

Swimmers taper for NSISC meet

BY JACK NICHOLL
Staff Reporter

The men's and women's swim teams have two weeks until their second taper meet of the season.

Starting Feb. 15, the swim teams will compete in the New South Intercollegiate Swim Conference meet in Cleveland, Ohio. Every Bulldog will go through a full taper going into the meet, except for the swimmers who already have qualified for nationals.

The five men qualified for nationals will have a five-day drop-taper, and the 13 women who are already qualified will have a shorter drop-taper. Tapering is a gradual reduction of workload that allows the muscles to repair themselves and become refreshed, head coach Mark Gole said.

Tapering has both a physical and mental effect. Physically, the muscles are rested and prepared for swimming all-out. Mentally, the swimmers have the expectation of swimming faster because they know they have rested. Swimmers will get the majority of their A and B na-

tional cuts at the taper meets.

"When you are tapered, you know you are going to go faster than you've been going all season, so when you know that, you've got that positive attitude," junior Erika Anderson said. "It makes you end up going a lot faster."

The length of a swimmer's taper prior to a meet is determined by what events he or she swims and how strong he or she is. Long-distance swimmers might have to taper for only a week, but sprinters might have to taper their practices for up to a month before a meet. Also, men typically have to taper longer than women because of the way their bodies are built.

Multiple factors determine how well a taper works. Gole said a number of people, especially women, come out of high school saying no taper has ever worked for them. Gole said the reason for this usually is that they have been tapering for too long in high school. He also said the taper is a result of work ethic.

"If the work is not done, and it's not done to the highest level, then that's what can throw off the taper," Gole said. "If

you know that you laid it on the line all season long and in the weight room and running, focus on your technical stuff, busting your butt on everything they do in the pool, then the taper will take care of itself. The taper doesn't work unless all of those components are done to their 100-percent potential."

Truman swimmers have two to four taper meets during the season. The Miami (Ohio) Invitational in December was the first, followed by the conference meet for those who still need national cuts. The team qualified for most of its A and B cuts at the Miami meet. A week after the conference meet is a chance for a third possibility of getting national qualifying times, at the Last Chance Meet. Few if any swimmers will go to the meet, and they only will go if they are very close to getting an A cut, Gole said.

"The idea is if you taper too long, then you are going to lose your aerobic base," senior Adam Pruess said. "If you are already qualified for nationals, most people won't taper for conference simply because if you don't taper, you're not going to swim



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Any members of the women's and men's swim team who have not qualified for nationals will taper for the Feb. 15 NSISC meet. Tapering generally leads to faster times.

fast enough because you're not going to be rested enough, but if you taper too much you lose too much of an aerobic base, and you won't be able to swim as fast."

Gole said having two or three taper meets per season is an ideal number.

"Two or three is pretty much max," Gole said. "Four, if you are throwing in a summer one

for when they go back and swim with their clubs."

Senior Laura Harp, who has been on the team for four years, said she has adjusted her taper every year to include more rest. She said that in high school she didn't have the taper meet in the beginning of the season but that having the meet helps gauge how the training is going.

"I think [the mid-season ta-

per] is really beneficial because it gives you an idea of how your training has been working for you, and then if you need to make any changes for conference or nationals, you can do so second semester," Harp said.

After the swimmers recover from the conference taper meet, they will almost immediately start tapering again for the national meet starting March 12.

Roller hockey looking to employ new strategy

Team tries using defenders as forwards to produce more offensive chances

BY JOE BARKER
Sports Editor

The Truman roller hockey club is not satisfied with its offensive production.

Sure, the team stands atop the Great Plains Hockey League Div. II standings with an 8-0-2 record and has scored more goals than any other team in the league, but the Bulldogs want more.

Enter a new offensive strategy.

"We've been trying to bring a defenseman in their zone, kind of like a third forward — kind of having three guys up and one guy back," senior defenseman Jim Dougherty said.

The loaded Bulldogs, who feature the top three scorers in Div. II and have outscored the opposition 71-9, are try-

ing to ratchet up their offense and apply more pressure to the opposition.

Dougherty, considered a coach of the defense by head coach Joe Nedelec, has helped implement a system in which the 'Dogs' defenders will take turns pinching in the offensive zone. The cycling defenders will work the high end of the offensive zone while the forwards will play closer to the net.

"It diverts attention on the defenders' side, to the guy that's high," Nedelec said. "And any time you divert attention from low to high, that obviously shores up a little bit of space down low where you can really do some damage."

If the new system works, the Bulldogs could pose a threat to any team they play.

"If we could get that down extremely smooth and have two defensemen cycling in and out as a third forward, I would think we wouldn't have any trouble beating anyone," Dougherty said.

The biggest drawback to using a defenseman as a forward is the potential for the player to get caught out of position, leaving just one player back to stop the other team. Nedelec said this shouldn't be a problem for his squad.

"Anytime you bring down a defender, the automatic argument against it is, 'No you're going to get caught,'" he said. "But our guys come back so quickly that it doesn't become as much of an issue."

Even without using a defenseman as a forward, the Bulldogs are not having trouble filling the net. Each member of the team, with the exception of junior goalie John Pecher, has scored at least one goal, and three of the players have at least 10.

These goals are not without help. The team has 72 assists on its 71 goals. Even Pecher has gotten into the act, notching an assist on one of senior forward and team captain Dane Moody's 16 goals.

The team's offense isn't just limited

to one scoring line. Any forward combination Nedelec puts out on the floor can score goals.

"There's so much talent, it doesn't make my job very hard," Nedelec said. "Any line that I put out can win us a game."

Junior forward Drew Vandas, who has a team- and league-best 24 goals, said the offensive balance makes the team impossible to match up with.

"Last year it was kind of like it was just me and Dane as the guys who would score most of the goals," Vandas said. "This year it's a lot more evenly distributed. There is not a lot of pressure on me — I know that I can go out there and play my own game. If I score goals, great. If not, then someone else will step up and do the job."

What makes the players' offensive numbers impressive is they don't have the luxury of practicing game situations. The team practices at the

Student Recreation Center, where the floor is not regulation size.

Still, the small rink does have advantages for the team.

"It's a challenge at some points, but at some points it helps," Vandas said. "When you're out there on the small rink, there are always people on you and next to you, and it really gets you to play with your head up and to make quick passes."

Nedelec said that although the practice situation is not ideal, it hasn't had an impact on the team because it still allows them to play hockey.

"I'm not surprised at how well they score because even with the smaller rink, you're aware of the angles vis-à-vis you and the net," Nedelec said. "... I'm pleased we're not limited by the practice surface we have."

The Bulldogs will put their new offensive strategy in effect this weekend. The team plays three games, all in St. Peters, Mo., at Matteson Square Garden.



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