



Nathan Becker/Index

Freshman shortstop Leah Reimnitz makes an over-the-shoulder catch yesterday in practice. The softball team sports a 9-3 record.

# 'Dogs improve to 9-3

**Softball wins 7 of 8 during Midterm Break, off to best start since 2004 season**

BY JOE BARKER  
Sports Editor

With the weather clearing up and the fields drying out, the softball team spent just four days away from the field during Midterm Break.

The team played in two tournaments and squared off in a doubleheader against Drury University (Mo.). The Bulldogs took seven of the eight games to improve to 9-3 on the year.

"I think that we're playing well," head coach Erin Brown said. "There are things that we can improve on, but I feel like we're controlling the things that we can control."

The break started off with a trip to Pittsburg, Kan., for the Pitt State Tournament. The tournament wasn't on the Bulldogs' original schedule, but weather in the region forced the cancellation of earlier games.

The 'Dogs won all three games at the tournament in different ways. First, the team knocked off Missouri University of Science & Technology in a 13-5 contest. Then the team beat MIAA rivals Washburn University (Kan.) and the host Gorillas 2-1 and 2-0 respectively.

Drury was the next opponent, and the teams split the doubleheader with the Bulldogs winning game one.

After playing five games in two days, the team took four days off before playing in the Emporia State Tournament. The 'Dogs won all three games at the tournament, beating the University of North Dakota twice and Winona State University (Minn.) once.

Brown said the games showed that the team can play tight games or high-scoring affairs.

"We can play either game, but it's good to know, for us a team, that we can produce a lot of runs if we need to and stay in every ball game until the very last out is made," Brown said. "I think it's good to know we can play either way."

Offensively, the Bulldogs have outscored the opposition 65-30. The team has a combined batting average of .312, well above last season's mark of .267.

Leading the hit parade is junior center fielder Dani Mayer. Mayer has 20 hits in 43 at-bats, producing a robust .465 batting average.

"I'm seeing the ball really well, and confidence is really high right now," Mayer said. "I'm just having a lot of fun."

When Mayer gets on base, she is unlikely to stay put. She is second on the team in stolen bases with 14 steals in 16 attempts. Senior right fielder Christen Belcher leads the Bulldogs with 16 swipes in 18 attempts.

As a team, the Bulldogs have attempted to steal a base 45 times and have been caught just five times. In contrast, the opposition has five steals in nine attempts against the Bulldogs.

"We have quite a few pretty quick people on our team," Mayer said. "With our speed, we should be stealing a lot of bases because it's to our advantage. A lot of other teams that we play against, we have more speed. So it's good that we're able to use that."

Senior pitcher Katie Noski said she is glad she doesn't have to pitch against her own team, with players constantly on the move on the base paths.

"As a pitcher, you don't like that from other teams," Noski said.

Noski leads the three Bulldog pitchers in appearances and ERAs. In four games started and five coming into the game in relief, Noski has compiled a 1.19 ERA in 35.1 innings pitched.

"Part of my success with pitching has been my defense," Noski said. "I have really good defense behind me, and I have a lot of confidence in them. I know if the ball is put in play, they can field it."

Junior Stephanie Martin and senior Katie Jeannin also have pitched well for the 'Dogs. The two, along with Noski, have held opponents to a batting average of .251 and an average of 2.5 runs a game.

A trip to Warrensburg to square off against the University of Central Missouri was supposed to take place Wednesday. The game was rescheduled for March 25. The Bulldogs will take the field today and Friday in a non-conference battle with Southwest Minnesota State University, playing their first home games of the season.

# Baseball still seeking first victory after break

**Bulldogs wade through tough competition, road games in an 0-14 start**

BY BLAKE TOPPMEYER  
Assistant Sports Editor

After losing eight straight games during Midterm Break, the baseball team still is seeking its first win.

The Bulldogs were swept in a pair of two-game series against the University of Central Missouri and Northern Kentucky University before losing all four games last weekend against Emporia State University. The losses drop the Bulldogs' season record to 0-14, 0-4 in the MIAA.

Central Missouri (13-5) and Emporia State (16-3) are both nationally ranked, and eight of Truman's 14 games have been against teams ranked in the top 20 in Div. II.

"[The losses have] been very stressful, very frustrating, but I think we've played the best teams we're going to

play all year," junior infielder Neil Bleish said. "I think it's all downhill from here. I think we have experience against difficult competition under our belt."

In addition to battling some of the nation's top teams, the Bulldogs also have played every game on the road this season. Truman had two home games scheduled earlier in the season, but both were canceled because of weather conditions. The 'Dogs will not play in Kirksville before their March 28 to 30 series against Missouri Western State University.

"We've spent a lot of hotel time so far, and it's rough," head coach Dan Davis said. "Teams usually play pretty well when they're at home."

Davis said his team "played a little bit uninspired" against Central Missouri and Northern Kentucky but that they improved in the weekend set with Emporia State.

"[Emporia State is] a very, very good ball club, and we found a way to battle, and we had a chance to win a couple of games down there," Davis said.

Truman's best shot at victory came in Game 3 against Emporia when Christian Witt took the mound. The freshman tossed five innings and allowed two earned runs on six hits, but the Bulldogs produced only three hits and lost 4-3. Truman led 3-2, but the Hornets scored two runs with two outs in the bottom half of the final inning to earn the win.

Witt's outing marked the second time this season a Truman pitcher lasted at least five innings.

"Probably the best thing I did was keep the ball low," said Witt, who has a team-best 5.02 earned run average. "[Emporia State is] a really, really good hitting team. Pretty much just every one of my pitches was working real good that day."

With the exception of Witt, Bulldog pitchers struggled to keep run totals down during Midterm Break. Opponents scored at least eight runs in six of the eight games. Truman pitchers have a 9.81 ERA this season.

When the team does get good pitch-

ing, it doesn't hit well. In the two games that the Bulldogs limited opponents to fewer than eight runs, Truman combined for just five hits.

Part of the Bulldogs' struggle at the plate stems from the limited production of key contributors from last season's team. Senior catcher Matt Over and sophomore outfielder Keaton Jones had batting averages over .295 last season, but the duo has combined for just 14 hits in 69 at bats (.203 average) this year.

"They're both good players," Bleish said. "Everybody in baseball goes through a slump, and they just happen to be in their slump at the beginning of the season. I know they're going to turn it around because they're both great players and great hitters."

Bleish is the only veteran hitting well. He has hit safely in seven of his last nine games. During Midterm Break, Bleish hit .320, drove in four runs and connected for a home run in the series finale against Emporia State.

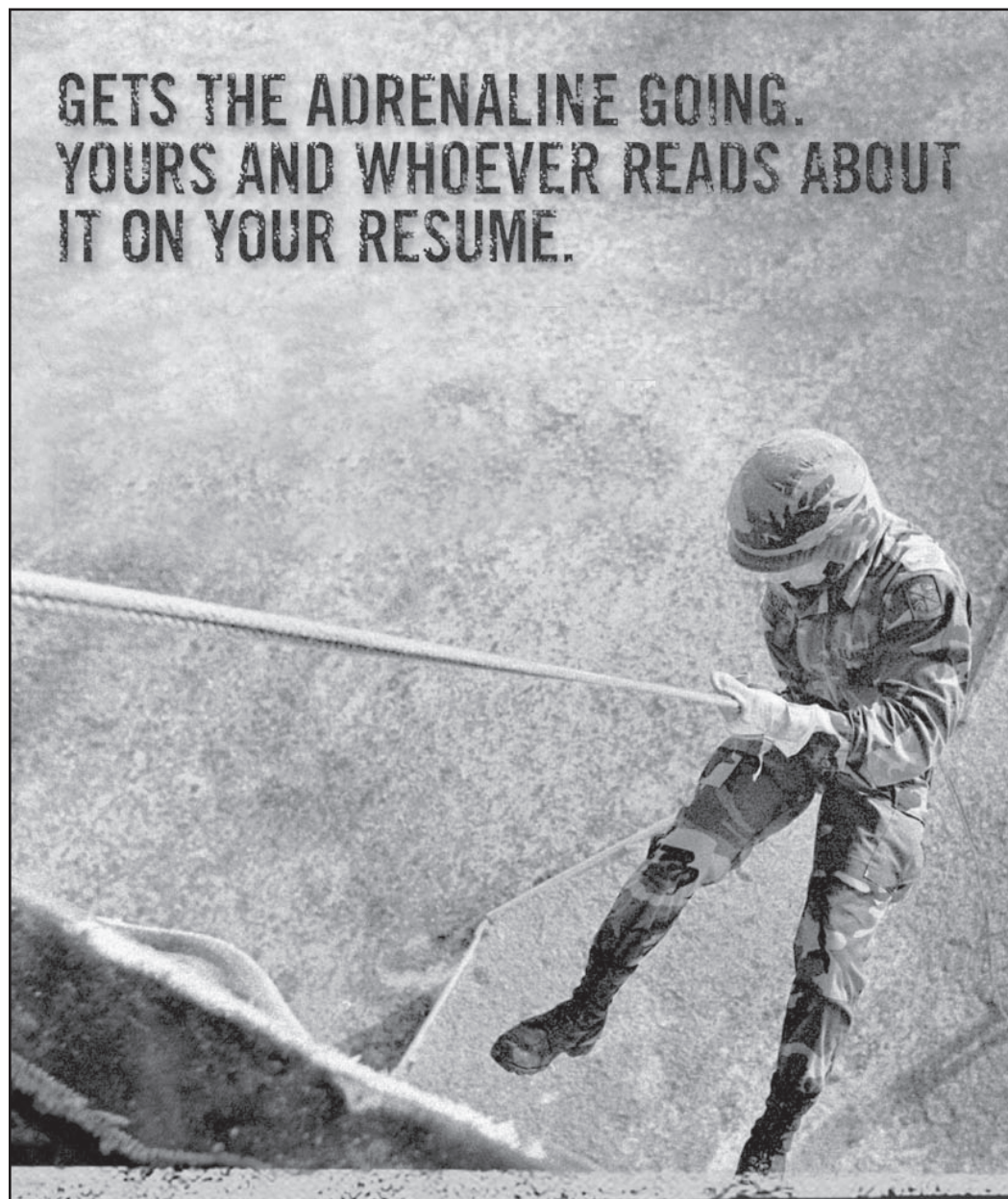
Bleish, who was the starting short-

stop last season, has bounced around between third base, shortstop and designated hitter this season while having to battle for playing time, especially early in the season.

"Competition always brings out a little bit more in people and makes them get after it a little bit more," Davis said. "He's a good player, and he's going to be all right. I think he [realizes] more what I expect out of him, and I think that's starting to sink in a little bit better, and he's starting to get some things going."

The Bulldogs will continue their slate of road games this weekend when they play doubleheaders Friday and Saturday at Pittsburg State University (7-9). Witt said he hopes the pitching staff can improve on the mound and give the Bulldogs an opportunity to pick up their first win against the Gorillas.

"Most importantly I think our pitchers have to do a better job of keeping the team in the game, not necessarily going out and throwing shutouts but just giving the team a chance to win the game," Witt said.



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