

Athlete of the Week

Sean Birrell

Sport: Soccer

Year: Senior

Position: Forward

Hometown: Perth, Scotland

Birrell scored twice against the University of Missouri-St. Louis on Saturday. The two goals upped his season total to five. He also added an assist Friday against the University of Missouri-Rolla.

Birrell's offense inspires squad

Billy Drazen
Staff Reporter

The men's soccer team recruited him from across the Atlantic, and things have worked out quite well.

Senior forward Sean Birrell, a finance major from Perth, Scotland, had an assist Friday and two goals Sunday to lead the Bulldogs to two consecutive victories, but he said he is not arrogant about it.

"The goal where Martin [Clayes] scored that I assisted on was a pretty special goal," Birrell said. "He shot while being out a long way and put it in the upper 90."

Birrell said he was pleased with his second goal Sunday because he and senior Martin Clayes worked together to get the goal. However, Birrell said the score by Clayes proved to be more special because it was such a great goal.

Birrell's assist to Clayes came just before the half against Missouri-Rolla on Friday and put the 'Dogs up 2-0. They held on to the lead and prevented Missouri-Rolla from scoring the rest of the way, shutting them out 2-0.

Birrell's two-goal performance Sunday came in an onslaught of the Missouri-St. Louis Rivermen. Already up 2-0 at the half, the 'Dogs scored three goals in three minutes, starting with Birrell's goal in the 54th minute. He later added

the team's fifth goal just three minutes on a feed from Clayes.

Head coach Duke Cochran said Birrell leads the offensive attack and consistently gets other players involved.

"He allows our offense to work," Cochran said. "He holds the ball up, and that's very important for us."

Birrell said his preparation helps him out on the field. He said he always is ready to play, and when it is time to go, he brings with him energy and aggression. What he brings to the team other than his talent, Birrell said, is feeling.

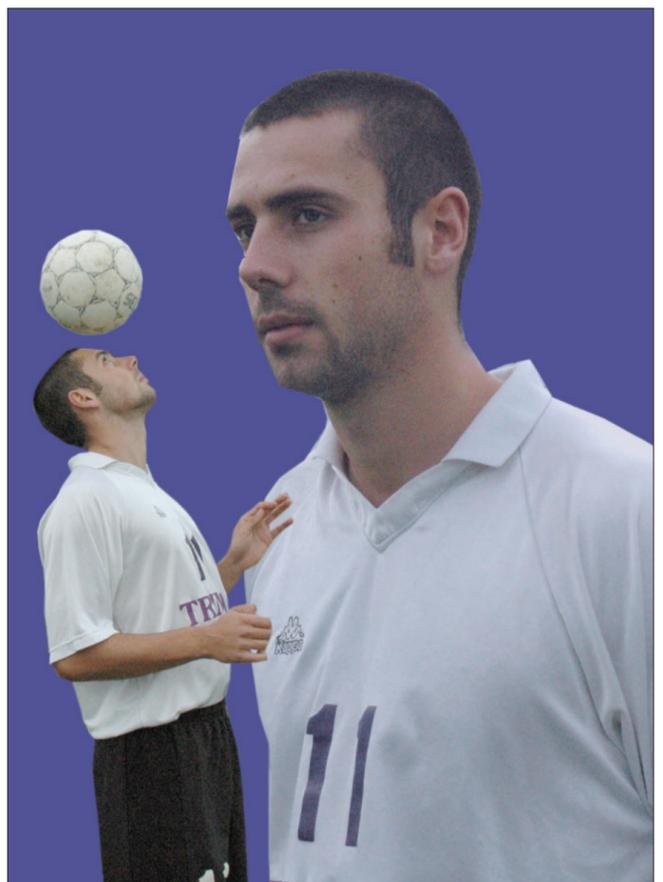
"I talk a lot and like creating a lot of enthusiasm because it rubs off on the other players," Birrell said. "Plus I don't like to lose, and that sort of mentality seems to spread through the team."

Birrell said his long-term goal is to win a national title and hopes to accomplish it before he graduates.

The intensity he shows on the field does not resemble his character off the field, where Birrell is pretty laid-back, Cochran said.

Birrell said he also works hard in the classroom and plans to return to Scotland after graduation. For now he is happy to be the Index Athlete of the Week.

"I am pleased to receive this honor," Birrell said. "Now I can send a copy of this paper back home and show it to my mother and my granny."



Photos by Adam Kabins, Designed by Chris Waller/Index



The Bullets and the Kansas State University rugby team face off in action last week. Chris Waller/Index

Bulls split weekend matches

Carl Waz
For the Index

Only against good competition can a team find out where it stands.

After 25-17 weekend win against Arkansas State University and a one-sided 50-8 loss to University of Tennessee, the men's rugby team realized just where it is.

"We know we have a lot of work to do, but we are ahead of schedule," head coach Bill Sexton said.

The team's weekend test in Jonesboro, Ark., started off with a battle against an Arkansas State team that the Bulls lost to during each of the past two semesters by a combined total of three points. Senior flyhalf Sean Foley said the Bulls relied on teamwork to neutralize Arkansas State's athletic advantage and fight their way to a 15-12 halftime lead and an eventual 25-17 win.

"We were up the whole game, but they were battling," Foley said. "We were kind of hanging on towards the end of the game, just waiting for the whistle to blow."

The momentum of the big win did not carry over to Saturday's game against the No. 7-ranked University of Tennessee. Kevin Jones scored the lone try in what junior inside center Tony Giubardo said was an ugly day.

"To put it bluntly, it was ugly," Giubardo said. "Nothing was going as fast. Nothing was going as crisp as it was [against Arkansas State]. Maybe it was people being tired, but I think it was mostly between the ears."

Despite the lopsided loss to Tennessee, Sexton said the weekend games served the teams well.

"It was a great chance for the team to bond and challenge themselves," Sexton said.

The women's rugby team also locked up in competition this weekend as it faced off against Southern Illinois University, Middle Tennessee State University and a Nashville club team in the Rucktoberfest Tournament in Memphis, Tenn.

Traveling with only 13 players, two fewer than it takes to field a full team, the Bulls fought their way to a second-place finish in the event with a couple of borrowed players.

The Bullets started their uphill fight Saturday against SIU. The game started with the Bullets inflicting the first damage with an early try, but SIU answered with three straight tries. Despite the deficit, the Bullets persevered and worked their way to an eventual 22-15 win.

Junior flanker Natalie Gerhart said she was proud of the team's effort and determination.

"I was impressed with everyone," she said. "In the past we've had problems with people overcoming adversity and getting their heads down, but this time we were able to fight through it and come out on top."

The Bullets played two more games. The second game came against MTSU where they clawed their way to a 7-0 win. The championship game, matched up the Bullets and a more experienced Nashville club team. After a long day of fighting, the Bullets could not get it done and lost 10-0.

Both the men's and women's teams will face off against Truman alumni this weekend in Kirksville. The women start at 11 a.m. and the men play at 1:30 p.m.

Editor struggles to find true definition of sport

Basketball is a sport. Soccer is a sport. Football is a sport. Poker is a ...

Poker is a sport, according to Webster's College Dictionary: Fourth Edition. In the reference manuscript, the first definition for a sport is "any activity or experience that gives enjoyment or recreation."

So, yes, poker is indeed a sport.

Hold on just a minute. The second definition of sport is "such an activity, especially when competitive, requiring more or less vigorous bodily exertion and carried on, sometimes as a profession, according to some traditional form or set of rules, whether outdoors, such as football golf, etc., or indoors, such as basketball or bowling."

OK, I am officially confused. True, poker is competitive and "carried on, sometimes as a profession, according to some traditional form or set of rules," but dealing or folding one's cards doesn't exactly constitute "vigorous bodily exertion."

Well, how would you classify poker? For that matter, how would you classify chess or bowling or hunting or driving "sports" such as NASCAR and drag racing? Are these events merely recreational games or are they intense athletic competitions?

Thus began my week-long quest to discover what is a sport. I sat down at my desk at home and pondered. My first definition was "any activity that involves a ball." I then, however, remembered those ball-and-paddle contraptions. You know, where the red ball is attached by a rubber band to the paddle. That's definitely not a sport.

My next definition of a sport was any event in which a score is kept. For example, the Cubs beat the Cards 5-0. There was a problem with this theory also. During chess competitions, the "refs"

Commentary



Ross Houston

keep track of how many points you earn from victories, and I didn't consider chess a sport.

Finally, I came up with the idea of sport as any event in the Olympics. I thought I hit the nail on the head. Unfortunately, I had to start philosophizing.

"Who decides what sports are in the Olympics, and how do they decide?" I thought to myself.

I was right back to where I started. Because I couldn't come up with a proper definition, I decided to hit the streets to see what Truman students comprised as "sport."

After being shot down by at least 15 people upon my inquiry "What is a sport?" I finally got someone to talk.

"I'd have to think about it for 10 minutes to come up with a proper definition," junior Chad Eberhart said. "It seems like it would be easy to define, but it's probably more complicated than you might think."

OK, understandable. He had the same problem as I had. Sport is a hard concept to define. I knew, however, that there was someone out there who knew the one true definition of sport.

Freshman Mark Petersma's definition eerily resembled Webster's second definition of sport.

"I would say [a sport is] any competition where physical activity is involved," he said.

I thought this was it. I found the definition. Just to make sure, however, I asked him if he would constitute poker as a sport.

"No, I would not," he said, luckily enough for me.

Regrettably, I had to open my mouth and say, "Isn't there physical activity in that, like when they deal the cards?"

He responded "Even though everything is a physical activity, you could be 300 pounds and ... uh ... I don't know."

I was so close. I just needed to ask one more person, and then I would have it. Or so I thought.

"I think [a sport is] pretty much open to interpretation," senior Alexa Martin said. "I think it should have some aspect of competition, but it doesn't have to. I mean, you could run just for fun, and there's no competition."

Martin provided me with Webster's first definition. This was becoming more and more frustrating.

As luck would have it, I ran into freshman Stian Gundersen, a midfielder for the Truman men's soccer team.

"There's many different types of sports," he said. "Chess could also be a sport in my opinion. It's just a different part of your body that you use. You use your brain, instead of using what I use: my legs."

Gundersen opened my eyes. Here I was, thinking that for one to be active, he or she needs to use his arms or legs, while I totally forgot that the brain not only is a part of your body but also controls your arms and legs.

So my final conclusion is that Webster's Dictionary is correct. Both definitions of "sport" are adequate. The one you choose to use is up to you. Just remember, when you go up to a chess player and say, "Chess is not a sport," remember the part of the body they're using for their sport is the same one football players use.

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