

SPORTS



Volleyball could win it all in '05

The volleyball team is in position to win the national championship this year.

For the entire 2005 volleyball season, head coach Jason Skoch's squad has been at the top. In fact, the last time a Truman volleyball team has been ranked No. 1 in the country for at least one week was ... well, never.

The 'Dogs weren't No. 1 in 2002 when they finished runner-up to Brigham Young University-Hawaii at nationals. They weren't even at the top last year when they went undefeated in the regular season.

So this year must be in the bag, right?

Slow down there, partner. We can't paint the national championship trophy purple just yet.

Don't get me wrong – ranking No. 1 in the country is a big deal. Out of all the Div. II volleyball teams, we're ahead of every one of them. I hate to sound cheesy, but we're the "Top Dog," if you will.

The problem, however, is that being ranked in the country is a big deal.

Every team Truman plays from now until the end of the season will be motivated to pull off that unbelievable upset. This means that opposing players will have a look in their eyes – a look that says, "You might be No. 1 in the country now, but tomorrow you won't be."

Don't believe me? Saturday against Northwest Missouri State University, a team that was 0-4 in the MIAA at the time, the Bulldogs were actually losing in the first set before eventually putting the Bearcats away 30-28.

This type of play won't cut it when Truman, for example, travels to Central Missouri State University on Oct. 12. If a team of the Jennies' caliber gets out in front early, the 'Dogs could and most likely will be looking at another loss.

Not enough proof that Truman's road to the championship is not going to be easy? I have plenty more.

Skoch, to put it nicely, is inexperienced. While he was an assistant at Div. I Mississippi State University, he has never grasped the reigns of a college volleyball squad.

Thus far, you can't argue with his results. Yes, he has led the 'Dogs to an impressive 16-1 record and a first-ever No. 1 ranking. And yes, we might drop another few matches, but for a rookie coach, losing 3 or 4 matches in a season is not too shabby.

But what happens during the postseason? What happens when every game is a must-win? What happens if juniors Kelsey Wackerman or Sarah Shearman get injured in the first round? What happens if the 'Dogs are down two sets to the University of Northern Alabama in the regional finals? A veteran coach might know how to solve these dilemmas, but I'm not so sure a rookie helmsman would be comfortable in these situations.

Speaking of North Alabama, the 'Dogs need to figure out a way to beat them. We've already had our regular season win-streak snapped by the Lions, and they also eliminated us from the NCAA tournament two years ago.

Although I think Truman very well could inch past them this year if need be in the tournament, we'd probably be better off facing a situation like last year.

For those of you who forgot, Pittsburg State University took the weight off our shoulders when they defeated UNA in the first round of Regionals. Thank you, Gorillas.

Considering only about half the season has elapsed, it's too soon to tell if Skoch and his ladies will clear that final hurdle.

I hope that the 'Dogs will capture the hardware, but I'm trying to keep a levelhead.

Commentary



Ross Houston



Senior James Walton shares his athletic talents as a wide receiver for the football team and also as a former national champion long jumper for the track team. Photo Illustration by Chris Waller

Athletes do double duty

Multisport students split energy across pursuits and seasons

Emily Humble
for the Index

Senior athletes James Walton's and Andrew Pitts' days never seem to end.

After class, they go to football

practice from 3 to 6 p.m. Then at seven they start in on hour-long football meetings. By the time they get home, it's time for homework.

"With a sport like football especially, it's very demanding, and it wears on you a lot," Walton said. "It's 8:30 to 9:00 p.m., and you're just starting on your homework at the toughest school in the state, and students will tell you just being a student seems to

be a lot. You're talking a heck of a workload."

But, unlike most student-athletes, they continue this trend year-round.

"It's the way I've done it my whole life," Pitts said. "I've always played football and baseball, and I couldn't imagine not playing either one of them right now."

That is what keeps these guys going: the fact that they love their

sports and the variation that the two they play have from each other.

"It's a different atmosphere, and I always enjoyed going back and forth and experiencing different things," Pitts said.

In their time at Truman, both have seen success. They are both starters on the gridiron as Pitts covers the long snapping position and Walton is a wide receiver. In

the spring, Pitts mans third base for the baseball team while Walton is one of the nation's best long jumpers.

Pitts has started 131 baseball games and has a batting average of .224. Walton was the 2004 NCAA Div. II Outdoor long jump champion.

Walton also took the ball in for six touchdowns last year.

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Women tame the Lions

John Weeks
Staff Reporter

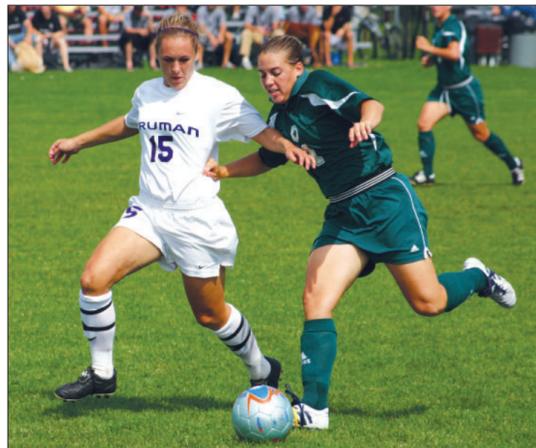
Just tell them they're playing a conference game. Then they won't lose.

The women's soccer team has lost only one MIAA contest since 1999, going an unbelievable 60-1-6 in that time span.

Scoring, a dynamic part of the women's soccer team for six straight years, went cold in the first three conference games of the season, however. The Bulldogs went into overtime for the third consecutive contest with Missouri Southern State University Saturday at home, tying 0-0.

Lions head coach Trevor Wachsman said his team was a little impatient.

"I think today we were just a little unlucky as far as being able to connect passes up and attacking at their end of the field," Wachsman said. "Obvi-



Chris Tharp/Index

Junior Melissa Snodgrass attempts to steal the ball from a Missouri Southern player. The Bulldogs tied the match 0-0, but rebounded to beat Missouri Western State College 3-1.

ously you want to win on any given day, but a tie is not a bad thing."

Senior captain Lauren Cepicky said she thinks the team had a lot of missed opportunities in Saturday's tie.

"It's kind of upsetting that we didn't score because we played so hard, and everybody gave 100 percent," Cepicky said. "Even though it was a tie, it was a good result consider-

ing all of the obstacles we're overcoming right now. But we need to win tomorrow. We need to score."

Cepicky put the scoring drought weight on her shoulders the next afternoon, scoring two goals against Missouri Western State College and leading the team to a 3-1 victory.

Women's soccer head coach Mike Cannon said he was pleased

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Davis' nerves lead Bulldogs to success

John Weeks
Staff Reporter

Bagels and bananas might turn the average goalie into one of the best ball stoppers in the country.

Junior captain goalkeeper Lauren Davis said she is not a breakfast person but occasionally eats a bagel and a banana on game days, which could explain her ability to allow just one goal in 12 straight games last year.

Davis said the nerves set in by the time she finishes breakfast on game day.

"I get nervous before every game," Davis said. "I get butterflies in my stomach, especially at home playing in front of our home crowd. Right before a game, I'm focused on the team that we're playing, and during the game I'm just focused on talking a lot, being positive and doing my best to be a leader."

Even though Davis said she gets nervous before every game, her roommate, junior Katie Buehler, said she thinks Davis plays better when she gets butterflies in her stomach.

"She always says she plays better when she's nervous," Buehler said. "She's really confident and holds her own. But she really showed her

leadership skills last year against [the University of Nebraska-Omaha] in the playoffs."

That game is one of the few Davis has lost in her stellar two-year career. Other than three losses to UNO, Davis has been nearly perfect, recording 13 shutouts her rookie year. The team finished that year 18-2-1 with UNO beating the 'Dogs twice during the regular season.

Davis silenced critics during her sophomore campaign by finishing the 2004 season with almost identical numbers, leading the team to a school record 19-1-2 mark.

She was just the fourth Bulldog goalkeeper to play every minute of every game in a season, posting a single-season record 15 shutouts, ranking fourth in the nation in goals-against average and third in shutout percentage.

Truman has lost a lot of talent in the off season. This year Davis steps into the captain's shoes alongside senior Lauren Cepicky. She said she remains confident with the supporting cast and feels honored to be the captain.

"I think being a captain is an honor but also a responsibility you

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Volleyball puts on show for home supporters

John Scognamiglio
Staff Reporter

Junior opposite hitter Kelsey Wackerman saw a personal streak end this weekend but helped the women's volleyball team keep another one intact.

Though Wackerman's triple-double streak came to a close, the Bulldogs still triumphed in both weekend games against Missouri Western State College and Northwest Missouri State University to keep their winning streak alive.

About 400 Bulldog fans cheered on the squad in their second home match of the season Friday eve-

ning. Fans were treated to a seesaw battle as the squads split the first two games. The Bulldogs were able to take control in game three and captured the victory against the Griffons in four games.

Head coach Jason Skoch said Missouri Western was very focused during the contest.

"They've had some great wins," he said. "They are riding high and believing in themselves. At this level, being focused is a big part of winning games."

Kyprian Harasymowycz, the Missouri Western assistant coach, said the Griffons tried to slow the pace of the match but had no answer

for Wackerman and junior outside hitter Sarah Shearman.

"The Bulldogs run a very fast-paced offense and love terminating a match and getting [other teams] out of here," he said. "If we get too frenzied, things fall apart. It's hard to come back against all that firepower."

Harasymowycz said that while looking at the game film the Griffons received, they knew it would be a difficult task to contain Shearman and Wackerman.

"We just knew what was coming at us," he said. "It was just a matter of us being able to execute and stop

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The Bulldogs Rank in the Top Two		
In several key MIAA statistics		
1 st	Team Assists/Game	15.24
	Team Digs/Game	18.44
2 nd	Team Hitting Pct.	0.245
	Team Kills/Game	16.21
	Micaela Walter Hitting Pct.	0.329
Designed by Lindsay Koski/Index		