

No swimmers added to national roster

BY COREY JAROS
Staff Reporter

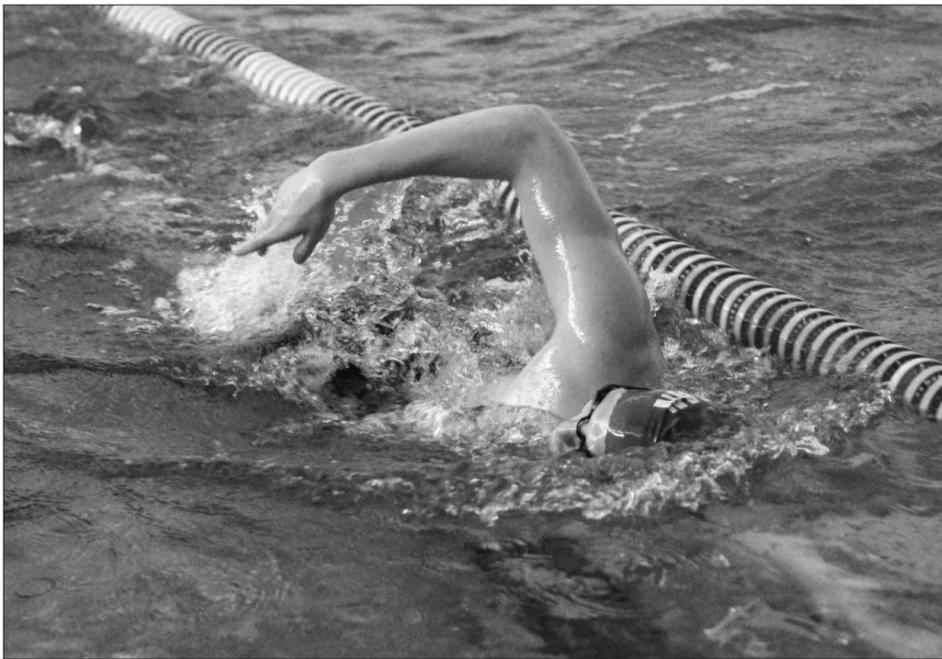
This past weekend's Last Chance Meet proved to be the final meet of the year for the four Bulldog swimmers who traveled to Cleveland, Miss., to take one last shot at scoring a time under the national-qualifying standard.

"Unfortunately, we didn't get what we wanted," head coach Mark Gole said. "I wanted to at least give them the opportunity because they were close, and they earned the right to go. It just didn't go as well as we would have liked."

Junior Jessie Lemaster successfully qualified for the national team during her first two years swimming at Truman and had been on the brink of scoring a time under the qualifying standard time of 17:32.29 in the 1,650-yard freestyle all season long. She missed the time she needed to make the national squad by less than one second at the Miami (Ohio) Invitational in December. She finished the race at the last-chance meet with a time of 17:47.05.

"My goal next year is to try and make my cut at our mid-season taper meet instead of waiting until the conference meet," Lemaster said. "One thing I did differently this year was a drop-taper so that I wouldn't have to taper for conference, and I think next year I would rather just rest for conference because that's what I did the past two years, and it worked perfectly."

Freshman Julia Jones followed her strong showing at the NSISC championships in the 1,650-yard freestyle



Senior Adam Pruess swims in practice last week. Pruess is one of five men's swimmers qualified for nationals. Neither the men's nor the women's swim teams received additional swimmers at last weekend's Last Chance Meet.

with another fast time of 17:39.17. She was less than seven seconds off of the national-qualifying time for the mile-long race.

"Julia had a great meet," Gole said. "She's had two of the fastest miles of her life back-to-back weekends. I told her that because you went the times

you did this year, that just means we have to go that much harder all season long next year, and you are going to be making nationals."

Sophomore Danielle Odenthal finished the 100-yard breaststroke two seconds off of the national qualifying time with a mark of 1:07.10. She also

competed in the 200-yard breaststroke, finishing with a time of 2:25.40 and missing the qualifying time by less than three seconds.

"I was actually really impressed with how Danielle swam," Gole said. "She fought really hard, and she had a really positive attitude about the whole

thing. All three of these girls are going to be coming back extremely motivated next year, and I expect them to do really well."

Senior Kyle Ruiz was the lone representative for Truman's men's swimming team at the meet. He competed in the 400-yard individual medley, which consists of butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle.

"The intensity was definitely a lot lower at the last-chance meet, but I don't really think that affected the racing that much," Ruiz said. "The one thing that I'm really happy about with the last chance meet is that it kind of proves to myself that I gave it everything I had and there's nothing left in the gas tank."

Despite not qualifying for the NCAA Div. II Championships in Columbia, Mo., the four Bulldog swimmers will be at the four-day meet cheering on their teammates. The women will try to regain the national championship title, and the men will be looking to improve on last year's 15th-place finish.

"There are a lot of alumni going, and all of the swimmers on the team now that aren't competing at nationals are excited to have a big crowd there and a lot of support," Lemaster said.

The 2008 NCAA Div. II Swimming and Diving Championships will be hosted by the University of Missouri-Rolla at the Mizzou Aquatic Center in Columbia, Mo. It is the first time that the event has ever taken place in Missouri. The action kicks off Wednesday, March 12, and culminates with the awards ceremony Saturday, March 15.

Rugby seeks rebound from 2-6 fall campaign

BY BEN YARNELL
Staff Reporter

It might be a muddy start to the season, but the Bulls rugby team is just glad that it is a start.

The Bulls will begin their spring season next Sunday when they take on the University of Tulsa on their muddy home pitch.

This semester, the Bulls will be looking for a turnaround after last fall's 2-6 record. The fall record is just one step in a progressive downturn for the team, one loss worse than last spring's 3-6 record. In contrast, for the past five years Truman has averaged six spring wins and five fall wins.

Head coach Bill Sexton said part of the reason for this slump is sheer lack

of numbers. He said that is why one of the team's main goals is to work on recruiting.

"Our real goal is to have 35 guys that are active and 30 guys at every practice so we [can] do full-on scrimmages and play the game the way it needs to be played," he said.

Sexton said this is part of a philosophical change, which involves not only recruiting but practice itself. Sexton said he is working to make practices more fun in order to retain as many of the 10 new players as possible.

One advantage the team will have when working toward this goal is the fact that the Bulls will be graduating only one senior, Tim Hage, at the end of the spring.

Junior captain Justin Lacy said he and the rest of the team hope to use that

advantage to the fullest and that they are anticipating what is to come.

"I know [next year's seniors] have talked about it," he said. "We are all really excited. It is going to be a great senior year for us. ... We all know that next year is going to be a really good chance for us to get back to nationals and get the team back to where it has been in the past."

The goal of nationals is one that has eluded the Bulls for some time now. It has been seven years since the last time Truman made an appearance at the National tournament.

One reason the Bulls had so much difficulty last year was the inability to keep much of the team healthy. Sophomore Paul Edgerly said that has not been as much of a problem this year,

even with such a tough flu season.

"We haven't actually seen much of an effect on the team so far," he said. "Everyone's been healthy so far, and we are hoping to keep it that way."

Lacy said that in order to turn the season around, the team will need to log as much time in practice and competition as possible this spring.

"It's just going to take a lot of commitment by all the guys coming out to learn the game," he said. "But you can only teach so much in practice. Once you get out there on the field and the whistle blows, guys start hitting people and balls are flying around. It's really that game experience that is going to get us [back to Nationals]."

The first taste of that experience will come this weekend when the Bulls take on

a newer Tulsa team. Sexton said he and the team are going into the game somewhat blind. However, that doesn't mean the Bulls are underestimating the opponent.

"Tulsa has a really well-developed high school league down there," he said. "They've got probably half a dozen high school teams in northeast Oklahoma. They routinely populate [the University of] Oklahoma and Oklahoma State [University], and now they have started playing at Tulsa."

One player the Bulls will have their eye on is Keith Kostelnik, who several of the Bulls played with on the Heart of America Collegiate All-Star team.

"He's a good kid, a very good athlete and a nice guy, so everybody is looking forward to playing against him," Sexton said.

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For Rent

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