



Freshman shortstop Alex Weber tosses to second baseman Erica LaCombe to force the runner out during Monday's game against Southwest Baptist. The 'Dogs split two games with the Bearcats and swept Missouri Western to improve to 17-16. **Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index**

## Bulldogs sweep Griffons

**Softball improves record to 17-16 with wins against Mo. West**

BY JACK NICHOLL  
Staff Reporter

Senior Katie Noski continued her dominance on the mound this week.

Fourteen innings, zero runs, 11 strikeouts and six hits.

That was her pitching line in the two games she threw this week, which propelled Truman to two wins. The Bulldogs were 3-1 overall in the seven day span, with 5-2 and 4-0 victories against Missouri Western State University yesterday and a 2-0 win and a 6-5 loss coming against Southwest Baptist University on Monday.

Noski improved her record to 8-2 with the wins. The two contests brought her complete games to eight and her shutouts to four in 14 starts this season.

"She's been the most solid pitcher that we've had," head coach Erin Brown said. "Mentally on the mound she's been strong. Mentally she works really hard. She's just been huge in our success this season."

In the first game yesterday, the Bulldogs (17-16, 5-7 MIAA) were behind by a run for most of the game before knotting the score at two with two outs in

the seventh. In the eighth junior Dani Mayer hit a two-out, three-run double to complete the comeback for Truman.

In the second game, Truman pieced together a combined six hits in the fifth and sixth innings for their scores. That was all Noski needed for win, as she only allowed one baserunner in the final two innings.

Truman scored first in both contests, which was one of their goals coming into the games.

Noski pitched the first game on Monday. She was just as dominant as the Missouri Western game, striking out eight and allowing four hits. Only one Southwest Baptist runner reached third all game.

"I was keeping the ball low and dusting them off, but inside pitches were working really good," Noski said.

She added that her changeup was not at its best, but she kept throwing it to mix up the hitters.

Truman only compiled three hits in Game 1 on Monday, but they capitalized on two Southwest Baptist errors to score unearned runs in the fifth and sixth innings to secure the win.

It was Noski who carried the team.

After not appearing until the fourth game this spring, she now leads the team in appearances and most pitching statistics. Truman

is 8-5 this season when she takes the ball to start the game.

"I think we have the same amount of confidence behind each pitcher," senior Christen Belcher said. "We realize that each of our pitchers have different styles, different abilities, but Kate's definitely been pitching well this season."

Game 2 against Southwest Baptist was a contrast to the first because of the increased offense. The two teams combined for 17 hits, and each starting pitcher was taken out by the end of the fifth inning. There was at least one run scored by either team in every inning but the sixth.

Brown was displeased with the result.

"We should be able to win with five runs," she said. "We gave up way too many hits and way too many earned runs that second game."

Truman started quickly in the first inning. Belcher walked, stole second and scored off a groundout and a flyout. The Bearcats erased the lead quickly with a run in the second and two runs in the third.

After Truman scored one in the fourth to bring the game to a one-run contest, Southwest Baptist immediately responded with three runs in the top of the fifth. The clincher came when Southwest Baptist's McKenzie Mortimer hit a two-run homer in

the fifth, which proved to be the difference in the game.

"We only had a one-run lead by then, and I think it really got everybody going and got our bats going a little bit," Mortimer said.

Truman had seven hits in the contest and two walks. The Bulldogs cut the lead to one with two runs in the fifth and one in the seventh, but the comeback fell short. They got help from two Bearcat errors, but it still wasn't enough to overcome the Southwest Baptist offense.

"I feel like we should have won the game we lost because we came out hitting and playing," Belcher said. "... We played harder and came out harder in the second game. I think we deserved to win the second game more than we did the first one."

Belcher was on base three times in four at-bats in the game, scoring each time. She had four stolen bases, upping her season total to 34.

Next up for the Bulldogs is a home doubleheader against Emporia State University Friday at 1 p.m. The team then has home league contests Saturday at 1 p.m. and Monday at 2 p.m.

The non-conference doubleheader against Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, scheduled for Wednesday, was cancelled. The team instead played their conference make up games against Missouri Western.

## TRUMAN ATHLETICS News and Notes

### Baseball: Pearl not in uniform Tuesday

Sophomore outfielder Brandon Pearl was not in uniform for the baseball team's doubleheader Tuesday against Quincy University. Pearl was in attendance as a spectator.

Pearl and head coach Dan Davis declined comment on the situation. Pearl said he will return to the team this season. Davis declined comment on Pearl's future status with the team.

Pearl has not appeared in a game since last Friday in Game 1 of a four-game series against Fort Hays State University. He committed two errors in right field in the bottom of the fourth inning and was lifted for a pinch hitter in the top of the fifth.

Pearl is hitting .255 with two home runs and eight RBIs in 24 games this season.

### Baseball: Jones produces from leadoff spot

Sophomore left fielder Keaton Jones found a comfort zone batting leadoff for the baseball team.

Jones is hitting .280 this season, and since moving to the No. 1 spot in the batting order March 16, Jones has a .310 batting average. He had a seven-game hitting streak snapped in Game 1 of Tuesday's doubleheader against Quincy University but went 1-for-4 in Game 2. Jones is hitting .222 in games that he doesn't bat first in the order.

"I've always been the type of hitter that likes to see a lot of pitches during my at-bats," Jones said. "If I see a first-pitch fastball down the middle that I can rip, then I'll take a hack at it. But I usually like to see a lot of pitches and work the count a little bit so I guess it fits pretty well with my style of hitting to hit leadoff."

This season, Jones has hit leadoff in 20 games this season and batted elsewhere in the lineup in 11 games. Jones said he thinks just getting more plate appearances as the season progresses probably has more to do with his increased production than batting No. 1 in the order.

"The last two years I've really gotten off to a slow start, and it's kind of frustrating," he said. "I felt like this year at the beginning of the year I was seeing the ball well. I just wasn't squaring the ball up and hitting it hard on pitches that I should be hitting hard. And here recently, I'm still seeing the ball really well. I'm seeing a lot of pitches, and I'm squaring it up when I get pitches I can hit."

### Track: Bulldogs get provisionals, then don't

Several Bulldogs made provisional marks last weekend at the Div. II Challenge in Emporia, Kan.

Unfortunately for Truman, none of them counted. The high winds in Emporia on Sunday, topping out at 22 miles per hour, altered the results enough that they were not admissible by MIAA conference rules.

"You can't count any time or jump that is over four meters per second," head coach John Cochrane said.

The Bulldogs will get another chance to hit those marks again when they travel to Rolla, Mo., for the Dewey Allgood Invite.

### Tennis: Rothfusz, Bracha deal with injuries

The men's tennis team is facing a few tough injuries. No. 1 sophomore Peter Bracha was limited to one singles match last weekend and will be held out of all matches until this weekend. Bracha will be day-by-day after that. No. 5 sophomore John Rothfusz is not expected to play this weekend because of a hamstring injury sustained while running.

### Softball: Weber fills in for Holleran at shortstop

Freshman shortstop Alex Weber has been filling in for senior starting shortstop Kali Holleran for the last five games.

Holleran has a foot injury and probably will be back by Friday's doubleheader against Emporia State University, Weber said.

Weber is 3-for-13 in the five games. She has appeared in 17 games this season but did not start until the injury.

"Alex has been playing fair, and I think she's been doing a good job defensively," head coach Erin Brown said. "She hasn't gotten ton of at-bats. We pushed her over to the left side just this year, and she's really doing well."

Holleran had started in every game this season before the injury with a .325 batting average. She is among the team leaders in on-base percentage, and she is one of two team captains.

## Softball keeps struggling to win close games

**Team is 5-14 in games decided by two runs or fewer after Monday loss**

BY JACK NICHOLL  
Staff Reporter

The Truman softball team's second game against Southwest Baptist University on Monday was a microcosm of its season.

The Bulldogs lost their momentum early, and their comeback fell short en route to a 6-5 loss.

"It's also tough to come up on the short end that game," head coach Erin Brown said. "You know, one run, again. The story of the season."

Of the 16 losses this spring, seven have come by one run.

The pattern of losing close games extends to two-run contests. In games decided by two runs or fewer, Truman has

a 5-14 record. In contrast, the Bulldogs are 12-2 in games decided by more than two runs. They have not lost a game by more than three runs all season.

The team has cited falling behind early in games and not being able to come back all the way as reasons for the close losses. Truman (17-16, 5-7 MIAA) has compiled a 12-7 record when scoring first and a 5-9 record when scoring second.

"When you play catch-up, you get a little tense or a little pressed," senior outfielder Christen Belcher said. "You feel pressured. It's never fun playing catch-up because the other team obviously has the advantage. You only have three outs each inning."

Scoring first gives the Bulldogs a mental edge as well.

"Getting the lead in the game is a key point in just our attitude and having positive thoughts about the game and feeling that we're going to win," freshman shortstop Alex Weber said.

When the team does score first, it is occasionally unable to keep the momentum going, and the opposing squad is able to come back, like in the game on Monday. Truman took the lead by manufacturing a run in the bottom of the first, but the Bearcats responded with one in the second and two in the third.

"We might score first, but we just ride on that for a while, and it doesn't take one run to win the ballgame," senior first baseman Katie Noski said.

Two-out hits have been tough to come

by as well. In multiple instances this season, the Bulldogs have had runners on base in position to score — they just haven't been able to complete the comeback.

"We have a hard time getting the clutch hit, the one hit you need with runners on with two outs," Noski said.

On Monday, the Bulldogs stranded a runner in scoring position in each of the last five innings.

The good news: They have outscored their opponents by a combined 146-96 runs this season, which suggests the record may improve by the end of the season. Using Bill James' Pythagorean expectation formula, the run differential should be good for a 23-10 record.

Three of the Bulldogs' wins have come by way of the eight-run mercy rule, and seven have been by five runs or more. They are fourth in the MIAA in batting average and second in earned run average, both of which are improvements from last season.

"At this point in the season, we're doing better than we were a year ago, so I'll look at that as improvement because last season we had a losing record fairly early on," Belcher said.

The close scores have hurt the most in conference games, which is where the wins and losses matter the most. Four of the eight conference losses have come by one run, and two others have come by two.

The Bulldogs have won by a combined 14 runs in their three wins, and they are outscoring their MIAA opponents 46-37 overall. They are tied for sixth in the MIAA with games coming up against both first-place Emporia State and last-place Missouri Southern.

The Bulldogs are second best in the conference in stolen bases but last in the league in slugging percentage. They have six games against MIAA competition and 10 games overall in the next week.

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