINUED FROM 8C

dignity established before they get out. We want PEP and we want it all the time.”

In this account, the group adopted the nickname “Gorillas,” which was a common twenties slang term synonymous with “rough-necks.” They

sponsored pep rallies, trains to out-of-town athletic events, freshman hazings, and “night shirt stampedes” through downtown Pittsburg, all which served to boost

their membership quickly.

Some other historical accounts vary slightly, intimating that the group earned the nickname “Gorillas” from others because of their behavior at said events. What is agreed is that the group readily embraced the name as have Pitt State students and alumni in the century since.

In 1923, the group went in search of an appropriate visual image to represent themselves, turning to art stu-

dent Helen Waskey. The image that Waskey drew was published in the school newspaper, making it the first visual representation of what was to become the official school mascot.

On Jan. 15, 1925, the student body officially adopted the Gorilla as the “name and the synonym for the athletic teams.”

Over the years, the mascot’s image has changed with the times.

In the early ‘50s Kanza art editor Lee Green turned Gus into a cartoon

character. In 1965, art instructor Larry Wooster sculpted a modern version, seated and looking over his right shoulder, that was cast in fiberglass and set in front of the Student Union. That version was cast in bronze and remains in its original location.

In 1986, the university adopted the familiar and now ubiquitous “split-face” logo for use on official and licensed material. The logo was created by designer Michael Hailey. Today, that

recognizable logo can be seen on a seemingly endless supply of Gorilla collectibles from t-shirts and hats to key chains and cupcakes. It’s a popular specialty license plate, as well.

In 2014, a 2,000-pound bronze Gorilla Statue by famed artist and sculptor Tom Corbin was unveiled in Champions Plaza on the east side of Carnie Smith Stadium. The dramatic piece has become one of the most popular sites for photo-

graphs for alumni and visitors. It sits at the end of the Gorilla Walk, where football players on their way to the stadium tap Gus’ hand for good luck on their way in to face their foes.

Bronze, concrete, painted on wood, etched on pewter or glass, or sewn onto a t-shirt, Pitt State fans and alumni love their Gorillas. They owe a big “thank you” to a group of rowdy boys who a century ago thought we needed a bit more “PEP... all the time!”



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# Homecoming has a rich history

## Staff reports

news@morningsun.net

The Homecoming traditions Pittsburg State University alumni celebrate this weekend have their roots in the earliest days of the university's history.

The school, founded in 1903, created an alumni association the year after it opened. The school, then the State Manual Normal School Auxiliary, began holding alumni dinners as early as 1910,

although those events were held in Topeka as part of the annual Kansas State Teachers Association meeting.

According to "Pittsburg State University:

Photographic History of the first 100 Years," the early school-wide reunions occurred at the annual teachers' meetings held on campus. "As many as 3,000 people would attend these meetings each fall where the greeting of old friends was

somewhat of a hidden benefit. By the 1920s, the campus sororities and fraternities were hosting informal reunions."

It took until the 1920s for the word "Homecoming" to appear in the Collegio, the student newspaper, around important football games.

The first Homecoming Queen, Laverne Cranston, was crowned in 1924 and by 1930, Homecoming was an annual event no longer tied to state

teachers' meetings in Topeka, but firmly associated with football. Events like pep rallies, bonfires and parades quickly became part of the annual celebration.

For a short period in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the university had a Black Homecoming Queen, referred to as Miss Bold Black. That was discontinued in 1975.

Nationally known entertainers were part of Pittsburg State's Homecoming for a

time, beginning in the 1950s. Names such as Duke Ellington, Roy Clark, Glenn Campbell, Broadway composer Meredith Willson and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, performed on campus and were often honored as parade grand marshals.

The Pride of the Plains Marching Band has always featured prominently in Homecoming and in the 1950s began hosting Band Day to coincide with Homecoming. Col-

lege, high school and junior high school bands from a wide area attended those days, marching in the parade in the morning and performing in a massed band concert at halftime of the Homecoming football game. The performance always concluded with the "1812 Overture," complete with ROTC cannon, which still rattles windows after every Gorilla touchdown.



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## Five Pitt State alumni to be honored during Homecoming Week

### Staff reports

news@morningsun.net

Five alumni of Pittsburg State University will be honored with awards presented by the Alumni Association during a reception on Friday, Oct. 18. The reception will begin at 2 p.m. in the Wilkinson Alumni Center at Ford and Joplin streets.

Ryan Bartlett, Benjamin Cochran, and Amber (Shaverdi) Huston will be honored with

the Dr. Kenneth K. Bateman Outstanding Alumni Award. Lexington Peterson and Josh Thompson will be presented with the Gorillas of the Last Decade (GOLD) Alumni Award (formerly Good Apple Award).

The reception is open to campus and the community.

**Dr. Kenneth K. Bateman Outstanding Alumni Award**

**Ryan Bartlett**  
Ryan Bartlett (BA

'03, Communication) is the senior producer of Digital Talent Production at FOX Sports in Los Angeles, California.

After graduating from Pitt State, he began his broadcast career. He worked at KM-BC-TV, KOAM-TV, ESPN, and NFL Media where he served as digital line producer and managing producer. In his current role, Bartlett over-

SEE ALUMNI, 15

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**GO 'RILLAS!**



# Gorillafest draws thousands

**Staff reports**  
news@morningsun.net

After the parade, thousands of Pitt State fans and alumni will head directly to the campus for the GorillaFest tailgate experience, now in its 27th year.

The event, in and around Gorilla Village between the stadium and University Lake, features food trucks; live music; bounce houses and activities for kids including bal-

loon twisting and Splitface Gorilla tattoos and hair paint; a pep rally by the Pride of the Plains Marching Band, Dance Team and Spirit Squad; and the traditional Gorilla Walk, in which the band leads the team from the Weede PE Building through Gorilla Village and Champions Plaza to the stadium.

GorillaFest is free and opens at 11 a.m.

In the years since its launch, Goril-

laFest and grown and changed, now encompassing numerous private and corporate tailgates that all feed into what is widely recognized as one of the top overall game day atmospheres in NCAA Division II.

This year, live music will be provided by Bill and Monica's Excellent Adventure and the pre-game pep rally will begin approximately 75 minutes prior to kickoff.

## NOMINEES CONTINUED FROM 6C



**Brett Gibson**



**Charlie Judd**



**Matthew Schmidt**



**Parker Jenkins**



**Riley Johnso**



**Trevor Bohnenblust**

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## ALUMNI

CONTINUED FROM 11C

sees the digital production of content for the NFL, MLB, WWE, Gambling and NASCAR.

He is a three-time Emmy Award Winner and a two-time winner of the Vision Award at ESPN for Creative Excellence, just to name a few.

Bartlett was appointed to the Pitt State Alumni Association Board of Directors in 2023. When he is back on campus at his alma mater, he can be found visiting with broadcasting students in the Department of Communication.

Bartlett grew up in Merriam, Kansas, and is a graduate of Shawnee Mission North.

### Benjamin Cochran

Benjamin Cochran (MSN '13, Family Nurse Practitioner & DNP '16, Advanced Practice Nursing) is a board-certified family nurse practitioner at Labette Health's Clinic in Altamont, Kansas.

Starting his nursing education at Labette Community College, he finished his bachelor of science degree in nursing at Wichita State University before attending the Irene

Ransom Bradley School of Nursing at Pitt State, where he earned two advanced degrees.

In addition to practicing nursing, Cochran hosts a podcast called Just some Podcast for Nurse Practitioners, which he started in 2018.

He was awarded the Nurse Practitioner State Award for Excellence in Kansas from the American Association of Nurse Practitioners in 2021. Cochran also received the William & Allene Guthrie Van Meter Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award from LCC in 2023.

He is a member of the LCC Nursing Advisory Board, the LCC Foundation & Alumni Association Board, the Altamont City Council, is president of the Curious Minds Discovery Zone, and has coordinated Labette County Toys for Tots since 2013 with his wife, Audra.

Cochran grew up in Chetopa, Kansas. He has lived in Altamont for the past 17 years with his family.

### Amber (Shaverdi) Huston

Amber (Shaverdi) Huston (BA '05, Communication) is the executive director of the Na-

tional Association for Campus Activities. She is the first female in NACA's 64-year history to hold that role.

In addition, Huston is serving her second term as National President of Alpha Sigma Alpha Sorority. She has served Alpha Sigma Alpha in a variety of roles – as a volunteer, an adviser, and as an employee – since she graduated from Pitt State. She was initiated into the Eta Eta Chapter at Pitt State during her collegiate years.

In 2020, Eastern Illinois University honored Amber as an Outstanding Alumnus. She completed her master of science degree in Student Development at the university in 2008.

Huston serves on the Marriott International Customer Advisory Council and the Higher Education Consortium for Student Affairs Certification Board. She has volunteered for several fraternal, college/university and association programs, serving as lead facilitator and presenter.

During her time at Pittsburg State, she was very involved on campus, including Alpha Sigma Alpha Sorority and Student

Government Association. She earned many awards, such as Outstanding Leader of Campus, Jack H. Overman Leadership & Service Award, Outstanding Greek Woman, Golden Gorilla, and Homecoming Queen, just to name a few.

Huston grew up in Girard, Kansas. She and her family currently reside in Columbia, South Carolina.

### GOLD Alumni Award

#### Lexington Peterson

Lexington Peterson (BS '21, Polymer Chemistry & BSET '21, Plastics Engineering Technology) is the business development manager in the Automotive and Mobility division at ENGEL in Cincinnati, Ohio.

After graduating in 2021, Peterson joined the team at iMFLUX as a field process engineer. She then joined KraussMaffei as project manager in their injection molding division. At ENGEL, Peterson builds partnerships and advances a shared vision on the future of automotive and mobility markets with a special focus on sustainability and emerging technologies.

Peterson was named the 2023

Plastics New Rising Star and was an SPE Inspiring Plastics Professional at SPE ANTEC 2023.

As a woman in STEM, she encourages girls to follow their dreams and advocates for women in the industry. She has volunteered in several schools in the Cincinnati area, as well as organizations focusing on girls in STEM.

Peterson grew up in Amsterdam, Missouri.

#### Josh Thompson

Josh Thompson (BST '17, Construction Management) is the owner and CEO of JT Companies in Pittsburg, Kansas.

JT Companies includes JT Construction and JT Home & Lawn. Thompson started JT Home & Lawn while he was a student at Pittsburg State. After graduation, Thompson joined Crossland Construction Company where he served as a field engineer and project manager.

In March 2020, he made the decision to step away from a secure, full-time job to operate on his own. Two days later, COVID shut the world down. Thompson kept working hard – focusing on concrete and metal build-

ing construction. During this time, he had only one full-time employee.

Over the past four years, the companies have experienced exponential growth. JT Companies now employs more than 30 employees. Thompson continues to hire Pitt State graduates to help him lead field operations and welcomes interns.

Thompson gives back to his alma mater in a multitude of ways. He serves on the School of Construction Leadership Council, is a proud sponsor of Pitt State Athletics, and gives back to several departments and groups through sponsorships.

In addition, he supports the community through service to the Salvation Army, The Lord's Diner, Mt. Carmel Foundation, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Fold of Honor, just to name a few.

Thompson was born and raised in Pittsburg. He still lives in the community today with his wife, Amy.

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