

SELECTION | CMSU takes on the 'Dogs

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March Madness.

"It was a big relief," Certa said. "We thanked God. We're all pretty excited and pumped for the weekend. ... It's exciting. I am really happy for the seniors. They deserve this."

A few minutes later, everyone, from Schrader to all the players, were on their cell phones, calling friends and family. Certa began dialing his parents and some of his older siblings.

Kirby, who joked that he would have had a heart attack if he had to wait until the No. 2 versus No. 7 pairing (the last pairing of the show) to hear Truman's name called - talked to his parents, including a tearful Mrs. Kirby, back in St. Louis.

The 'Dogs play CMSU at noon Saturday and have a great chance to earn a victory. Two more wins after Central, and the 'Dogs will earn a spot in the Elite Eight.

CMSU's key to success is Michael Hicks, the MIAA's top scorer and free-throw shooter. In January, the Bulldogs won the first matchup between the two rivals 77-69, as Lindsey held Hicks to 14 points on four-for-19 shooting. Hicks scored 24 points in a 66-62 CMSU win Feb. 22.

The team didn't play its usual game against on Feb. 22, a problem that recently plagued during the team.

"We were flat, tired, all those things," Schrader said. "It wasn't so much because of what we were doing, but how were doing it. ... I won't dwell on losing two or three games in row. We always look at how we are playing and what the next game is."

The Bulldogs should return to their usual form Saturday, a form they used to win 20 games. They regained some fire in the final 15 minutes last Friday, using balanced scoring, strong passes and tenacious defense to nearly pull a comeback win. If they continue that same play in this weekend, they could find themselves with a chance to go to nationals - and another reason to celebrate.



Chris Tharp/Index

Sophomore Nick Certa drives against Emporia State University's Wes Book Friday night. Certa led the team with 18 points in the contest.

BASKETBALL | Emporia defeats Bulldogs 96-90

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Sodemann's presence on the floor.

"I didn't know if we lost confidence - we just didn't gain confidence," Schrader said. "With Chip on the floor, we gain confidence."

Also missing for the 'Dogs was junior forward Grant Agbo. Agbo dressed and

participated in warmups but did not play. Schrader said Agbo was sick.

Six 'Dogs scored double figures with sophomore swingman Nick Certa leading the way with 18. All five starters cracked the 10-point mark, and six different players hit three-pointers.

But in the end, it wasn't enough.

PLAYOFFS | 'Dogs one of four MIAA teams in region

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Looking ahead to the regional, three other teams from the MIAA were granted berths - SBU, CMSU and Northwest Missouri State. Three teams from the Lone Star Conference - Tarleton State University (Texas), West Texas A&M University and Central Oklahoma - and one from the Heartland Conference - St. Edwards University (Texas) - also were selected.

The Bulldog/Central Missouri game is first on the docket Saturday afternoon, followed by Tarleton State against Central Oklahoma. Saturday night showcases West Texas A&M against Northwest Missouri State in the early game and the host Bearcats taking on St. Edwards in the nightcap.

Should the 'Dogs get by CMSU, they'll take on an opponent who essentially is unknown because the two teams don't meet on a regular basis. That's a feeling West Texas A&M coach Rick Cooper said he never likes to experience.

"The MIAA is one of the strongest conferences in the country, and it's always difficult to figure out matchups against them," Cooper said. "All four teams representing their conference have amazing guards and coaches, so they'll pose some problems we may or may not have seen this year."

According to an article on ESPN.com last Saturday, seven contributing factors lead to postseason tournament success in teams seeded in the mid-level range (five or six seeds in Div. II).

Teams that have a pre-season all-American have made more than four straight tournament trips, have a winning percentage greater than 87.5 percent, have a coach with more than 10 tournament appearances, are playing within 500 miles of campus, receive more than 60 percent of their scoring from their frontcourts and lose their last game heading into the tournament tend to have the

Regional Tournament

1 Southwest Baptist (26-4)
8 St. Edwards (Texas) (21-8)

5 Northwest Missouri St. (20-9)
4 West Texas A&M (22-7)

3 Central Missouri State (23-7)
6 Truman (20-8)

2 Tarleton State (Texas) (24-6)
7 Central Oklahoma (17-12)

greatest success come March.

The Bulldogs meet the qualifications in just two of those seven categories: playing within 500 miles of campus (SBU is 235 miles away) and losing their last game heading into the tournament.

This is a team not made up of superstars with any post-season experience (last trip for the program was 1999). The 'Dogs work hard on both ends of the court and shut down the opposition's best players to secure the win.

"Truman doesn't display a lot of flash, but they'll stretch the game out and make you work hard for 40 minutes," SBU head coach Jeff Guiot said. "They have the ability to really shut down what you want to accomplish, and that makes it impossible to look past any game you have against them."

Regardless of what might come as the calendar gets deeper and deeper into March, every team knows that each game could be its last.

"We have the potential for three games in four days [at the regional]," Schrader said. "But there is no Tuesday if we don't get it done on Saturday. This is the national tournament, and these guys have earned this experience."

HOCKEY | Squad finishes season with a 15-6-1 mark

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and didn't want to play. But I guess they really wanted me to play, and everyone was cool to have me back."

Vandas scored a goal and had two assists in his first game against SEMO on Jan. 21. Vandas tallied 12 points in seven games with the team.

Freshman forward Jon Watson said the officiating in the semifinal loss to UMSL was very fair unlike earlier in the year.

"The [referees] let us play a lot," Watson said. "I think against UMSL we came out real strong, and honestly the game was not a 9-2 score. It wasn't. It could have been a 3-2. ... [UMSL was] able to take advantage of their chances

whereas we were not."

The 'Dogs will miss senior forward Scott Whittle, Radigan and LePage because of graduation, but LePage said he's happy with what the team accomplished in his last year.

"Graduating and not going to nationals - yeah it sucks, but I'm glad I'm going out with these guys," LePage said. "Playing five years with Whittle, you couldn't ask for more. I mean, he's one of the best players in the country, much less the region. It's been a privilege playing with [Whittle]. Playing with guys like Neil [Bales], Radigan, Dane [Moody]. These guys can skate with anybody in the country, and they will for years to come."

LOOK FOR UPDATES

PHOTOS & COMMENTARY

WWW.INDEXSPORTS.BLOGSPOT.COM
WWW.TRUMANINDEX.COM

1. Lindsay McReynolds, swimmer and Index advertising manager, blogs from Indianapolis as she and her teammates try for their sixth-straight national title.

2. Read blogs and see an online photo gallery for Div. II men's basketball South Central Regional at Southwest Baptist University.

SWIMMING | Teams begin nationals in Indianapolis

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advantage with having so many people who are so fast."

Gole will be at the helm of the squads for the first time at the national meet. However this won't be Gole's first time at the national championships. He swam for Div. II Oakland University (Mich.) in the late '90s when the team captured three national titles.

"I think I'm looking forward to this meet more than any meet I ever swam in or coached in," Gole said. "As a swimmer you only have yourself to worry about and now I have 26 athletes that I have to worry about."

The national meet will be the final meet for several members of the swim

teams and the last chance to set records. Senior Josh Otis said he hopes to make his mark on his final meet and break his own school record in the 200-yard individual medley, a mark he has broken twice before this season.

"I would like to place in the top-four in the 200 IM and hopefully improve my [school] record by a second," Otis said.

Other seniors who will close out their Bulldog career are Chris Brammer, Whitney Jensen and Aimee Gregor.

The meet started yesterday and runs until Saturday.

Early results will be posted on the host University of Indianapolis' Web site <http://athletics.uindy.edu>.



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