

WRESTLING | Wrestling squad downs Missouri Baptist College 26-25 on Wednesday night in Pershing Arena with a final-match victory

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The 39-7 loss is an improvement over last season's outing against the Bronchos. However, Central Oklahoma has not been kind to the Bulldogs. In the two seasons the teams have locked up with each other, the score has been 83-7 in Central Oklahoma's favor.

The Bulldogs' loss to Central Oklahoma isn't completely unexpected when looking at the statistics. Currently, the Bronchos are No. 6 in national polls. Add to that the fact that last year, the team beat the second-place team in the NCAA Div. II Championship, the University of Nebraska-Kearney, by almost a 20-point spread.

Also on the Bronchos' side is the fact that they came away with eight All-Americans last year. However, only one, Heath Jolley, returned for the Broncos, which means the 'Dogs faced off against a mostly new roster.

On Sunday, Truman took on Oklahoma City University. Last season, the Bulldogs lost to the

Stars by a slim 25-23 score, which came down to the final match of the day. However, the score was not nearly as forgiving for the 'Dogs on Sunday. Truman fell to Oklahoma City 40-4.

This time, only one Bulldog, Nahlik, came away victorious on the day when he defeated Adam DeLong, again by a score of 9-0.

The win for Nahlik extends his streak to six of his last seven matches. Head coach Dave Schutter said he is not surprised by Nahlik's performance.

"[Nahlik] is wrestling really well right now," Schutter said. "In wrestling, it's kind of like a flame goes off inside a competitor and their fire starts burning. That's what's happened to Rob. His focus is there and his fire is burning. He's ready to go every time out."

And although Nahlik had the best weekend for the team, Schutter said there were some Bulldogs who did better than their scores indicated, including 141-pound sophomore Mitchell Bainbridge.

"[Bainbridge] is starting to

see the light at the end of the tunnel," he said. "He's starting to turn the corner a little bit, which is good."

One Bulldog who won't be turning that corner is 165-pound junior Ryan Clanahan. After a string of injuries, he and Schutter decided it was time to hang up the singlet after squaring off against Oklahoma City.

"It was a little bit surreal," Clanahan said. "But, at the same time, it's been a long time coming. With injury after injury after injury, I kind of guessed, though, that this was how it was going to end."

With the loss to Oklahoma City, the Bulldogs extend their dual losing streak to four straight games. Still, Schutter said he sees so many tough matches back to back as a good thing.

"I think it just makes us better," Schutter said. "When you face good competition back to back, it just shows you what you are going to face going into nationals and regionals. When you wrestle weak people, it give you a false sense of security. It lets you know where you are at."

DUAL | Nationally ranked University of Central Oklahoma and NAIA powerhouse Oklahoma City University pose challenge for wrestlers

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Just two Bulldog wrestlers experienced wins last weekend. Senior Rob Nahlik picked up two wins at 125, after beating Central Oklahoma's Nick Rice and Oklahoma City's Adam DeLong, both by a score of 9-0. Junior Blake Peterson was responsible for Truman's only other victory. Peterson defeated Central Oklahoma's Paul Mayfield, 7-3.

Nahlik said he performed at the level he expected but would like to get off to a quicker start.

"I did about as well as I should have done on Sunday," he said. "Saturday I could have wrestled better, but I came out a little sluggish in both matches and didn't score until late in the first period in both matches. I'd like to be able to score earlier against guys of that level."

Nahlik said he thought the team was surprised by Sunday's dual against Oklahoma City.

"I think the team kind of had wrong expectations of this weekend," he said. "A lot of the team was expecting to have a real hard match against the returning national champs on Saturday, and I think some people were just expecting Sunday to be significantly easier than Saturday, which obviously it wasn't."

Nahlik said he didn't think the duals would have much of an effect on the team's mind set.

"I don't worry about dual meets, really, that much at all," he said. "It doesn't really matter how well you do in dual meets. It matters how you do in tournaments. I'd rather see everybody do well at regionals than win any dual matches."

Freshman Mitchell Bainbridge competed in the 141-pound division and was pinned by Central Oklahoma's Trey Branscum in the first round but wrestled a tighter match against Oklahoma City's Tyler Howard, losing 9-4. Bainbridge said he liked the fact that Truman was competing against better schools.

"I think it's good," he said. "Those guys are the top in the nation, ranking wise, so it's good to see what you need to work on. You see your mistakes, so you know what to work on later on."

Bainbridge said he would benefit from wrestling these teams because it is his first year with the varsity team, and he has gained some valuable experience.

"This is my first time getting some actual college mat time," he said. "Seeing what I need to change to become a great college wrestler is a lot different from practicing."

Bainbridge said he gained a boost in confidence from Sunday's dual.

"I was close," he said. "I only lost by a little bit. At the very end, it could have gone either way, so it gave me a little confidence to know that I can win, and I can be better than him if I need to be because I know what I need to work on."

The Bulldogs will get more of a chance at more tough competition this weekend when they travel to Minnesota to take on Minnesota State University-Mankato on Saturday. Currently, Mankato sits atop the coaches' poll in Div. II. The Mavericks finished fourth at nationals last season.

TRACK | Trio of Bulldog runners claim wins at Illinois College Blue Classic in Jacksonville, Ill.

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"I set the bar for my last few attempts a half-inch above the school record just to try and see if I could get it, but I was just too tired by that point," Biermann said.

Biermann and fellow pole vaulters junior Kristen Klesh and freshman Lindsey Bramon are a reliable source of points to match the efforts of the women's weight throwers, which will be a key component to any run at a strong placing in the conference championships.

For the men's squad, senior hurdler Sean Bergstedt broke a recent slump with a first-place finish in the 55-meter hurdles.

"Unfortunately, the last several meets I have not been quite up to expectations, for me and my coach," Bergstedt said. "I think that after this last meet, I ran pretty well and felt strong, and it will give me a lot of confidence for meets down the road."

With an automatic NCAA bid already secured for his top ranking on the 60-meter hurdle MIAA Performance List, Bergstedt is now determined to improve his 400-meter time as the anchor man for the 4X400-meter relay team.

Fellow senior teammate Kevin

Crean placed third in the men's 800-meter race, finishing with just a half-second between himself and the winner with a time of 1:58.52.

Coming off of a victorious effort in the 1,000-meter race at the Northern Iowa Invite, Crean said it was a very tough and slow start to this week's race.

"We came out pretty much elbow-to-elbow in a really tight pack, moving with a pretty slow pace, and what that does is it wears on you and takes its toll on that last lap," Crean said.

Crean currently is at the No. 5 ranking on the MIAA 800-meter Performance List, roughly two seconds from the best time in the conference.

The level of competition in the conference is much clearer for the athletes as provisional lists begin to solidify, and this is the time of the season when they strive for the number or mark that they need to make to earn a chance to race at the NCAA Div. II Championships in Mankato, Minn.

Only three meets are left, including the MIAA Indoor Championships on Feb. 29. The 'Dogs will travel to Galesburg, Ill., for the Knox Invitational on Saturday.



Senior mid-distance runner Kevin Crean works out in a practice earlier this season. Crean took third in the 800-meter run at the Classic on Saturday.

COLUMN | Little athletic ability leads to 30-point losses for columnist's rec-league team

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The guy who was guarding me obviously had seen my scouting report that said I couldn't shoot, so he wasn't within five feet of me. I got the ball, and because we already were down a lot to zero, I chucked up a three.

It was ugly. It hit the backboard, the front of the rim, the back of the rim and then somehow fell through the cylinder for three points.

I was stunned.

A couple of trips down the court later I again found myself open for another three — I guess the guy guarding me didn't think I would get lucky twice.

I did. It was another ugly shot that for some reason I launched with incredible arc. It looked like a definite air ball but instead was a swish. I was getting cocky.

The next time I got the ball I ignored the defender who had begun to respect my game. I chucked a three that hit nothing but the ground under the basket. It was the best definition of an air ball I had seen live. I was not even in the general area of the basket.

We went on to lose by 30 and that was only because that's as bad as the officials let it get. It would have been much worse had we played the entire second half.

Our team lost again by 30 last week and probably will lose by 30 tonight. I think after that I'm going to hang up my gym shoes and retire from rec-league play.

And I won't pull a Michael Jordan and come back wearing the four-five.

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