

Men gear up for MIAA Championship

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

The men's golf team has reached crunch time.

The team is preparing this week for the MIAA championships April 21 to 22, knowing that a bad day could end its season.

"In order for us to continue our season [to regionals], we need to not only maintain our place within the top five of the conference, but show that we belong there," head coach Kevin White said. "I mean, we need to beat some teams we haven't beaten this year."

In the MIAA championship, point totals are double what they are for normal MIAA events. The first-place finisher receives 16 points, second place gets 14 points and so on.

The Bulldogs sit in fifth place in the

MIAA but are 10 points behind fourth-place Missouri Western State University. A 10-point lead is likely insurmountable, but a poor performance could drop the Bulldogs further.

The Bulldogs are just one point ahead of Missouri Western State University, and two points ahead of seventh-place Pittsburg State University. Southwest Baptist University is last in the conference, but only 5.5 points behind the 'Dogs.

The men are chasing Washburn University. The Ichabods lead the MIAA with 32 points, and have taken first in every MIAA event this season. The University of Central Missouri is a distant second with 24.5 points.

The top eight teams from the region advance to regionals. The region includes the MIAA and the North Sun Conference. Last season, six MIAA schools advanced and two North Sun schools made region-

als. Truman has advanced to regionals in each of the last six seasons.

White said that if the team is not selected for regionals, there is a chance the NCAA will select the team's top player to go to regionals. He said that if the NCAA decides to take a Bulldog, it would be either junior Scott Danielsen or freshman Chris Kovach.

Danielsen and Kovach have carried the Bulldogs for most of the season. The duo has been in the top three for the 'Dogs at every tournament this spring. Both Danielsen and Kovach consistently have shot in the mid-70s. Kovach had the team's low round of the season, a 69 in Round 1 of the Fort Hays State Invitational in the fall. He is the only Bulldog to break par all season.

White said the team continues to work on putting and laying up on par 5s. "Short game for one," White said.

"Having confidence in their putts, having confidence in their shots. I think freshman Vince Kurth is right there. He broke 80 his last time out in a competitive round. I think he is on the right track. For the other guys, this has been a great week. Actually watching the Masters, watching how [Trevor] Immelman won the tournament by laying up the par 5 and stuff like that, that's what we've been trying to teach. It shows that with Zach Johnson winning last year and Immelman winning this year. It shows that you don't have to go for the greens in two in order to be a superhero."

Kovach said the team is working hard on its putting this week.

"We're mainly going to focus on our short game because that's where all the strokes come from," Kovach said. "... Every little putt can mean a stroke or mean a spot or you're going to regionals

or not. You just have that one stroke, so work on the short game. That's most important. Then go out from there. Make sure you're hitting solid shots and stuff so you can score."

Kurth said the team is working on simulating tournament experiences this week. He said creating tournament situations will help the team better prepare for the upcoming MIAA championship.

"This week we are doing qualifying for one," Kurth said. "In qualifying, we are doing a Ryder Cup, per se. We are kind of doing that to help ourselves to get in a tournament situation, per se, and to help us focus more along with our regular practice."

The MIAA championship is April 21 to 22 in Branson, Mo. The NCAA Super Regional is May 5 to 7 in Findley, Ohio.



Blake Peterson/Index

Junior thrower Ashley Bernard practices the hammer throw Tuesday. Bernard took two firsts and a second at last week's Div. II Challenge.

Bernard claims first twice at Challenge

BY ARRON HUSTEAD
Staff Reporter

Junior Ashley Bernard dominated the throwing events this weekend at the Div. II Challenge at Emporia State University.

Bernard took first place in both the shot put and hammer throw events and second in the discus throw. Her throws in each event were 42.5 feet, 157.06 feet and 144 feet, respectively. Even though she came in second in the discus throw, she established a new personal record in the event by 14 feet.

"I did hammer before I threw that, and I was kind of disappointed," Bernard said. "Just because I was trying to hit the provisional mark for hammer, and I thought about it, and I was like 'OK I'll let it go,' so let's just try to do something today for discus. I guess everything I was feeling for hammer just kind of came out in the discus."

Bernard said she has been consistent in her preparations this season but that she thinks she needs to do even more as the season progresses. She said she was more on edge going into this weekend's meet.

"Usually it's just about the same," Bernard said. "I've kind of been in a slump as far as conference goes, but this week the season is half over. I think that I pretty much had to step it up. My mentality was a little bit different."

Bernard said the competition at the meet was as tough as it has been all season, which motivated her to bring her A-game.

"You're starting to figure out where you stand, and I pretty much wanted to

let the girls know that I'm pretty much ready for conference already," she said.

Assistant coach Leslie Hardesty said Bernard hasn't lost momentum gained from the indoor season.

"She is someone I would say has a really good work ethic," Hardesty said. "Always wants to do her best and strives to be the best at practice, in the weight room, at competition."

Hardesty said Bernard thrives on meets that present a high level of competition because it makes her even more determined and focused.

"The one thing about Ashley is she wants the meet to be competitive because she wants to take the opportunity to go out there, not only do her best, but come out on top," she said.

Bernard has to work extra hard to be prepared in multiple events and spread practice time evenly between them.

"As you get into the middle of the season, then you can really kind of rank your events," Hardesty said. "This is the most important, this is the second, this is the third, and then you just start tweaking little things here and there. I don't think we really try to stay focused on one event and one event only because she does three events."

Hardesty said Bernard has been competing at a high level but that she has the potential to do even better.

"I think, you know, she's got a little bit more in her, and hopefully by the time we get to conference we'll be able to peak in everything that we're doing," Hardesty said.

Athlete of the Week

Ashley Bernard
Sport: Track and field
Year: Junior
Position: Thrower
Hometown: O'Fallon, Mo.

Bernard finished in first place in both the hammer throw and shot put events at the Div. II Challenge last weekend. She also took second in the discus throw, earning a personal best distance of 144 feet — 14 feet better than her previous best. Her performance earned her the MIAA Women's Outdoor Field Athlete of the Week.

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