

Alumni face off with rugby teams

Chris Matthews
for the Index

With temperatures below 50 degrees Saturday, former teammates became opponents on the pitch.

Friends reminisced on the sidelines as the Bullets and Bulls Rugby Club teams played former Truman players in the annual Homecoming Alumni Game matches.

The Bulls decidedly defeated the alumni 58-5, but the returning alumnae beat the Bullets 22-0. Although the matches were physical, the players and alumni said the games were mostly for enjoyment.

Senior Sean Foley, captain of the Bulls, said the team was less strict with its strategy during this game than it is during a regular match.

"[There's] definitely a different feeling to these [alumni] games opposed to a league match," Foley said. "Ninety percent of it's fun."

Graduate student Kyle Stephens said he has played rugby for the past five years and knows a lot of the alumni who played.

"It's good to see the old guys again," he said. "They brought a good team, and we had a fun game. We smoked them pretty good."

Mark Dodson, a 1984 graduate, said he has returned almost every year to play.

"[I] come back because it's Homecoming and [to] meet the guys I haven't seen for a long time," he said. "The alumni haven't done so well in the last few years. We've lost the last two [or three], ... but the team's getting better, it seems like. They keep getting younger, or I keep getting older."

Dodson, 45, plays on a league rugby team in Kansas City and said he contributes the loss to most of the alumni's lack of time on the pitch.

"A lot of [the alumni] are out of shape," he said. "If we had [had] enough players that play throughout the country on club teams, then we could have given them a pretty good game."

Bulls head coach Bill Sexton said 18 alumni came back to play in the game and give donations to the club.

"Part of the effort of the game is fun and camaraderie and bringing people back together that played together, but also it's a pretty straight-out giving event too," he said.

Jerry Ashley, a 1995 graduate, said he came back to play and give something back to the club.

"We're just here to give them a little support, so if they make it to the playoffs

and on to nationals, then we'll throw some money their way and show them our support," he said.

Bullets senior player/coach Natalie Gerhart said the Bullets also benefited from the return of 12 or 13 Bullets alumnae.

"It helps a lot all the time to play our alumni because they are the people that taught us originally," she said. "You can always learn from a team that has played together for a long time and definitely from people [who] have been our mentors."

Stephanie Creed, a 2004 graduate, said the game was fun but also competitive.

"We still wanted to crush the new people because ... we have a reputation to uphold," she said. "If [the alumnae] tell stories about how great we were or how mean we are on the field, ... we have to uphold that."

Creed said she sees a difference between this Bullets team and the one she played for last year.

"We had a very tall team in all my years, and they're getting a lot shorter," she said. "Not that that's a bad thing, but there are certain positions where you want more height. So, they have to step up their level of play, which is good."

The Bullets have seven remaining games, including some against regional rivals.

"The games we're probably most excited about [are the University of Missouri-Columbia and Washington University (Mo.)]," Gerhart said. "We're about on the same level, [so it is] good competition."

Gerhart said the team has evolved for upcoming games.

"We've been working a lot on adapting to different styles of play and [creating] a lot of continuity between forwards and backs," she said. "So, we've been working on bringing the team together as one unit, and I think that's starting to show."

The Bulls play Kansas State University on Oct. 30, the last league game. Like the Bulls, Kansas State is a Western Rugby Union Men's Collegiate Div. I team, so Sexton said the outcome of the game will have implications for the playoffs in the spring.

Sexton said that the weekend before the alumni game, the Bulls played two big matches against the University of Arkansas and the University of Tennessee, and the team needed to sharpen its game after losing to Tennessee 50-8.

"So for us [the alumni game] was a chance to really refocus the effort and get ready for K-State," he said. "We're going to practice hard next week, and then have those guys in town."



Senior Sean Foley runs away from an alumni player Saturday. The Bulls easily conquered the alumni 58-5, but the Bullets had trouble against the alumnae, dropping the match 22-0.

Chris Tharp/Index

Klimek continues to lead 'Dogs to success

Joseph Barker
Staff Reporter

Some would expect an athlete's performance to drop off throughout a long season. Those people haven't met senior Eli Klimek.

In every men's cross-country race this year, Klimek has been the first Truman runner to cross the finish line. "He's been very consistent all season long and has been our No. 1 runner in all of our meets thus far," head coach Ed Schneider said. "He continually improves his times and performances each week. I hope that trend continues on through the end of the season."

Klimek has had two top-10 finishes this fall. His highest finish was second at the MIAA Championship on Oct. 22, in Pittsburg, Kan. The second-place finish has earned him Index Athlete of the Week honors.

"I think I did pretty well," Klimek said. "I prepared well and was just mentally really focused on what I wanted to do. I feel like I could have done better. At times I was concentrating more on the team effort than the individual effort. I think I sacrificed a little bit for that because in the long run, I would rather the team do well as a whole even if that meant me doing not as well."

Klimek ran the 8k course in a time of 25:13.70. He was 18 seconds behind the winner, senior Jarod Wall of Central Missouri State University. Although he was behind Wall, Klimek did manage to record his fastest time of the season, making his way onto the Top-10 All-Time

Bulldog list for the 8k run. Schneider said Klimek performed well.

"He ran a very good race, had his personal best time," Schneider said. "He made our top-10 performance list for 8,000 meters, which indicates he's one of the fastest runners we've ever had here at 8,000 meters."

Going into the conference meet, Klimek said he expected to take second and was surprised he made it so close.

"Actually I was [closer to Wall]," Klimek said. "I was actually surprised by the performances of the others who finished behind me. The last time I raced Jarod Wall, he beat me by quite a bit. It was just way too much for me to be Truman's No. 1 runner and to be behind him by that much was just ridiculous. I felt really good to be that close to him."

Klimek and the rest of his team aren't done yet. They will travel to Abilene, Texas on Nov. 5 for the South Central Regional Championship. Klimek said he will be ready.

"I think preparing comes naturally, the mental part of it," Klimek said. "We have learned our place on the team and what we need to do to perform the best we can as a team. We all know that it's a big deal and that regionals is our last race unless we do well enough to qualify for nationals."

While the race will feature tough competition, Schneider said he is confident Klimek will perform well.

"I'm hoping he competes the way he has all season long and goes after the front runners," Schneider said. "And tries to place as high and run as fast as he can."

Athlete of the Week

Eli Klimek

Sport: Cross Country
Year: Senior
Hometown: Platte City, Mo.

Klimek was the top Bulldog at the MIAA Championship with his second-place finish. This year Klimek has been the top runner in all five of the team's races this year. His time of 25:13.70 at the MIAA meet was his personal best for the season and was one of the top 10 in the Bulldog record book.

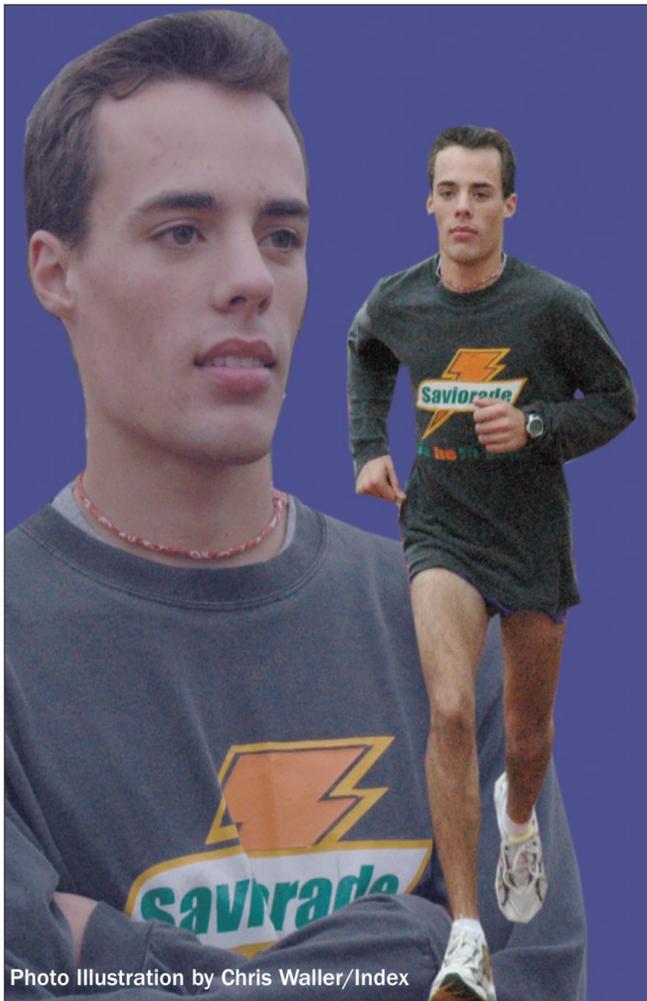


Photo Illustration by Chris Waller/Index

Major League playoffs bamboozle Cubs fans

I have hair. And let me tell you, it feels great.

Literally one minute after the Cards clinched the National League Central Division, one of my many cocky St. Louis Cardinal "friends" gave me a phone call.

"Cardinals baby! Woo!" he said. "All the way this year!"

"Yeah, sure," I said. There was no way the Cards were going to make it to the Series. I wasn't relying on any sort of statistic proving the winner of the NL Central hasn't won a World Series title in X number of years. It was pure faith.

I knew the baseball gods wouldn't let a loyal Cubs fan see the Redbirds hoist the trophy at the termination of the season. How else can you explain umpire Don Denkinger calling Kansas City Roy-



Ross Houston

als pinch hitter Jorge Orta safe at first in game six of the 1985 World Series, even though everyone else at Kauffman Stadium knew Cardinals' pitcher Todd Worrell arrived at the base first?

So I told my "friend" I'd shave my head if the Cardinals won the

World Series. In fact, I was so confident. I told him I'd shave my head if they even made the Series at all.

When Albert Pujols hit that homer in game five of the NLCS, I was starting to question my judgment. Hey, as a Cubs fan, I know that anything can happen. Yes, I still remember 2003 and the Bartman episode. Don't rub it in.

But did I lose my faith? No. I am a Cubs fan, and despite receiving multiple threatening looks from my Exploring Religions class, I proudly proclaimed that St. Louisans were wasting their time with rally caps and jerseys and "Slama-lama-ding-dong!"

Luckily for me and my hair, Roy Oswalt pitched a wonderful game six, and the Astros won their first-ever National League Pennant.

Still, I was a bit rattled that the Cards didn't pull off the series. The main reason for this train of thought is the loss of Cubs loyalty because of the "other" Chicago team.

My mom, a loyal Cubs fan in her own right, sent me an instant message after viewing my away message that said, "Go Astros." (Note: Never show your parents how to use instant messenger.)

"Why are you rooting for the Astros?" she asked.

Luckily, I happened to be right there when it popped up.

"Why? Who should I be rooting for?" I responded.

"The White Sox," she typed back.

I sat at my desk, stunned.

My mom was born and raised on the north side of Chicago. She's

always been a Cubs fan. And yet, she was suddenly rooting for the South Side.

I found out she wasn't alone. Chicago Mayor Richard Daley was calling Cubs fans out to support the Sox. Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich, a lifelong Cubs fan, was joining in the "Sox-cess." Even here in the 'Ville, my fellow Cubbies supporters were saying the unthinkable: "Go Sox."

This is unacceptable. Do you honestly think New York Mets aficionados cheer on the Yankees whenever they make it to the Series? How about the L.A. Clippers? Did all of their fans dash to the nearest athletic store and buy Kobe Bryant jerseys when the Lakers had their three-peat?

Yes, the Houston Astros are

in the Cubs' division, and yes, Cubs fans don't like them. But we should dislike the White Sox even more. Every year, the two Chicago ball clubs face off in the Crosstown Classic - also known as the Red Line Series because both stadiums can be accessed via the El's red line - and every year, bragging rights are up for grabs.

The Sox already have us beat this year, so why should we want them to add another check to the list of things they've accomplished that we haven't?

So Cubs-turned-Sox fans might be happy now that the Sox won it all, but how will they feel come next April? For the good of the game, I certainly hope they come back to the North Side and keep one of the best inner-city rivalries alive.