



Freshman forward Mark Misiewicz (right) and freshman center David Scott (left) run through drills in Wednesday's practice. The men's basketball team suffered its fifth loss of the season Saturday.

Mark Hardy/Index

'Dogs falter in home opener

Men's comeback attempt comes up short, team falls 71-66 against NAIA squad

BY BLAKE TOPPMEYER
Assistant Sports Editor

The Bulldogs started their fourth quarter rally just a little too late.

Looking for its first win of the season Saturday against NAIA Hannibal-LaGrange College, the men's basketball team (0-5) mounted a comeback effort, but time expired before the 'Dogs could fully close the gap.

The Trojans led 62-49 with just more than four minutes remaining, but Truman finished the game on a 17-9 run behind strong play from senior forward Nick Certa and junior guard Banks Estridge. But Hannibal (6-6) put the game away with five free throws in the final 12 seconds of play to claim a 71-66 victory in Pershing Arena.

"It's tough to play a whole game at that kind of intensity, but there's a sense of urgency when you're down by double digits with four minutes to go," Estridge said. "You have to pick it up. You have to take a few more chances."

Estridge and Certa, the lone starters remaining from last year's team, scored Truman's last 25 points of the game. Senior guard Josias Flynn's free throw with 10:38 remaining in the second half was the last point a Bulldog other than Estridge or Certa scored. The duo scored 24 points apiece, with a total of 37 points coming in the second half, and combined to shoot 66 percent from the field.

"When you're down, you obviously look to guys that have been there before, and Certa and I are really the only ones that have been in situations like that," Estridge said. "We were both feeling it. Between the two of us, the shots were coming, and they were falling."

Head coach Jack Schrader said his two team leaders played under good control late in the game.

"What they both did down the stretch — they started playing slower, not trying to make plays on the run, taking their time," Schrader said.

Hannibal's performance at the free-throw line might have been the difference between a win and a loss for the Bulldogs. The Trojans shot 74 percent from the charity stripe and made nine more free throws than the 'Dogs, who shot just 50 percent. Truman missed its final four free throw attempts, two of which came on the front end of a one-and-one.

Up 67-64 with 12 seconds remain-

ing, the Trojans' Matt Smith missed his second free throw attempt, but Hannibal's Matt Ayers grabbed the rebound and nailed two free throws to ice the game.

The late rally from the Bulldogs was the team's third offensive spurt of the game. Truman jumped out to an 18-17 lead behind 67 percent shooting in the first nine minutes of play. But the 'Dogs soon went cold and did not score a point in the final 7 1/2 minutes of the first half and trailed 28-24 at halftime.

"We'd go on a run and get pumped, but they'd score a bucket, and instead of fixing our problem, we would get a little too down on ourselves," Certa said. "We'd just go on runs where we'd let them score way too easily."

Truman came out of halftime playing up-tempo basketball and scored several baskets in transition. The Bulldogs stormed to a 36-30 lead, only to see Hannibal answer with a 14-1 run of its own.

Schrader said he might have put some bad lineup combinations on the floor at times, which took the team out of its rhythm.

"[I'm] just trying to push the right button at the right time," Schrader said. "And I don't know which buttons to push yet."

Hannibal mounted a strong offensive attack. The Trojans converted 46 percent of their field goals, the highest of any of Truman's opponents this season.

"The whole game, the reason we were down was defense," Certa said. "The last two weekends, we played some really good teams, but we played good enough defense to be right there. And [Saturday] ... I don't think our defense was where it should be."

Three Trojans scored in double figures, led by Nick Michalas' 21 points. The 6-foot-8 Michalas was one of several Hannibal players to have success in the low post.

Hannibal used a cutting offense and good interior passing to find holes in the 'Dogs' defense.

"With our system, we always struggle with teams like this because we don't take people out of their offense," Schrader said. "We guard their offense. And teams that run their offense and execute well always hurt us."

The Bulldogs will continue in their hunt for their first win Saturday at 3 p.m. against NCCAA Central Christian College. The game will be Truman's last home contest until January.

Estridge, Certa provide offense in early games

BY BLAKE TOPPMEYER
Assistant Sports Editor

Trailing by 13 points with just more than four minutes remaining, the men's basketball team was in danger of getting trounced by NAIA Hannibal-LaGrange College on Saturday.

The team needed a spark, and junior Banks Estridge provided it.

First, the point guard buried a three-pointer from the right wing. On the next possession, Estridge pulled up in transition for a three-point jump shot from the left wing and connected again. He polished off his personal eight-point run on the ensuing possession when he knifed his way into the lane for a layup.

Just like that, the Bulldogs trailed by just five points. In less than two minutes, Estridge single-handedly pulled the 'Dogs out of an offensive slumber and gave the team a chance for victory.

"This week in practice, coach was really like, 'Be aggressive. Get the

ball up the floor. Take it to the hole,'" Estridge said. "And I think that really helped my confidence because I went in today knowing that coach wanted me to be more aggressive."

Although the Trojans held on for a 71-66 win, Estridge posted 22 second-half points in a comeback effort. Entering the game, the junior had been in a scoring slump.

He averaged fewer than seven points a game and a 29-percent shooting percentage through the season's first four games.

But his performance in the final 20 minutes Saturday reasserted why Estridge is one of Truman's top offensive threats.

"A lot of it has been coach just trying to get me to find my role with this new team," Estridge said. "I'm the type of player that likes to bring a lot of energy and play hard, and I was kind of playing maybe a little too out of myself the first few games."

Estridge finished the game with 24

points and shot 71 percent from the field. He missed just one of nine shots that he took inside the three-point line. Estridge also contributed six assists — compared to only one turnover — and grabbed six rebounds.

Senior forward Nick Certa said he knew Estridge quickly would overcome his slow offensive start from earlier this season.

"He showed a lot of this last year, and I knew he'd get back into it because he can definitely be a great offensive threat," Certa said. "He's really versatile. He can handle the ball really well. He can drive. He can shoot. So he's going to be big for us on the offensive end."

Certa also erupted in the second half Saturday. He scored 15 of his 24 points in the last 20 minutes.

With Certa scoring from low post and contributing two three-pointers, along with Estridge driving to the basket, the Bulldogs narrowed the once 13-point deficit to just two points with

seconds remaining in the game, before Hannibal-LaGrange solidified the win.

"We felt like we needed to get to the basket a lot better at the end [and] maybe draw a foul," Certa said. "So we took it to the hoop, and it worked out for us."

Estridge and Certa provided 73 percent of the Bulldogs' total offensive production Saturday. No two players ever totaled more than 60 percent of Truman's scoring in a game last season.

And although the efforts of Estridge and Certa were necessary against Hannibal-LaGrange, the Bulldogs likely will need other offensive weapons for the team to achieve a third straight winning season.

Last season, every member of the starting five averaged double figures in scoring. But this season, only Certa and Estridge are averaging at least 10 points per game. To add to this, Truman is receiving just 10.4 points per game from its bench players. The 2005-06 Bulldog team, which compiled 20 wins, received

an average of more than 20 points per night from its bench.

Head coach Jack Schrader said part of the problem has been deciding what lineup to put on the floor at certain times.

"I have to figure out how to use the personnel better," Schrader said. "It's about as simple as that. And see who steps up."

Estridge said production from the bench is important to a team's success and that he expects the team to improve all around as players settle into their responsibilities.

"I think once we find a [starting lineup] that really works together, and then a group that comes off the bench, and they know their roles, then I think we'll start getting that production," Estridge said.

But until that time arrives, the 'Dogs might need production from Estridge and Certa similar to what they received Saturday, when the two veterans carried the team in the second half.

Parking space steps away from home?

Yes **No**

Washer down the hall?

Uh huh! **Negatory**

No lofted beds?

Yep **Nope**

perfect...

Newly remodeled and well maintained **four to five bedroom** houses for rent that are close to campus. They feature **washer and dryer and off-street parking**. Available for May and August leases. Call **Kevin Gregory at 660-216-6618** for more information.

Classes will be out soon...

Stock up for the winter break with:

- Salsas (hot or mild)
- Pie Fillings
- Jams
- Apple Butter
- Jellies
- Pickles
- Preserves
- Relishes

from

Farmer Jay's Homemade Delights

(660) 342 - 3161

Will deliver in Kirksville