

Photos by Adam Kabins/Index, Design by Chris Waller/Index

# Healthy Agbo regains form

John Weeks  
Staff Reporter

Junior forward Grant Agbo is just happy to be healthy.

"It finally feels good to be healthy," Agbo said. "I've been healthy for a while. I'm feeling good, getting better every day."

Agbo has never been completely healthy in his career on the Bulldog basketball team.

Back in September, he strained a muscle in the lower part of his bicep while working out and about two weeks later he sprained his ankle when he stepped on someone's foot.

But the 6-foot-5, 265-pound Agbo led the Bulldogs (15-4, 5-3 MIAA) to a 61-58 victory against Emporia State University on Saturday, pouring in a season-high 21 points, one point away from tying his career mark.

Agbo's transition from McCluer High School (Florissant, Mo.) to Truman was fairly smooth. He led

the team in scoring as a freshman with 12.6 points/game and won MIAA Freshman of the Year. Agbo averaged more than eight points/game his sophomore season largely because of nagging injuries.

Head coach Jack Schrader said that if his team needs to get the ball down in the low post, Agbo is the man for the job.

"He's our best low-post player," Schrader said. "When you attack the basket, you need someone big and strong and aggressive to do it, and he's the man."

Schrader said he hasn't seen Agbo this healthy since his freshman year.

"Unfortunately, he's had a lot of little injuries going on every year," Schrader said. "It's tough because, in a way, people get used to you not being around or available or being there. Right now, he's just rounding into shape."

Agbo said making an impact in every game with his size is a constant goal. He played 34 minutes

in the win – the most he's played all year – and finished the game 6-for-11 from the field and 9-for-14 from the free-throw line, raising his scoring average to 8.5.

Schrader said Agbo's size will come in handy as the season progresses.

"As the conference gets competitive, it becomes physical, and he is our physical presence in there," Schrader said. "Really that's what he gives us, and that's pretty easy to see."

Agbo said he has a routine before every game – a nap.

"You have to slide in the nap even if it's like 45 minutes," Agbo said. "You feel a lot better."

Agbo said he's very excited to be healthy and is optimistic for the year.

"Losses will happen," Agbo said. "We're mortal. No one thought we would be undefeated, but no one thought we'd be where we're at now. Hopefully, it will be a historical year, but only time will tell."

## Athlete of the Week

### Grant Agbo

**Sport:** Basketball  
**Year:** Junior  
**Position:** Forward  
**Hometown:** Ferguson, Mo.

Agbo scored 21 points versus Emporia State last Saturday, helping the Bulldogs secure a 61-58 victory and end a two-game skid in the MIAA Conference.

## SENIORS | Both swim teams knock off Div. I Western Illinois to send out seniors with key victory

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mean, Western Illinois has a few good swimmers, but still our third and fourth and fifth swimmers on the depth chart were able to win."

The win was the third in a row and the women's fourth win. Gole said it was a good confidence builder for his teams to be on a winning streak heading into this weekend.

This weekend could easily be called rivalry weekend for the 'Dogs. Friday, the men head to Rolla, Mo., to take on the University of Missouri-Rolla Miners.

The men's squads met in the Pershing pool in early Nov. with the Miners winning the dual 175-86.

"We swam them earlier this year, and Rolla just annihilated us," Gole said. "It wasn't even close. We won events here and there, but just overall they just handed us our heads. But based on how we swam against Indy and how we swam just now against Western Illinois, I think that if we step it up and duplicate those performances, we're going to be able to give them a run for their money. It will be nail-biter. It will come down to every point."

After the Friday meet, the men will join the women in Springfield, Mo., to take on Drury University.

"As soon as we're done on Friday, we have to drive to the other

meet and get ready for the next day," Pippett said. "We're just going to have to keep our frame of mind for racing for those two days."

While the men's main rival is UMR, the women have a similar rivalry with the Drury women. The Panthers have finished second every year since 2001 – the same year the Truman women started their five straight national title run.

"Drury is our main rival every year at nationals, so obviously it's really exciting to get this one out ahead of time and see where everyone is at this point in the season," Funk said.

Truman will start the meet

down 32-0 since the Panthers have a diving team. For the team to be win, they will have to overcome the diving deficit in the 11 swimming events.

"Our depth is going to be what is going to come up for us against Drury," Gole said. "Drury has horses. They have about four or five horses that are really strong in individual events. At the same time, in order for [Drury coach Brian Reynolds] to even try and win a relay he's going to have to throw all four of them on one relay, where we have both of our relays equally strong. If we make up those 32 points it's going to be on our depth."

## GOLE | New coach wants to make men's team a national power on par with women's squad

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"This is a desired position in my opinion," Gole said. "You want to work with talented athletes – I want to work with talented athletes. I've watched Truman State swim the last five years, and I know that the swimmers on this team have that kind of ability that I wanted to be able to work with."

Another drawing point for Gole was Truman's tough academic standards. He said good student athletes make his job easier.

"I heard about the academics here, and I knew that the swimmers were not only talented but equally focused in the classroom, and as a coach that's what you want," Gole said. "You don't want to be having to fight for your athlete's eligibility all the time. [The athletes] know that they are here to go to school and at the same time here to swim fast."

Taking control of the reins of the five-time defending national champion women will be tough, Gole said. He said that maintaining a winning program will take constant work.

"Honestly, I think the hardest thing to do is stay on top," Gole said. "It's just going to take persistent recruiting and developing talent. Being able to fight for that title every year is what I want."

When Gole says staying on top is tough, he is speaking from experience.

As a collegiate swimmer at Oakland, he was a member of three-straight national championship squads, and he was a 16-time All-American.

"I know what it is about," Gole said. "I knew what it took, like when I was at Oakland it took 18

guys winning the title. We didn't necessarily have the super-talented swimmers. I take that overall team aspect with me."

Although keeping the women on top is one of Gole's goals, he said he also wants to continue to develop of the men's team and try to make Truman a swimming power in both locker rooms.

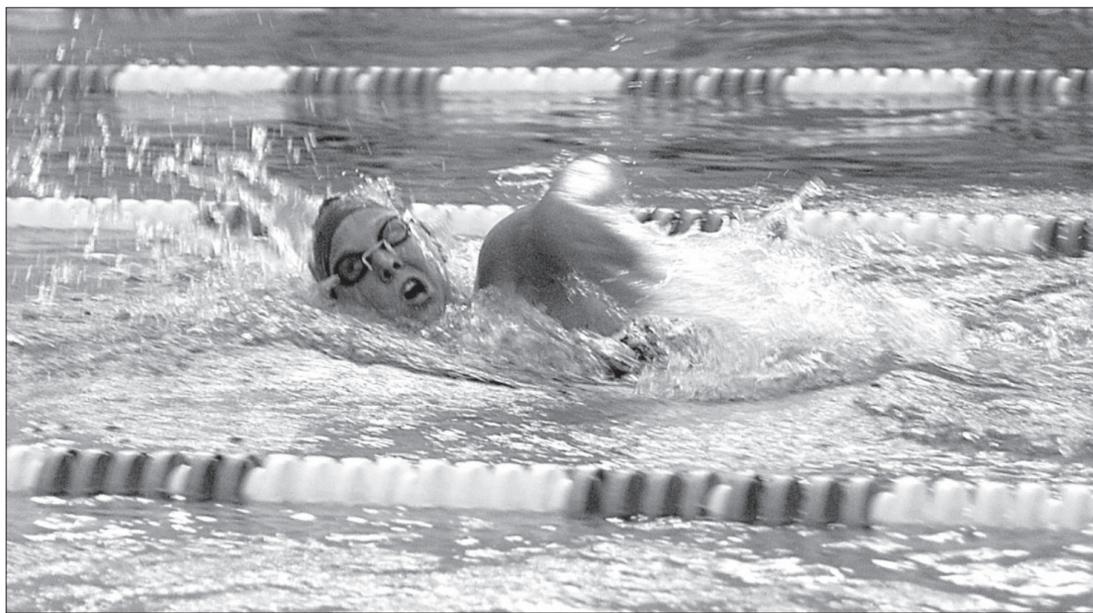
"With the men's program, [we want to] just try and stay at the top 10 right now," Gole said. "And at the same time [we want to] recruit to get top five and just take it one step at a time like the women did. I think that we are on the way there. I think the [men's] team is definitely stronger than it has been."

Gole said he has changed the teams' training methods to keep the Bulldogs a swimming power. Instead of focusing purely on technique or distance, the team uses a "hybrid" method that combines both schools of thought, Gole said. So far the team has adapted to the change of styles.

"I think it's opened our minds to a lot of new ways to train, and I think it's really showing that we are in great shape, probably better shape than we have been in at this point in the season ever," senior Katie Funk said. "It's still a lot of hard work, but I think we are all starting to kind of begin to believe in his style of coaching."

Whatever Gole does with the team in future seasons is still to be determined. Wollmering said for now he is pleased with the job Gole has done so far.

"I think he's been doing a great job and is a great addition to Truman State University and the swimming program," Wollmering said.



Roger Meissen/Index

Senior Aimee Gregor swims the 500-yard free style event Saturday at the Pershing pool. Gregor finished in 5:13.24.

## PARENTS | Senior Day festivities provoke fond memories of swim teams, individual success for parents of soon-departing athletes

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hours at Truman."

Some of those hours were a little nerve-racking for Annie Jensen – especially during nationals last spring. The Bulldogs had a 37.5 point lead against Drury entering the final relay – and Whitney Jensen swam the second leg.

"There were a lot of points in the relay," Annie Jensen said. "Truman really needed to pull this one off and win. I could barely sit and watch. I kept hoping she wouldn't false start or not swim fast enough. It's really nerve-rack-

ing to sit and watch the competition. My husband, though, loves the competition."

After Diana Betsworth swam the first leg, Jensen scorched the field in 50.96 seconds – the third fastest time (out of 32 swimmers) in the whole race – helping to ease her mother's nerves and give the 'Dogs a lead they would never relinquish.

Now, the women are a few weeks away from vying for their sixth straight title – and fourth of Jensen's career. Then, she will leave the pool and attend dental school.

"It's bittersweet," Annie Jensen

said. "She's been swimming for so many years. It makes me teary-eyed just thinking about [the end]. We've had a great time."

A few feet away from Annie Jensen stood Dave Brammer, father of senior men's swimmer Chris Brammer.

Only an hour before, Chris Brammer had won his specialty, the 100-yard butterfly. His father recalled his son's first days in the neighborhood pool – days that started when Chris wanted to jump off a diving board in his hometown of Omaha, Neb.

"Chris was diving, and the life-guard said he couldn't dive anymore unless he swam the length of the pool," Dave Brammer said. "That lasted about a day. Since then, Chris has made it a lifelong passion that has taken 15 years to culminate."

Dave Brammer, a tall, quiet man, said he has always enjoyed the Truman atmosphere and the swim meets.

"This was the perfect fit for Chris," he said. "We didn't look at any other schools. The President comes to the swim meets and knows the parents. Truman is one

of the greatest spectator schools in Div. II and the conference.

The boys aren't at the top like the women are, but the experience swimming and going to nationals has been great for Chris."

Marcie Otis and Darcy Otis, the parents of Josh Otis, drove from Johnston, Iowa, to watch their son compete and win two individual events (200-yard freestyle and 200-yard backstroke) at Truman for the final time.

As the meet came to a close, Darcy Otis diverted his attention away from the pool and his nearby

New York Times, and discussed his son's All-American career.

"A big part of Josh is self-motivating," he said. "The potential has always been there, but has always [been] committed and hard-working. He doesn't want the limelight – he just wants to help his team."

Marcie Otis echoed similar sentiments – a sentiment undoubtedly shared with every senior parent on Senior Day.

"Swimming has helped mold him into the person he is today," she said. "He's made us very proud."

## BASKETBALL | Men knock off conference co-leader in close game

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tournament.

After four halves of poor shooting, the men's basketball team turned it on against Emporia State University on Saturday, riding 61 percent shooting in the second half on its way to a 61-58 road win Saturday afternoon.

Junior forward Grant Agbo made the most of his first start of the season, scoring a season-high 21 points, and senior guard Chip Sodemann found his stroke, adding 16 points in the win.

Prior to taking the court for the second half against the Hornets, the 'Dogs had shot a dismal 29-for-113 (26 percent) from the floor in the previous 80 minutes of action.

"When a team has a group of guys who can shoot the ball like we do, it's just a matter of time before they start to go in," Sodemann said. "Throughout the course of a season, you're going to go through some slumps, and you just try to keep those slumps as short as possible. But we knew all along that

it was just a matter of relaxing and making shots."

In a game pitting two teams in the top eight of the regional rankings against each other, neither team was able to grab the upper hand in the first half.

The Hornets took only a four-point lead into the locker room despite the 'Dogs shooting only 24 percent from the field.

"We didn't shoot the ball particularly well for a period of two games, and honestly there isn't much you can say to force the issue," head coach Jack Schrader said. "All we were trying to do was attack the basket, and that's what we talked about at halftime."

The purple and white stormed out of the gate in the second half, hitting nine of their first 10 shots to take a nine-point lead with 12:02 to play.

It could have increased their lead to as much as 12, but the Hornets slowly chipped away at the lead because of its high-pressure defense and the homecourt advantage at White Auditorium.

"It's a tough place to play with the fans right on top of you

all around," sophomore forward Nick Certa said. "They started to cut into our lead quite a bit during the second half, but we just tried our hardest to stick to Bulldog basketball and forget about what they were doing."

The 'Dogs controlled the glass all afternoon, out-rebounding the Hornets 40-29.

Junior forward Andy Calmes tied his season-high with 15 rebounds as he increased his season average to 9.4 rebounds per game.

When the 'Dogs rebounded their opposition, they've reaped the benefits all season, posting an 12-0 record on such occasions.

"We had nine more possessions than Emporia, but they actually averaged more points per possession," Schrader said. "We got some big rebounds [Saturday] from Nick [Certa] and Grant [Agbo] on the offensive end, which gave us more chances to score."

The team will travel to Washburn University this weekend before facing off in another battle against Northwest next Wednesday night.



Adam Kabins/Index

Senior guard Austin Kirby sets up the Bulldog offense Wednesday night versus Missouri Western. Kirby had three assists in the game, a win by the Bulldogs 60-56. Kirby averages about two assists a game.