

# Softball begins season with split

BY JACK NICHOLL  
Staff Reporter

After an offseason indoors, the softball team is back outside.

The Bulldogs opened the season with a 2-2 record in the Alabama-Huntsville Tournament last weekend.

After the team's double header versus Wayne State University (Neb.) and host Alabama-Huntsville were canceled because of rain Friday, the team opened the season with two games apiece Saturday and Sunday.

Weather conditions were a factor — many of the players on the bench had gloves on and were wrapped in blankets. It was the first time the team competed outside this season in either a game or practice.

The Bulldogs cruised to an 8-0 five inning mercy rule victory in the opening contest against the University of Southern Arkansas. Junior Stephanie Martin pitched the complete game for the 'Dogs.

"I think everybody was pretty good, and we came out strong for our first tournament," junior outfielder Dani Mayer said. "I

thought everybody was pretty sharp. ... It was pretty important. It was a huge confidence booster. Everything we were doing in the offseason helped us to come out and play strong in our first game."

In the second game, Truman lost to the University of West Alabama 3-1. Senior Katie Jeannin started and pitched five innings for Truman. After she was taken out because of a line drive against her ankle, Western Alabama broke the 1-1 tie with two runs off of senior Katie Noski in the bottom of the sixth.

Head coach Erin Brown said that in the first game the women were pumped but that their energy only carried over into the first part of the second game.

"It was great to come out and get that win at the beginning of the season," Brown said. "The girls really enjoyed it. Then I felt like we let down a little bit in the middle of the West Alabama game and then came back up, [but] it was too late."

The first game Sunday did not go any better, with the Bulldogs once again losing by two. The University of North Alabama won the game 5-3 with Martin pitching the whole game. She

struck out five and walked four.

Truman took a quick 1-0 lead in the top half of the first inning, but it was quickly erased as North Alabama scored a run in each of the first three innings. Truman closed the gap to one run by scoring in the top of the fourth, but the Lions responded again with two in the bottom of the frame.

The 'Dogs only had one fewer hit than the Lions, and the Lions had four errors compared to none for Truman. However, North Alabama drew more walks, and its scoring was helped by a home run from cleanup hitter Lindsey Bates.

Senior Christen Belcher had four hits and three steals at the top of the lineup for Truman, but she only was able to score once.

Brown said that although the team lost, the defense still was strong, which was a theme in each game. She said the team did not allow an unearned run all weekend.

"To go outside and play for the first time, I was really pleased with our defense and really felt like we did a good job," Brown said.

In the fourth game, the team got back in the win column with



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index  
Senior utility player Hallie Blackney squares to bunt in a practice last week. The softball team opened its season last weekend at the Alabama-Huntsville Tournament.

a 10-3 victory against Delta State University. Noski recorded the win on the mound and Mayer went 3-for-4 with a home run. Truman was down 3-1 after four innings but came back with five, three and one runs in the last three innings.

Brown said it is important for the team to drive in base runners more often than it did during the weekend. She said that even in

the last game, the team left many runners on base, and the team will work on this in the upcoming practices.

Junior Rebekah Shea said the hitting was solid all weekend, but sometimes the hitters could not deliver the hit needed to drive in a run.

"It seemed like we consistently had runners on," Shea said. "There never seemed to be

like there was a lag in hitting."

Truman opens its home and conference schedule this weekend with two games against Southwest Minnesota State University.

It will mark the first time the Bulldogs will be able to play or practice on their home field this year. The games are at 11 a.m. Saturday and Sunday.

# Pitchers adapt to elements in first trip outside

BY JACK NICHOLL  
Staff Reporter

Battling the elements, the Truman softball pitchers compiled a 2-2 record last weekend at the University of Alabama-Huntsville Tournament.

The series marked plenty of firsts for the pitchers this season: pitching outside, pitching on dirt with cleats and pitching in a live-game situation. Most importantly, the pitchers were up against cold, windy weather, which isn't present during their practices in Pershing Arena.

"Feeling their fingertips was a struggle, and I think that affected some of their pitches," head coach Erin Brown said. "... I think they did well, but

we still need to make that adjustment to try work through those environmental factors."

Junior transfer Stephanie Martin lead the way for the staff. She started two games and compiled a 1.75 earned-run average. Martin was especially sharp in the opening game Saturday against the University of Southern Arkansas, throwing a five-inning shutout.

Brown said Martin was phenomenal in her first game but that she had some trouble hitting her spots in the second game when she pitched against the University of Northern Alabama on Sunday.

"Part of that is that adjustment outside," Brown said. "Inside it is so much easier to

get traction and do things in the gym versus outside in your cleats."

Martin pitched the complete game in the 5-3 loss Sunday. She allowed seven hits and four walks and struck out five. It was her first live-game action for Truman after transferring here from Southwest Baptist University.

"I think everybody was anxious with Stephanie being able to play this year, and she definitely adds something," third baseman Rebekah Shea said.

Senior Katie Noski was second on the team in innings pitched with eight combined in two games. She received the loss in the second game against West Alabama University when

she came in during the sixth inning. Senior Katie Jeannin started the game but had to be taken out after the fifth inning because of a line drive that hit her in the ankle. Noski also threw a complete game in the final game of the tournament, a 10-3 victory against Delta State University.

Shea said winning the final helped the team build confidence going into the home opener next weekend.

"Our last game against Delta State was a pretty big win for us, so I think we're just trying to build on that moment some and keep it going and carry it over to this weekend," Shea said.

Jeannin pitched well in the limited innings she played.

After getting hit with the line drive, she was able to finish the inning but not the game, and she was unable to pitch Sunday. The only run she allowed came via a home run. Junior outfielder Dani Mayer said Jeannin, and the other pitchers were strong both mentally and physically throughout the weekend.

Brown said that as well as Jeannin did, she has room for improvement.

"I felt for her, being out in the game situation, her pitches weren't moving as much as they do in practice, and so we'll need to continue to improve on that," Brown said.

The pitchers were able to limit their walks as they adjust-

ed to the umpires' strike zones. The most they allowed in one game was three, and Martin allowed none in her shutout victory. Brown said all of the pitchers can work more on hitting their spots and snapping off their pitches better.

A strong defensive effort also was a factor in the pitchers' success. The defense did not allow an unearned run all tournament.

"Our defense played fairly solid," Shea said. "The very last game there were some throwing errors, but a lot of that had to do with being outside in an actual game setting, so I think they are definitely mistakes that are easy to fix."



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