

## CERTA | Senior is a member of the 1,000 point club, third all-time in blocks

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Certa's composure became even more important during his senior season. After playing on senior-laden teams his sophomore and junior years, Certa and guard Josias Flynn are the only two seniors on the roster this season. Certa is the lone senior to play with Truman's program all four years.

With the title of senior came more attention from opposing teams' defenses. "He has been a marked man for sure, especially in the conference," Schrader said. "[Opponents] put their best, toughest, most physical defender on him all the time, whether we play him inside or whether we play him outside. And that can really wear on a person to know that you're always going to get beat up, and I think he's handled it really well."

Certa has taken the added pressure from opponents in stride. He paces the Bulldogs in scoring with 14.2 points a game, 11th best in the conference. Certa also ranks in the top 15 of the MIAA in blocks, rebounding and field goal percentage.

Along with being the focal point of opposing team's defenses, Certa also had to assume more of a leadership role this season. Never needed as a leader in the past because he was playing on experienced teams, Certa now plays for a Bulldog team with six freshmen.

"To be honest, I'm not the most vocal leader," Certa said. "How I work is basically, when I have something to say, I'll say it, and it's like: Listen up. Listen

to what I have to say. But I'm not going to sit here and bark all the time. ... [I] maybe don't have a lot to say, but when I do I think it has meaning."

In addition to adjusting to new teammates, Certa had to adjust to a new position this season. He entered the program as an off-guard and played the wing position for most of his first three years.

But after last season, the team lost three inside players to graduation, creating a void at the power forward position.

Schrader turned to his veteran Certa to fill the gap. He delivered.

Although Certa's three-point shooting percentage has dropped a little this season, he shoots 45.8 percent inside the arc. Junior Todd Kulage said Certa has exploited defenses with mid-range jump shots.

"His turnaround jump shot is almost impossible to block," said Kulage, one of Certa's close friends.

Andy Calmes, who graduated after last season, played with Certa for three seasons and was his roommate for two years. Calmes said Certa's athletic ability and good jump shot led to the versatility that has made him so valuable to Truman.

"Typically a guy his size [is] caught in a tight position between a small forward, a shooting guard or a power forward," Calmes said. "He has the versatility to play all of them. ... If he's out on the perimeter against smaller guys, he can shoot over them, or if he's in the post against bigger guys, he has

the speed and the jumping ability to go around them."

Schrader saw a glimpse of Certa's versatility when he recruited him. He said his interest in Certa peaked when he watched Certa compete in the three-point and dunk contest in the Illinois high school state tournament as a junior. Schrader said Certa's involvement in both competitions showed his all-around ability.

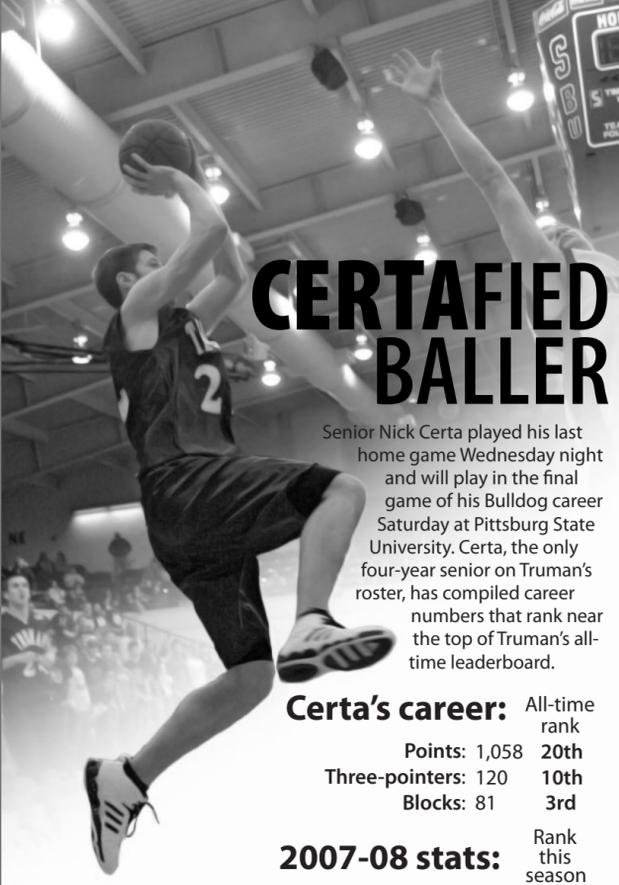
Because the Bulldogs had a big roster of returning players in Certa's freshman year, they didn't need many recruits in 2004, and Certa was the only player to join the team that year.

"We were very picky and particular that year," Schrader said. "We could be selective, and he fit."

Certa continued to fit nicely in the program for four years, filling multiple roles. He was a key member of the older era of players, including the group that qualified for the 2006 NCAA tournament, and now he has helped bring about the development of a new era of talent.

Next season, a new stool will sit in front of Certa's locker. A new player might don Certa's No. 22, but it will be tough for anyone to match the impact that Certa had on two eras of Bulldog basketball.

"People kind of saw me as part of the older era, and it was kind of weird to see me as a leftover," Certa said. "But I kind of think it was a pretty cool opportunity to be able to play with those [older] guys and to be able to play with the new guys. And in the next few years, I'll come back and watch them and see them do well. And it will be neat to have played with both groups."



# CERTIFIED BALLER

Senior Nick Certa played his last home game Wednesday night and will play in the final game of his Bulldog career Saturday at Pittsburg State University. Certa, the only four-year senior on Truman's roster, has compiled career numbers that rank near the top of Truman's all-time leaderboard.

<b>Certa's career:</b>	All-time rank
Points: 1,058	20th
Three-pointers: 120	10th
Blocks: 81	3rd
<b>2007-08 stats:</b>	Rank this season
Points per game: 14.2	1st
Rebounds per game: 6.0	1st
Blocks: 31	2nd

File photo  
Design by Antionette Bedessie/Index

## COLUMN | Group of young players give hope for men's basketball team's future

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As head coach Jack Schrader said at the MIAA tournament after last season ended, the Bulldogs don't reload with transfers, they rebuild.

And so far, the foundation for the future looks pretty solid for next season and beyond.

The team will lose its leading scorer in Certa and role-player senior Josias Flynn, but that's it for next year. It most definitely will hurt not to have the versatile Certa on the floor for 30-plus minutes a game. However, the remaining squad will be a little older and a little wiser. And probably a little better.

Just look at Certa's career path. He started off not playing many minutes. As his minutes increased, so did his production.

There have been growing pains this season — a brutal non-conference schedule that actually challenged the team instead of providing them an inflated win-loss record like so many other teams in the MIAA — that I think ultimately will help this team.

Knowing how hard it is to get a win in the tough MIAA lets the team know just what it takes to be a top squad.

The losses have piled up this season, but they haven't been in a blowout fashion. The Bulldogs

seem to hang with just about every team right up until the very end.

And more importantly, they haven't slacked off this season when the competition is, on paper, far superior.

Southwest Baptist University sits atop the MIAA with a 20-6 overall mark and 13-4 record in MIAA play. The Bearcats score the most points per game in the 10-team MIAA, the Bulldogs the fewest. On paper it's an obvious mismatch. On occasions like this, far too often the inferior team simply doesn't show up. It's easier not to try and lose than to try and lose.

The Bulldogs didn't do that. They split their two games with the Bearcats, winning the first game back in January by 20 points. The second matchup between the two teams came down to the very end.

By showing up and giving everything they had, the men showed commitment.

I'm not saying the 2008-09 Bulldogs should order a National Championship banner to adorn the rafters at Pershing Arena. It's far too early to even think about that.

I just like the way this team is headed. It seems like they are going in the right direction, and it should be exciting to watch the group in the upcoming years.

## FOWLER | Senior forward is second on the team in rebounds per game, third in points

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"She's been stepping up a lot lately," McGee said. "A lot of teams are focusing on Georgia down low, so she gets a lot of wide open cuts and things like that to the baskets. She's been looking to score a lot more lately."

During Fowler's four seasons at Truman, the Bulldogs have suffered several long losing streaks including streaks of seven and six as well as two streaks of nine. These streaks have all but ended the Bulldogs' hopes of postseason play early on, but Fowler said this season is a little different.

"There is light at the end of the tunnel this year, which means so much more as opposed to previous

years where we might not have been in this position because our conference record wasn't the greatest," Fowler said. "But this year definitely has been exciting because we have been winning games."

With the season winding down, Fowler said team still has a lot to play for.

"A team goal right now is to win as many games as we can and do as well in the tournament as we can," Fowler said. "We've been to the tournament before, but winning a game in the tournament, the confidence builds. Anything can happen this year. Definitely, we have a chance to get to the national tournament if we can have a good run in Kansas City."

## MEN | Bulldogs' loss to Emporia State eliminates their conference tournament hopes

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The Bulldogs remained close for most of the second half, but Fandja fouled out with 6:25 remaining, which thwarted any further comeback attempt.

"Pat played real well," Certa said. "He was hitting his shots and we could always use him on the rebounds. So [him fouling out] always hurts. His presence playing defense against some of their big guys can make them miss shots. A lot of times their guards would drive, and it would be nice to have him in there to slow that down."

Wednesday also marked the final game in senior guard Josias Flynn's career. He scored three points and added two assists.

The loss to Emporia State was Truman's fourth consecutive loss at Pershing Arena.

On Saturday, Fort Hays State University came in to Kirksville and beat the Bulldogs 62-58.

The Tigers used a quick offensive start to put Truman in a hole that the Bulldogs could not recover from. Fort Hays made its first six shots of

the game, and Truman did not make its first basket until freshman forward Ethan Freeman scored a three-point play with 12:39 remaining in the first half. By that time, the Tigers already had jumped ahead to a 13-0 lead.

"It's tough when they're making all their shots, and you can't really seem to get the ball in the hoop," Certa said. "I thought we did all right for the rest of the first half, and I felt like we really fought well in the second half, but it's hard to overcome a rough start like that."

The Bulldogs beat the Tigers on Jan. 9 in Hays, Kan., by limiting Fort Hays (18-8, 10-7) to a 29-percent field goal percentage. But Saturday the Tigers shot 67 percent in the first half en route to a 37-21 halftime lead. Limited production from Certa and junior guard Banks Estridge in the first 20 minutes factored in the Bulldogs' lowest first-half scoring output since Nov. 24.

Truman's top two scorers combined for only five first-half points Saturday. Fort Hays limited Certa to 12 total points in the schools' two matchups this season.

## MIAA | 'Dogs drop eighth game in last nine tries, qualify for postseason play

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Candace McGee ranks second all-time in three-point field goals made and is a member of the 1,000-point club.

On Saturday, the Bulldogs ended a long losing streak.

Georgia Mueller recorded her MIAA-leading 14th double-double of the season, and three other Bulldogs finished in double figures in points to help lead the Bulldogs to a 67-61 victory against Fort Hays State University on Saturday.

The win breaks a seven-game losing streak for the Bulldogs that dated back to Jan. 26.

Truman trailed for most of the first half before using a late 8-0 run sparked by two Bulldog steals to take a four-point halftime lead.

The Bulldogs never trailed in the second half and hung on for the victory despite not making any field goals in the final 5:24 of the game.

"I think the big thing is it gives us some confidence," Sloop said. "We played basically four one-possession

or overtime games in that stretch and battled some adversity. We weren't able to come out with wins. And the fact that we were able to come out with a win will hopefully give us some confidence."

Senior Candace McGee said the win was important because qualifying for the MIAA tournament is at stake in the last few games.

"It feels really good," Candace McGee said. "I think we got a little more energy just to get the monkey off our back and get a win. I definitely think it will give us some momentum finishing out the season and hopefully getting to the conference tournament."

The 'Dogs made 18 of 25 free throws, including 6 of 7 in the final minute.

Mueller, first in the MIAA in points and second in rebounds, finished the game with 22 points and 11 rebounds.

Three Bulldog senior guards finished the game in double figures. Fowler finished with 15 points and eight rebounds. Candace McGee also had 15 points and was 8-for-8 from the free throw line. Ju-

lia Montebello chipped in 10 points.

Truman got after it on the defensive end of the floor by forcing 19 turnovers and holding Fort Hays to 30 fewer points than the first time the teams met.

"This game was really important because not only have we not won in three or four straight weeks, but [we are] trying to get into the MIAA tournament," Fowler said. "It was really important that we go this one. And to beat a team that had already beat us pretty bad earlier in the season was really important for us."

The victory greatly improves the team's chances of making the MIAA tournament. The Bulldogs appeared to be a lock for the tournament a few weeks ago, but their seven-game skid put that in question. Currently, the Bulldogs are in 7th place in the conference, with the top 8 teams advancing to Kansas City, Mo., on March 7-9.

The Bulldogs will close out the season at 1:30 Saturday afternoon against Pittsburg State University.



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