

TRACK | Lauer, Bergstedt earn provisional marks, Bergstedt also sets a track record



Freshman Mike Reams prepares to launch the javelin during the 11th annual Truman Open on Saturday. Mark Hardy/Index

Continued from Page 17

As for the men's team, the dominance was not as evident as for the women's. However, one performance in particular was record-breaking. Senior Sean Bergstedt set a new track record for Stokes Stadium in the 400-meter hurdle with a time of 52.13 seconds. That beat out the old track record of 52.4 seconds set by Brian Moorman of Pittsburg State University.

The mark also counted as a provisional mark for Bergstedt. However, the week before was 0.03 seconds faster. He said he attributes some of the performance this week to the fact that he feels in his element.

"It's refreshing to run the event that I feel I am best trained for," Bergstedt said. "The 400 hurdles is like unlike any other event. ... It's a grueling race, but it's just something that brings me a lot of personal satisfaction."

Two other Bulldogs, senior Joe Ackermann in the 110-meter hurdles and senior David Yonce in the steeple chase, also finished first for the team.

The Truman Open was not the first opportunity the Bulldogs had to compete outdoors. Two weeks ago, the teams traveled to Fayette, Mo., to compete in the Central Methodist University Easter Open. Like last week, the women's team walked away with 10

first-place finishes, led by junior Ashley Bernard, who took first in the shot put, the hammer throw and the discus.

Lauer was hot on her heels, however, with a first place in both the 200-meter dash and the triple jump, marking the second time in as many weeks that the junior scored multiple firsts.

The men, however, had a much better week at the Easter Open than at the Truman Open. For the first time since February the men's team came away with more first places than the women's team, with 11 top finishes.

Senior Charlie Brandhorst was top 'Dog for the men, placing first in the 100- and 200-meter dashes. These wins are the first of both the indoor and outdoor seasons for Brandhorst. He said that although the wins were a big deal, there are others he would like to win more.

"This was kind of a smaller meet," Brandhorst said. "If it was a larger meet, like conference, I think I'd be a lot happier about it, but it feels good to win a couple of races and get the confidence going."

The Bulldogs will get a chance to test out any new confidence they might have earned last weekend when they travel to Maryville, Mo., for the Northwest Missouri Invite.



Freshman Jen Lawson chips onto the green during last weekend's Bulldog Classic. Lawson tied for sixth in the event. Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

GOLF | Limsiacco fires a 169 to finish second at Bulldog Classic last weekend

Continued from Page 17

"[Limsiacco] and Julie, when Julie is playing well, are going to be very close all the time," Lesseig said. "Right now, Krystal is a little ahead of her."

A surprise for the Bulldogs was the play of senior Marta Samojluk.

After sitting out the fall season to focus on academics, Samojluk returned to the links at the Classic. It was her first appearance in tournament play since the national tournament last spring.

Samojluk showed few signs of rust and shot rounds of 95 and 89 to finish in 12th place.

"She's probably pretty much on schedule," Lesseig said.

The women continue their fall season this weekend with a trip to Amana, Iowa, for the Upper Iowa Invite.

Lesseig said if the team is going to make a return trip to the national championship it has to do one simple thing.

"We need to beat some people," Lesseig. "We need to get the scores down into 330s, the 320s."

WILD | Letter to Editor, non-renewal of women's basketball coach's contract and alleged burglary make up interesting month for athletics

Continued from Page 17

I wondered why the Student Recreation Center couldn't be used. Now, I'm not suggesting that the Rec become the new athletes' gym, but for two hours, twice a week, the gym could be used for basketball or volleyball practice, and really, few people would be bothered.

If teams can't practice, it's tough to win.

Speaking of winning, I was sur-

prised to see that women's basketball head coach John Sloop wasn't offered a contract for next year. After his best season, he was shown the door.

Still, it's hard to make an argument for Sloop when his record in eight seasons was never good — when your best season is a mere three games north of the .500 mark, I think it's time for a change. Coach Sloop is a nice man, and I enjoyed interacting with him through the years. I wish him the best

of luck, but I think the team needs new blood.

After Sloop was told he won't be coming back next year, a couple of people asked me if I thought football head coach Shannon Currier would be next. They weren't asking based on his on-the-field record, but more because of off-the-field issues.

Two more football players did something stupid, and the fingers started pointing at Currier and Director

of Athletics Jerry Wollmering.

Did I miss something? Since when is theft not the fault of the person doing the stealing? Currier and Wollmering were not in Dobson with the two kids.

What these two kids allegedly did was insanely stupid. There is no way that either Currier or Wollmering could have known these players would do this. It should be common sense not to steal. It's not the job of the athletic department to tell

athletes not to steal things.

Although the situation in Pershing is not quite end-of-the-world level, it's still been a rough couple of weeks for the athletic department.

I hope the department will start getting some support, no more coaches will be let go and athletes will start to treat being a Bulldog as a privilege and try to stay off the front page of the Index — unless it's for on-the-field accomplishments.

ATHLETES | Average ACT score for Truman athletes is the highest it's been since athletic department started tracking the numbers in 2002

Continued from Page 17

Since the athletic department began keeping record of athletes' ACT scores in 2002, their test average has never been below 26. The 26.6 test average in 2007 was the highest average for Truman athletes during that time span.

'Never going to compromise the mission of the University'

After Director of Athletics Jerry Wollmering did not renew the contract of former women's basketball head coach John Sloop last month, Sloop hinted that academic standards might be lowered in the future for prospective athletes (see the March 20 issue of the Index).

Wollmering dismissed this idea. "We're never going to compromise the mission of the University," he said. "We haven't. We've showed that we can [have success] without compromising."

Truman is the only highly selective public institution in Missouri, and to gain admission, a student must achieve a combined ability score of 140. This means that prospective students need to have a combined average in the 70th percentile for class rank and ACT test scores.

Regina Morin, associate vice president for enrollment management, said students also could be admitted if their combined ability is within 10 percent of the desired 140 and they have other factors — such as attending a highly academic high school or taking a lot of difficult high school courses — showing credence for admission.

She said athletes receive no more special consideration for admission than any other student who provides diversity to the campus, such as students from non-white racial backgrounds, out-of-state students or students with musical or leadership talents. Morin said this policy should continue in the future.

"The thing is, it doesn't really serve a student well to bring them in if they're

really far below that 140 combined ability," Morin said. "... It really comes down to that: Is the student academically prepared to be able to be successful in the competitive environment that we have? And if they're not, they're not admitted because it's not doing the student a favor, as badly as they want to come, or as badly as a coach may want them."

Graduating Athletes

After athletes are admitted to the University, their performance in the classroom does not falter.

Male athletes in fall 2007 had an average cumulative GPA of 3.17, while male non-athletes' GPA was 3.20, according to statistics supplied by the athletic department. Female athletes had an average cumulative GPA of 3.39, compared to 3.36 for a female non-athlete.

Also, Truman athletes exceed the performances of athletes from other MIAA schools. Washburn University, Emporia State University and Fort Hays State University — all of which are located in Kansas — each had average athlete GPAs of 3.01, according to information supplied by the schools' athletic departments.

Additionally, Truman led the conference in the 2007 NCAA graduation rate report. Truman's graduation rate was 66 percent for freshmen athletes who enrolled in 2000-01, with the NCAA providing the athletes six years to graduate. The Div. II average was 55 percent.

Recruiting Challenges

Because of the admission standards and the expectation for academic success for athletes, Truman coaches are limited in whom they can recruit.

When Morin met with coaches in January, she talked with them about the challenges they faced in recruiting. She said there was discussion about attempting to bring in more transfer and international students who meet admission guidelines.

Football head coach Shannon Currier said he meets the recruiting challenge by targeting a large pool of high school athletes.

"We have to recruit more people knowing that maybe 15 to 20 percent can get into the school," he said. "If Northwest Missouri [State University] has, say, 5,000 on their database, we better have a lot more because we aren't going to get the same amount of kids into the school."

Currier said he cannot use the high admission standards as a crutch if his team does not perform the way he desires.

"If we don't succeed as a football program here, I personally can't use our academic standards as an excuse because we're finding kids out there that can help us win championships," said Currier, whose football team has compiled two straight 6-5 seasons. "Our players that we're recruiting are going to help us win a championship."

Volleyball head coach Jason Skoch said the admission standards are not the biggest challenge facing coaches during recruiting. For volleyball, he said competing for athletes with the high number of Div. II, Div. III and junior colleges in the Midwest and presenting a competitive scholarship offer are bigger hurdles to climb in recruiting.

"I think you can win here, but I have to admit you're busting your butt much harder, much more than you would at another place," Skoch said. "It's not the academics, man. People think it's the academics, it's — in my opinion — the lack of resources, lack of facilities, lack of teamwork on the campus."

Skoch and Currier said they think the high academic standards can be beneficial to their programs. The academic marks help in the distribution of athletic scholarship money because many athletes also are receiving academic scholarships.

"The academics are wonderful," Skoch said. "I think it's a wonderful selling point. In general, most kids that have good academics are better focused, [and] they're more driven on their own."

Skoch and Currier also agreed that athletes should not get preferential treatment when it comes to admission. "The main thing is, we as coaches, we don't decide who gets into this school," Currier said. "That's beyond my control. What we do, we try to recruit the highest caliber of student that we possibly can because not only do we want them to get admitted, we want them to succeed here."

'A good balance'

Even with the challenge of finding athletes who can compete in both the athletic and academic realms, the Bulldog athletic program is achieving success.

The football team has a combined 12-10 record in the past two seasons, and in the fall it had an average cumulative GPA of 2.96, the highest since Currier took over the team prior to the 2004 season.

Although the football team has the lowest GPA among Truman teams, players are outperforming conference schools in the classroom. Washburn's football team — 15-8 in the past two seasons — has a 2.74 cumulative GPA, and Emporia State's football team has a 2.66 cumulative GPA while compiling a 6-16 combined record in 2006 and 2007.

Northwest Missouri's football team has been a Div. II national runner-up three years in a row. But to be admitted to Northwest, a student only needs to have a 21 ACT score and a 2.0 GPA or a 100 combined ability and a 2.0 GPA, according to the school's Web site. The average ACT score for all of Northwest students is a 22, and the 2007 Bulldog

football team had an ACT average score of 24.3.

"When [about 100] guys have an average ACT of over 24, find me another school that can say that in their football program," Wollmering said.

Meanwhile, the Bulldog women's teams have experienced the biggest accomplishments.

The women's swim team has won seven of the past eight national championships, and the volleyball team has qualified for eight straight NCAA tournaments. Since 1998, women's teams have totaled 26 regular season and post-season MIAA championships.

"I think it proves that there are a lot of outstanding students out there that have the athletic ability to compete at this level," Wollmering said. "... I would put our women's athletic program up against any Div. II athletics program in the country."

Skoch said Truman's academic background helps give the school its niche.

"I guess I'd also look at it like this is: Would we be here if we didn't have the academics? Hell no because of the location and because of everything else," Skoch said. "And so when people ask if academics are [a challenge], it makes it more difficult to recruit, and yes, trying to go find a nerd that can jump 10 feet and has the volleyball skill set is very, very difficult. But let's face it, it's why we're here."

It is why many of the athletes are here, and it's why Certa was sitting in Violette Hall discussing business strategies Monday and not in a classroom at a different institution.

"I'm not sure for everybody, but my overall feeling is it definitely gives athletes who feel that academics are important and understand their value, it gives them a good medium, a good balance of both," Certa said.

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