

Bulldogs take two matches

After losing three straight matches, 'Dogs sweep next two conference opponents

John Scognamiglio
Staff Reporter

In a span of 48 hours, the women's volleyball team turned its three straight losses into a familiar winning streak.

After dropping three conference matches last week, the Bulldogs regained steam heading into the final weekend of MIAA regular season play, defeating Missouri Western State University and Northwest Missouri State University to improve to 22-4 overall and 10-3 in the MIAA.

Before Friday night's matchup, the squad had won only two games in its previous three matches. Last weekend the squad avoided defeat as the team won both matches 3-0. In the Oct. 15 match against Washburn University, the squad had only one service ace against 14 service errors. On Friday and Saturday, the team hit 18 total service aces with 15 total service errors.

Head coach Jason Koch said the team improved since its loss to Washburn University.

"There were multiple people trying to step up to take charge and show leadership on the floor," he said. "There was a lot more energy. I did less coaching this weekend than I have done all year."

The 'Dogs traveled to St. Joseph on Friday to play the Lady Griffons. The Bulldogs switched offenses for the match, turning to a 5-1 offense, where they had only one setter – junior Christine Wagener – instead of the usual two. Senior middle hitter Micaela Walter also returned to the lineup and played well, hitting .667 for the match with 11 kills.

The retooled offense performed better than the previous matches as the 'Dogs won with scores of 30-24, 20-27 and 30-21. Junior outside hitter Sarah Shearman led the squad with 12 kills, and junior setter Christine Wagener chipped in with 38 of the team's 46 assists.

Wagener said the change to the new offense worked to the 'Dogs' strength.

"The new offense was something different," she said. "It was always one option we had."

Shearman said the team played well because it remained focused.

"In the new offense, we have to focus more on each player's position and

job," she said. "We responded well to the switch, and it did help us out a lot."

The Lady Bearcats hosted the 'Dogs at Northwest Missouri State on Saturday. Once again, the team stuck with the 5-1 offense, and the winning trend continued as the squad pounded Northwest by scores of 30-18, 30-26, 30-24.

In the first two games of the match, the Truman hit .310 and .320 but staggered in the third game, hitting only .194. Shearman again led the squad in kills with 14. Wagener added 40 assists to the team's output, and junior opposite hitter Kelsey Wackerman paced the squad with 17 digs.

Koch said he was impressed with the play of all three middle hitters.

"I rotated the middles this week because I'm really blessed with the situation to where all three middles are playing very well right now," he said. "That's great for playoff time because if one is having an off day, I can put another in, and we don't miss a beat."

For the weekend, Wagener finished with eight kills, 18 digs and 78 assists. On Monday, the MIAA rewarded her by naming her "Specialist of the Week" for the third time in her career.

Shearman said the team benefits when a player is recognized for their efforts by others in the conference.

"Our team has a lot of different strengths," she said. "However, people can still stand out."

This weekend, the team finishes out the conference season with three road contests.

The squad travels to Southwest Baptist University today to play the Lady Bearcats. They then head down to Missouri Southern State University on Friday to take on the Golden Eagles and finish the weekend against the Gorillas of Pittsburg State University on Saturday afternoon.

Koch said it's important the team has a strong finish to the season.

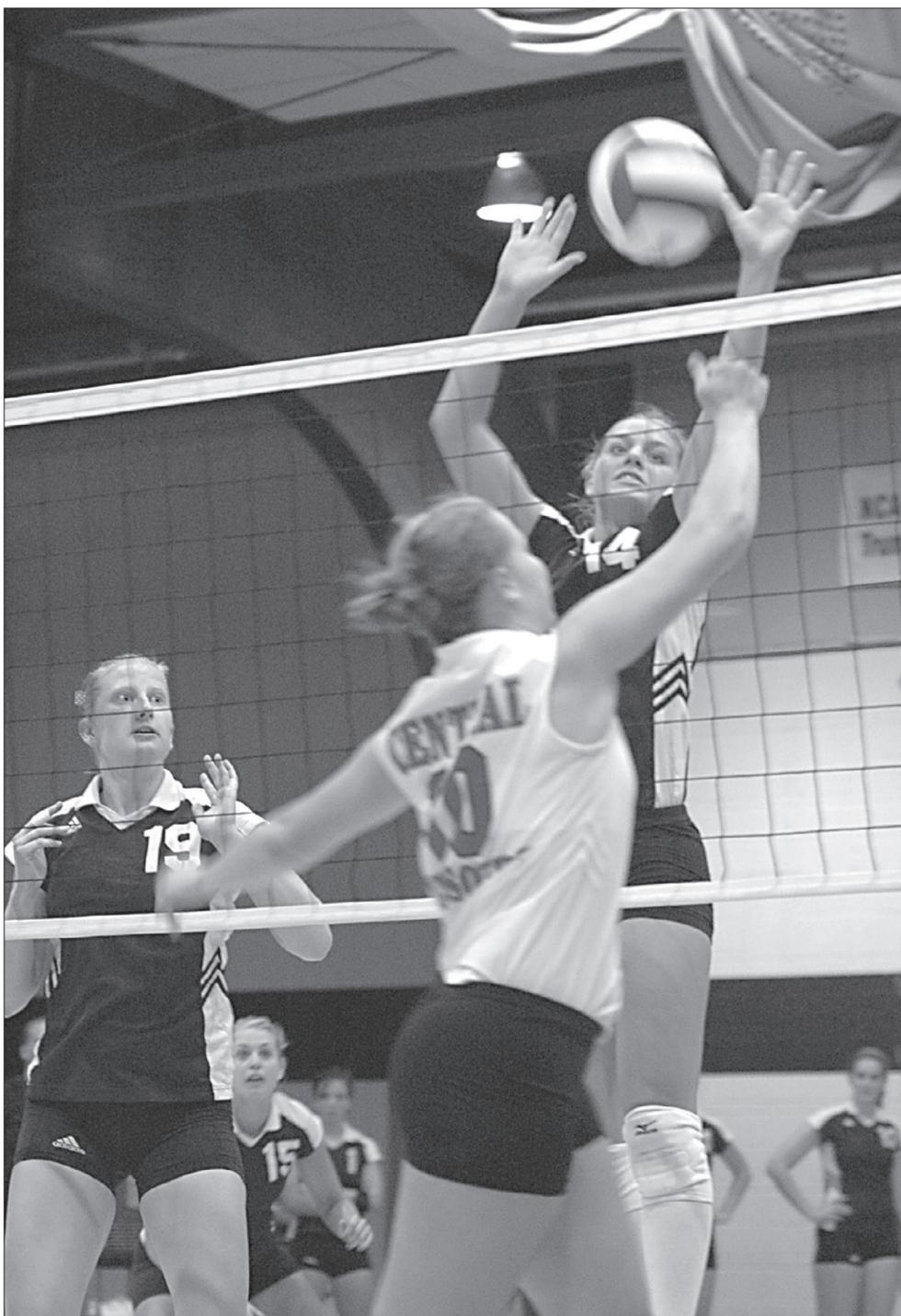
"It's huge because I want to make sure that we are firing on all cylinders," he said. "Last weekend was good because we got our confidence back. This weekend is big because we need to be totally clicking on the defensive side and stay aggressive."

Wagener said the team still needs to fine-tune a couple of things as the season comes to an end.

"We still have stuff to worry about," she said. "The three losses gave us a wake-up call. We just have to want to win."

"There were multiple people trying to step up to take leadership on the floor. I did less coaching this weekend than I have done all year"

Jason Koch
Head volleyball coach



Mike Snodderley/Index
Junior outside Sarah Shearman spikes the ball against Central Missouri State University in a 3-1 loss Oct. 14 at Pershing Arena, as senior middle hitter Megan Remley looks on. The Bulldogs are 22-4 on the season and are tied for second place in the MIAA at 10-3 with Emporia State University. CMSU is fourth at 10-4.

The new 5-1 offense propelled		
Junior setter		
Christine Wagener		
to her best week of the season		
Assists	Last Week	Season Avg.
Digs	13.00	7.90
Service Aces	3.00	2.46
Kills	0.83	0.29
Hitting Pct.	1.25	0.20
	.400	.172
Designed by Lindsay Koski/Index		

Women's soccer runs into scoring drought

Squad only scores one goal in last three matches, faces CMSU and Northwest next

John Weeks
Staff Reporter

The women's soccer team won half of Sunday's game against Missouri Southern State University, just not the scoring part of it.

The Bulldogs' hopes of winning the conference were probably dashed this past weekend as they came home without a win. They are currently three points behind Missouri Southern for the conference lead.

Since the Lions beat the Bulldogs last weekend, they will have to lose two more conference games. They have only dropped two MIAA games the entire season, though.

The 'Dogs salvaged one point out of a possible six, tying 0-0 with Southwest Baptist University and losing 2-1 to Missouri Southern University.

Head coach Mike Cannon said it's disappointing to return home without a victory.

"Obviously, a loss and a tie wasn't what we were hoping for," Cannon said. "We were hoping for a win and a tie at worst."

The offensive struggles that plagued the 'Dogs the first half of the season have taken their toll once again, sparking a three-game scoring slump at a crucial point in the season. The ball has found the net only once in the past three contests.

Cannon said he doesn't really understand how the team keeps coming up short when the players give every game their best effort.

"We keep putting kids out there, and I think every game we've played this year, no one has outclassed us," Cannon said. "That's what's kind of frustrating. We've played 16 games and only won seven. That's disappointing. Sixteen games and we haven't even



Chris Tharp/Index
Sophomore defender Rachael Schmidt corrals the ball against Washburn University on Oct. 15 at the Truman soccer field. The Bulldogs are 7-6-3 in 2005 after finishing 0-1-1 last weekend. They are tied for third in the MIAA.

won half of them."

Senior captain Lauren Cepicky said she thinks the team played well this weekend, but like other games earlier in the season, the results weren't there.

"I don't really feel like we played bad at all," Cepicky said. "I just think that in order for us to be successful as a team, we have to figure out how to

make ourselves successful. I think it's kind of a choice."

The Lions of Missouri Southern sit atop the conference with 20 points, two ahead of the 'Dogs. To take conference for the seventh consecutive game, the 'Dogs need to win more games than the Lions in the final stretch of the season.

Junior midfielder Robyn Morten-

son, who scored the team's lone goal Sunday, said she can't figure out why the team is struggling yet again, especially after clicking as a team and compiling a five-game winning streak.

"We feel like almost every team is kind of in the same boat as us," Mortenson said. "We need to not let what's happened in the past affect us

and just continue to play our game. Hopefully Southern loses and we can take conference."

Senior defender Moe Bylina, who assisted on Mortenson's goal, said the team failed to push the ball up the whole game.

"I was disappointed because I thought we came out flat-footed," Bylina said. "[Missouri Southern] came out with a lot more intensity in the first 10 minutes, which is when they put away their chances."

Mortenson said that even though the team seems to have lost its step and hasn't capitalized on scoring opportunities, maintaining a positive attitude is key to finishing the season on a high note.

"I feel like the results of our games don't necessarily show the whole story of how we've been playing as a team," Mortenson said. "It's just frustrating that we can't get the wins that I think we deserve."

This weekend the 7-6-3 'Dogs play Central Missouri State University and Northwest University at their home fields, with the hopes of getting back on track and competing for the conference title.

The team came from behind at home to beat Central Missouri 2-1 and Northwest 4-0 the second weekend of October.

Cepicky said the team needs to roll with the punches and bounce back from a sour three-game stretch.

"Obviously we're impacted by a loss and tie, but it's how we respond to it that's important," Cepicky said.

Cannon said his team has to dig deep each and every game.

"Hopefully we can get it together for our last road trip and then our last home games," Cannon said. "We don't control our own destiny anymore, but we can at least put pressure on Southern. I'm not that concerned about the record so much. I just want us to have a good finish for the season and for our team in general heading into next year, as well."