

# Baseball splits with Quincy

**Nietzel, Zukaitis lead 'Dogs to win against Hawks**

**BY BLAKE TOPPMAYER**  
Assistant Sports Editor

The baseball team accomplished something yesterday it had not done in more than 10 years — the Bulldogs defeated Quincy University.

Truman (6-34, 4-22 in the MIAA) beat the Hawks 6-4 in Game 2 of a double-header at Quincy, marking the first time the Bulldogs have won against their rivals from Illinois since February 1998.

Prior to the games, head coach Dan Davis said the team would need solid pitching to beat Quincy.

"We're going to have to pitch really well," he said. "They're not as offensive as they have been in the past."

Freshmen Jordan Nietzel and Kevin Zukaitis gave Davis what he wanted. Nietzel started on the mound and tossed four innings, allowing only two runs. After junior Corey Tomasek allowed two runs in 0.2 innings, Zukaitis finished the win by not surrendering a run in his 2.1 innings of work.

Freshman right fielder Joshua Dilday singled to right field in the 8th inning to score junior shortstop Neil Bleish and put the Bulldogs ahead 5-4.

The win salvaged a split for the 'Dogs after they lost 8-6 in Game 1.

On Tuesday, Truman

hosted Lincoln University. The Bulldogs scored three runs total in the 8th and 9th innings to tie the game at 4-4. But the Blue Tigers won 6-4 in 12 innings after Drew Horrell hit a two-run homer in the top of the 12th.

"I thought we'd put a bunch of runs up [Tuesday], and obviously they did a good job of pitching us, and we didn't produce like I thought we would, unfortunately," Davis said.

The Bulldog bats were silent until the eighth inning when Dilday homered to left field. This narrowed Lincoln's lead to 4-3. Dilday came through again in the ninth. After a pair of Bulldogs walked to start the inning, Dilday hit a game-tying double to right field.

That's when the hitting ceased for the Bulldogs. They did not get a hit in extra innings.

The Truman bullpen kept the team in the game as long as possible. Bulldog relievers pitched 7.2 innings and allowed only the 12th-inning homer.

Sophomore Justin Robbins surrendered the home run, but he also pitched four efficient innings.

"[The bullpen] threw strikes today, and they threw very well," Davis said. "They threw aggressive, and it's what I thought we would have all year. I just hope they do that the rest of the year because they'll be pretty good. Justin Robbins was a huge bright spot for us." During the weekend,



**Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index**  
Freshman pitcher Andy Updike delivers a pitch during Sunday's game against Missouri Southern. The Bulldogs won one game of four against the Lions.

the Bulldogs had a four-game series with MIAA-rival Missouri Southern State University. Truman won 9-1 in Game 1 but then dropped the next three games, losing 9-3, 14-3 and 11-6.

Truman and Missouri Southern are the conference's two worst pitching teams, and each team suffered from poor pitching at some point during the weekend.

"Offensively, I thought we did fine," Davis said. "I still thought we gave at-bats away. As we mature as hitters, we'll understand that it's not a good thing to give at-bats away. On the mound, it was pretty Average Joe at best. They're a team that strikes out a lot, and we didn't put hitters away when we needed to."

Truman's pitching was, however, at its best in Game 1, which led to the victory.

Freshman Logan Frame started on the mound and allowed just a solo home run in 3.2 innings before he had to exit the game when he felt tightness in his arm

in the fourth inning.

Freshman Michael Staihr, who has the lowest ERA for the team, entered in relief and retired every batter he faced in 2.1 innings of work. Freshman Andy Updike finished out the game by allowing only one runner to reach base in the ninth.

Freshman catcher Bryce Bond said Frame and Staihr succeeded by controlling the inside part of the plate but that the two relied on different pitches.

"They're a lot different," Bond said. "Logan has a little more movement on his fastball, so he can go to his fastball a little more. And Staihr can rely on his offspeed [pitches]. He's got a couple good change-ups that are real good."

Bleish headed the Bulldogs' offensive outburst with a 3-for-3 effort at the plate. Bleish stayed hot for the remainder of the weekend, but the rest of the Bulldog lineup struggled to get clutch hits.

In Game 2, Truman compiled 12 hits but was 1-for-7

at the plate in Saturday's second game with runners in scoring position.

Bleish was the only Bulldog who produced consistently at bat throughout the series. He finished 8-for-16 at the plate and hit two home runs to increase his season total to six.

"He's a strong kid, and he's got some bat speed," Davis said. "I think what he's done is bought into what we're asking him to do, and that's to use his legs to hit because that's your power part of your body."

After Truman's solid pitching in Game 1, it did not receive many more high-quality innings until Game 4, when Nietzel pitched three scoreless innings. For Nietzel, Davis said it was "absolutely his best" outing of the season.

Nietzel said the key was utilizing his breaking ball.

"If you give them a good fastball, they hit it," he said. "They weren't great with the offspeed, but if you made a mistake with your fastball and left it up, they hit it hard."

## TRUMAN ATHLETICS News and Notes

### Softball: Belcher ties MIAA career mark

Senior outfielder Christen Belcher currently is tied for the MIAA career record in stolen bases.

Belcher swiped three in the double-header against Missouri Southern State University on Monday, bringing her career total to 152 steals. She is tied with Missouri University of Science and Technology (formerly Missouri-Rolla) alumna Becca Alt, who set the record from 1995-98.

Belcher leads the MIAA this season in both steals, with 41, and steals per game, at 1.05. She swiped 42 bases last year and 45 her sophomore season, which both also led the MIAA. She had 24 stolen bases her freshman year.

Belcher tied the record after reaching base in her first at-bat in the second game Monday, but she never got a chance to break it. She led off the fifth inning with a base hit, but a single and a bunt moved her to third before she had the chance to steal.

Her next chance to break the record will come in a home contest at 2 p.m. today against Lincoln University.

### Men's golf: Two pick up MIAA awards

Despite finishing in the bottom half of the MIAA, two Bulldog golfers picked up All-MIAA honors this week. Freshman Chris Kovach was named the MIAA Freshman of the Year after his performance at the MIAA championship earlier this week. Kovach had the best scoring average of all freshman in the conference.

Junior Scott Danielsen was named to the All-MIAA honorable mention team. Danielsen and Kovach were the most consistent golfers all season for the Bulldogs, finishing in the top three at every tournament this season.

### Baseball: Bond seeing more time

Bryce Bond has been carrying the load behind the plate for the baseball team recently. The freshman catcher has started in 12 of the last 15 games and appeared in all 15.

He had started nine consecutive games before senior Matt Over got the start at catcher in Game 2 Saturday against Missouri Southern State University.

Over was the No. 1 catcher entering the season but has battled a sprained MCL in his left knee for most of the season. He's hitting .167 after leading the team with a .330 average in 2007.

Bond has a .319 average this year and 14 RBIs. He said he has been holding up pretty well even with all the extended playing time he's receiving.

"It's a lot of fun to catch that many games," Bond said. "I know Matt really wants to get in there. He got an opportunity to play [in Game 2 against Missouri Southern] which is great. I'm ready to go whenever it happens, but Matt's a good catcher too, and he deserves all the playing time he can get."

### Baseball: Frame has arm tightness

The baseball team took another blow to its already injury-riddled pitching staff when freshman starter Logan Frame suffered an injury in Game 1 of Saturday's double-header against Missouri Southern State University.

Frame left the game in the fourth inning after experiencing tightness in his left arm — his throwing arm.

Frame said the injury is not going to require surgery and that he should be able to return to the mound this season.

"It was just a little soreness," he said. "I threw a pitch, and I just felt a little tight. I tried to keep pitching through it, and I was able to get a couple batters out, but after a while I felt like I was hurting the team if I was going to stay out there and keep pitching. ... The entire game I pitched pretty much pain free, and it just got tight that one inning."

The game marked the third time in his last four starts that Frame has pitched at least three innings and allowed two runs or less. Frame has an 5.48 ERA in his last four starts and that number is lowered to a 1.53 ERA when an 11-7 loss at Fort Hays State University is excluded.

### Men's tennis: Ties will be broken randomly

There is a three-way tie as the MIAA conference tournament begins next week. The men's teams of Northwest Missouri State University, Southwest Baptist University, and Washburn University are tied with conference records of 3-1. The seeds will be determined randomly. Truman is fourth with a 1-3 record.

### Softball: Pair splits time at catcher

Senior Hallie Blackney and sophomore Erica LaCombe have been successfully platooning at catcher this season.

Blackney has 12 starts while LaCombe has 27 at catcher. Blackney also has 21 starts at first base and LaCombe has seven at second base.

The catchers have been switching off the most in the team's double-headers this season. They have replaced each other in eight of 13 double-headers this season.

The switches shake up the entire lineup. When LaCombe starts at second, usual starter Sherri Johnson does not play.

Blackney is hitting .282 this season. LaCombe is hitting .248.

# Men take seventh, Kovach third

**BY BRENT FOSTER**  
Staff Reporter

The men's golf team finished its regular season at the MIAA championship Tuesday and must wait for its postseason fate to be determined.

The Bulldogs finished the 54-hole tournament in seventh place in the eight-team MIAA. The seventh-place finish dropped the Bulldogs into sixth place in the final conference standings, which could jeopardize Truman's chances of making the NCAA Div. II regional tournament. The NCAA selects eight teams from each region.

The Bulldogs' region is comprised of 16 teams from the MIAA and the Northern Sun Conference. Last season the NCAA selected six MIAA teams and two from the Northern Sun. The Bulldogs will find out Thursday afternoon whether they made regionals.

"We're still right there on the bubble," head coach Kevin White said. "It could go either way. Last year at this time I thought we were out, and we were in. This year I think we're out, but you never know."

Truman was in good position

after the first round to move up the leader board but struggled to get any momentum going in Rounds 2 and 3. The Dogs' 314 in Round 1 put them in a battle for third place, but the men shot 323 and 322 in the final two rounds to end any chances of a high finish.

Freshman Chris Kovach's play was a bright spot for the Bulldogs. Kovach finished in third place overall, just one shot back from Washburn University's Ryan Deutsch and the University of Central Missouri's Justin Yoder. It was the highest finish for a Bulldog at any tournament this spring.

Kovach was named the men's golf MIAA Freshman of the Year.

"He played at a level he needed to play at," White said. "To finish one shot back of being in a play-off for the whole thing is amazing. What hurt him was not being in a position to help close the deal."

Kovach, who had three top-10 finishes in the five scoring events this season, was in the hunt for the individual title the entire tournament, but lightning caused a 45-minute delay just before he was set to tee off on hole 15 in the final round. Kovach

was at one under for the round before the delay. He finished the final round with a two-over-par 73.

"It was just a little different conditions," Kovach said. "The wind changed a little bit, and the rain kind of softened up some of the holes. On one of the holes it spun back off the green when it might have stayed up there. It might have done something, it might not have [had it not rained]."

Junior Scott Danielsen was the only other Bulldog to finish in the top 30. Danielsen, an All-MIAA honorable mention selection, finished with a three-round total of 238, 20 shots behind Kovach.

If Truman is not selected as a team to advance to the regional tournament, Kovach might be selected as an individual. Besides taking the top eight teams from the region, the NCAA also selects the top five individual golfers from teams that do not make regionals.

"If we don't go as a team, Chris [Kovach] should make it as an individual," White said. "Scott [Danielsen], possibly, but I think he might have played himself out of it this week."

Washburn won the event and

the overall MIAA regular season title with a three-round total of 884. It was the Ichabods' fifth MIAA tournament championship in six seasons. They finished the regular season perfect, taking first place in every MIAA-sanctioned event. This was the third time in the last four seasons Washburn finished the regular season perfect.

UCM was a distant second with a three-round total of 901.

Deutsch won the individual title in the first hole of a sudden death playoff against Yoder.

UCM head coach Tim Poe said the strength of the conference will be evident at the upcoming regional tournament.

"I wouldn't count any of the teams out in the MIAA that make it," Poe said. "They've all showed signs of playing pretty well. Even Southwest Baptist played very well the last day over conference. ... All the teams coming from the MIAA, if everyone plays well, you just never know. The parity of this league is getting better and better."

The NCAA Div. II Super Regional Tournament will take place May 5 to 7 in Findley, Ohio.

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