

'Dogs bow out in semis

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

The women's basketball team shocked the MIAA one night and nearly did it again two days later.

Truman stunned second-seeded Emporia State 77-70 in the first round of the MIAA tournament. Two days later, the Bulldogs fell behind Southwest Baptist University before making a late rally that just came up short in a 70-65 loss. The loss ended the Bulldogs' tournament run and ended their season at 16-13.

Truman defeated MIAA powerhouse Emporia State thanks to the efforts of senior guard Katie Fowler, who scored a career-high 26 points and was 4 for 4 from beyond the arc. This was the same Emporia team that beat the Bulldogs by a combined 62 points in two previous meetings this season.

"In the first two games, they shot unbelievable from three against us," then-head coach John Sloop said. "You just have to tip their hats to them. ... We didn't play out of the world — we played a solid game, we played well, we had some balance offensively. I thought we were pretty solid defensively, and we were pretty solid on the boards. The kids battled and won and really deserved it. We played a good game."

Truman led nearly from beginning to end. Emporia took a 20-19 lead late in the first half, but the Bulldogs led 31-24 at the half and extended the lead to 17 points with 10 minutes left in the game.

The Bulldogs were able to kill the Hornets' rally by sinking 11 of 16 free throws during the final three minutes.

Junior forward Georgia Mueller was on her game for the 'Dogs, adding 14 points. Sophomore guard Laura Joya had nine points.

Besides Fowler's play, the 'Dogs also used a stifling defense to shut down the top 3-point shooting team in the country. MIAA player of the year Michelle Stueve was just 1 for 6 shooting from behind the 3-point line. The majority of her team-high 17 points came in the final minutes when the game was already out of reach. Truman held Emporia to 29 percent from behind the 3-point arc.

"We played really good defense against Emporia the second time," Mueller said. "They didn't get very many open



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

First team All-MIAA forward Georgia Mueller drives to the basket earlier this season. The Bulldogs upset second-seeded Emporia in the opening round of the MIAA tournament.

looks, and that really kind of shook them up a little bit. Just all around defense was probably the key."

The Bulldogs' luck came to an end Saturday with a semifinal loss to Southwest Baptist.

The Bulldogs hung close at first, trailing by eight at the half but were done in by SBU's 17-6 run early in the second half. This opened up a 19-point lead from which the Bulldogs were never able to recover.

Truman made a late second-half run and cut the game to one possession on a Joya layup with two seconds left. On the inbounds play it appeared that

Truman had forced a turnover, but SBU retained possession and hit two free throws to seal the game.

SBU's first-half shooting contributed to the Bulldogs' defeat. The Bearcats shot 49 percent in the first half and hit five of twelve from behind the arc. Truman's defense was able to slow the Bearcats down in the second half, but the Bulldog' late run came up short.

Senior guard Candace McGee finished with a team-high 18 points and an MIAA record 10 for 10 from the free-throw line. Mueller also finished with 18 points for Truman.

Fowler was named to the All-MIAA tournament team. She finished her Bulldog career with 37 total points in the two games.

"It's a really big honor for me just because I see it as our team really went down there and played," Fowler said. "I wouldn't have been able to be on that team if my team hadn't have played two really great games. Being named with the players on that team of that caliber, that was just a really big honor for me. I've never had an individual award at the college level so it was really cool to be a senior and to go out with an award like that. It was a really big honor."

TRUMAN ATHLETICS News and Notes

Baseball: Crader succeeds in platoon format

Freshman second baseman Luke Crader has been a spark for a Bulldog offense that has often struggled to produce runs. Crader leads the team with a .385 batting average and is one of three freshmen hitting over .300.

Crader is in a platoon situation with fellow freshman second baseman Jeff Davison. Crader plays when left-handed pitchers take the mound and Davison starts against right handers.

Crader's average is much better than Davison's, but Davison has been flawless in the field, which helps offset his .125 average.

Head coach Dan Davis said he plans on sticking with the platoon situation for now.

"If Luke continues to hit the ball, then we're going to have to eventually make some adjustments, but right now I'm pretty happy with both of those guys' progress," Davis said. "Jeff started hitting the ball very well the last couple of days."

Crader likely will be called upon this weekend when the Bulldogs (0-14) play four games against Pittsburg State University. The Gorillas' pitching staff is headed by left-hander Garrett Forsythe. Opponents are batting just .234 against Forsythe this season.

Women's basketball: Mueller finishes solid year

Forward Georgia Mueller finished her junior season and left her name on the record books. Mueller set the Bulldog single season scoring mark March 1 in a win against Pittsburg State University.

She has an outside shot to break the all-time Truman record for points scored. Mueller finished the season with 638 points and has 1,457 for her career. Carol Jarrard has the all-time mark with 2,006 points from 1978-82.

Wrestling: Bulldogs lead Div. II in academics

For the second year in a row, Truman wrestling topped the standings for academics among all Div. II teams to be named Academic National Champions.

The team earned a combined GPA of 3.394 this season. Truman had nine Academic All-Americans, more than any other team.

Senior Rob Nahlik and junior Blake Peterson earned first team Academic All-American honors. The duo were the Bulldogs lone representatives at the recent national meet.

Sophomore Dean Schultz placed on the second team. Six Bulldogs earned Honorable Mention.

Swimming: National pool helps team succeed

The NCAA Div. II championships was hosted last week at one of the fastest pools in the nation at the University of Missouri.

The aquatic complex, which opened in the summer of 2005, also housed the Div. I Missouri Grand Prix championships earlier this season.

The pool features deep gutters to minimize waves, and the temperature is kept at 79 degrees, which is optimal for competitive swimming.

Truman swimmers arrived Sunday and were able to practice five times before the championships started Wednesday.

The location is close to home for many Bulldogs, which resulted in high fan support at the meet.

Head coach Mark Gole said Truman had one of the largest fan bases there, and the crowd grew as the meet went along. Team members' parents, alumni and University President Barbara Dixon all were able to attend.

"There was a sea of purple out there, ... and I think it really put our team to its maximum," Gole said. "We knew it was going to be a dogfight, and it was."

The women finished first and the men finished 20th at the meet.

Women finish best season since 1999-2000

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

The women's basketball season was a roller coaster.

A season full of ups, downs, highs and lows ended in the semifinals of the MIAA conference tournament when the Bulldogs lost to Southwest Baptist University 70-65.

Truman came out of the gates fast at the beginning of the season, winning 13 of 17, and began to look like an NCAA tournament team. It was ranked fifth in the first regional poll, which would have put it solidly in the field of 64. But injuries and illnesses hit the Bulldogs midway through the season. The Bulldogs lost seven in a row and plunged to almost the bottom of the MIAA standings.

Despite the long losing streak near the end of the season, the Bulldogs finished with a 16-13 record. The 16 wins are the most for the Bulldogs

since the 1999-2000 season.

"We were an NCAA tournament talent team that ran into a six-week stretch at the end of the season with just crazy, in terms of the amount of injuries and illnesses that we had to deal with," said former head coach John Sloop, whose contract was not renewed last week.

Truman lost key guards sophomores Laura Joya and Julie Guinn and senior Julia Montebello to injuries and illnesses at the same time. The injuries forced inexperienced ball handlers to play point guard during the seven-game losing streak. Truman hung tough in several games during the streak, losing four games by single digits. But the 'Dogs never were able to pull out much-needed victories at the end of the games.

Senior guard Katie Fowler said the team did not handle problems that arose in the middle of the season well.

"I think we struggled with adapting to the adversity we faced," Fowler said.

"Whether it be playing on the road or having to play with injuries or sicknesses, we didn't do a very good job of doing that and that hurt us during that stretch."

Besides the fast start, another high point for the Bulldogs was a two-game swing through Hawaii. The Bulldogs blew out Hawaii Pacific University and nationally ranked Shaw University (N.C.).

This season was also business as usual for junior forward Georgia Mueller. Mueller was a unanimous first team All-MIAA selection for the second straight

season. She led the MIAA in scoring and was second in rebounding, averaging 22 points and nine boards per game. Mueller also broke the Truman single-season scoring record in the last game of the regular season.

Mueller will be back for one more season, but this was the final season for four Bulldog seniors. Guards Candace and Carmen McGee, Fowler and Montebello all have played their final games for the Bulldogs.

The four were all contributors throughout their careers, especially this season. Carmen McGee was arguably the Bulldogs' best on-ball defender and showed her defensive skills by holding MIAA player of the year Michelle Stueve to 1 of 6 shooting from 3-point range in the Bulldogs' upset of nationally ranked Emporia State University during the first round of the MIAA tournament.

"Those were four kids that showed up every day and you never had to worry

about their effort," Sloop said. "A lot of people may think that is a given. But it's a four-and-a-half-month season and whatever. It's really hard. Showing up every day and working hard is not something that is easy to find. They were the foundation of what we had become and what we were hoping to become in the future. That leadership fed to everyone in the program."

Besides losing four seniors, the Bulldogs will also move forward with a new coach next season. Director of Athletics Jerry Wollmering announced March 10 that Sloop's contract will not be renewed next season.

Mueller said the team will have to carry on in the off season just like normal.

"It will definitely be a big change," Mueller said. "Especially for me. I've played here for three years. I'm used to one coach, but you just have to take it in a positive manner, and I think everyone will be fine and we'll really come back strong next year."

"I think we struggled with adapting to the adversity we faced."

Katie Fowler
Senior

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