



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Sophomore Ben Rusk positions himself for a return during a match earlier this spring. Rusk dropped his singles match Saturday against Emporia State but teamed with sophomore Steve Hipkiss to win a doubles match. Emporia State beat the men 5-4.

## Tennis competes at MIAA

### Women reach semis, men bow out in opening round

BY JOE BELL  
Staff Reporter

Losses in doubles plagued the Bulldog tennis teams last weekend.

Truman headed to Topeka, Kan., to play in the MIAA conference tournament. The women entered as the No. 3 seed and the men as No. 4. The women advanced to the semifinals, but the men were knocked out in the first round.

The women's first match was against Missouri Southern State University. MSSU took an early lead in the match, taking two of three doubles matches. Only the Truman No. 2 team of senior Jennifer Salmon and freshman Amy Ochs notched a win. The Bulldogs came back strong in singles, winning four of the five matches to give the women a 5-3 victory.

The women advanced to the semifinals to play Southwest Baptist University in the next round of the tournament but lost to the Bearcats 5-3.

"We had lost to them earlier this season, so it would have been really cool if we'd been able to beat them, but we couldn't quite pull it off," Ochs said. "One of our doubles teams won a match that we hadn't won last time we played them, so that was good. But we ended up losing again."

The two doubles losses to MSSU did not cost the women, but doubles losses in their match against SBU did prove costly. The 'Dogs only were able to muster one doubles victory from the No. 3 team of freshmen Anna Greenwald and Kelsey Kuykendall.

The Bearcats' Jenna Hendrickson also snapped Ochs' singles win streak. Prior to this match, Ochs had won 24 straight singles matches.

Salmon and junior Lindsay Blair won their singles matches. "I think we played well as a team all weekend against Missouri Southern, as well as Southwest Baptist," Salmon said. "We played a close match with Southwest Baptist, who ended up going on to win the whole tournament. So I think we feel pretty good about that."

The consolation match for the women, which was to take place

against Washburn University, was cancelled because of the weather.

Injuries in addition to doubles losses hamstrung the men during their meet. A previous injury limited sophomore John Rothfusz to playing doubles, and an injury sustained during senior Cody Pusateri's singles match forced him to forfeit the match in the second set.

The men won two of three doubles matches, but the doubles loss was one of the deciding factors in their 5-4 loss to Emporia State University, a team which they had beaten 6-3 earlier in the season when they won all three doubles matches.

"For the men, it was obviously a disappointing loss because we had beaten [Emporia] before," head coach Pete Kendall said. "However, we were obviously affected by a couple of injury situations. Rothfusz only played doubles, and Cody [Pusateri] got hurt during his singles match and had to retire. John [Rothfusz] hadn't played for a period of time, too. ... He'd had very little practice. So those things obviously affected the outcome of the match."

After the matches this weekend, the women have a 21-5 season re-

cord, and the men stand at 13-7.

Kendall remained confident his teams would get selected for the NCAA regional tournament.

"[The losses this weekend] probably won't affect us much," he said. "I expect it to only affect [the men] by Emporia changing places in the ranking. That will change, but it won't affect the final outcome of the rankings. ... The women, nothing changed. As far as I can tell, nothing really changed for us. ... The people that were below us are still below us. ... I wouldn't anticipate a change in the women's situation."

Kendall was proved correct Wednesday when his teams were selected for regionals. On May 9, the Bulldogs will play the first round of regionals in Bolivar, Mo. The women will be playing the University of North Dakota and the men will be facing Southwest Baptist University.

The men hope to rehabilitate a few of their injured players as they continue a run of three years of tournament participation. The women will return to the tournament after being absent since the 2005-06 season, when they had a record of 14-8.

## TRUMAN ATHLETICS News and Notes

### Men's golf: Kovach headed to NCAA regionals

The men's golf team was not selected for the NCAA Super Regional this week. However, freshman Chris Kovach was invited to play as an individual at the tournament.

The NCAA selected six teams from the MIAA and two from the Northern Sun Conference. Truman finished the regular season in sixth place, but seventh-place Southwest Baptist University was selected over the Bulldogs. SBU finished ahead of Truman in the final two events of the regular season.

Kovach is one of five individuals selected to go to regionals. He finished the season with three top-10 finishes and was named the MIAA Freshman of the Year. He led the Bulldogs in six of nine events this season. The Super Regional tournament is May 13 to 16 in Findley, Ohio.

### Softball: Team successful from top of lineup

The softball team has been settling into a familiar lineup as of late.

The last three games have seen the same hitters in the one through four spots in the lineup: senior Christen Belcher, sophomore Erica LaCombe, senior Kali Holleran and junior Dani Mayer.

Mayer usually has occupied the three spot this season, and junior Rebekah Shea usually has hit fourth. Belcher has batted leadoff every game this season.

The switch seems to have worked. The top four hitters accounted for five of the six runs during the weekend, and they compiled a .393 batting average.

"It worked really great this weekend with [Belcher] getting on base and me getting a base hit and bringing her around and then Kali bringing us in, or with Dani being the cleanup, her hitting us in," LaCombe said.

Belcher currently leads the team in on-base percentage, LaCombe is leading in sacrifices and Mayer is leading in runs batted in.

### Baseball: Bulldogs approach loss record

The baseball team will need to pick up at least two wins this Thursday to Saturday to avoid setting a new school record for losses in a season.

The Bulldogs are 7-39 (5-27 in the MIAA), and are approaching the Truman record of 41 losses in 2000.

"Unfortunately ... we've struggled because we're in that learning process," head coach Dan Davis said. "I'll go to my grave saying that we've got a talented club. We're learning baseball right now."

Truman will host Northwest Missouri State University for a four-game series starting Thursday. The games are the Bulldogs' last of the season.

"Nobody really focuses on [the losses] because I think a lot of the guys are looking ahead, and they're seeing what we're going to be able to do because we are pretty young, but we have some really good talent so we are going to be able to do some good things," said Matt Herrick, freshman third baseman and pitcher.

Northwest Missouri, which is 26-21 (15-15 in the MIAA) this season, swept the Bulldogs in a four-game series last season.

### Baseball: Sophomore outfielder rejoins team

Sophomore outfielder Brandon Pearl rejoined the baseball team for Tuesday's doubleheader against the University of Central Missouri.

Pearl had not been in uniform during the past two weeks and often attended the Bulldogs' games as a spectator.

Head coach Dan Davis declined comment on Pearl's return to the team. Davis also declined comment earlier this season as to why Pearl was not in uniform.

Pearl has not appeared in a game since an April 12 contest against Fort Hays State University. He is hitting .255 in 24 games and 16 starts this season. Pearl has two home runs and eight RBIs.

## Bulldogs close regular season with two wins

BY JACK NICHOLL  
Assistant Sports Editor

The softball team went two for two this weekend.

The Bulldogs traveled north to the Minnesota State University-Mankato tournament and left with a 3-2 eight-inning victory against University of Minnesota-Duluth and a 3-0 victory against Augustana College (S.D.) on Sunday.

Truman (22-19, 8-10 MIAA) originally was scheduled to play three additional games Saturday, but cold weather and snowy fields forced the games to be cancelled. The cool conditions persisted Sunday after the fields were cleared, but Truman overcame it in the two wins.

Senior Katie Jeannin recorded the win in both games, throwing six shut-out innings in Game 2 and getting out of a bases-loaded jam in the eighth inning of the first game, allowing her to pick up the win. She repeated her recent success by continuing to throw her low-and-outside dropball.

"That dropball, that low-and-out pitch, is just her pitch," sophomore catcher Erica LaCombe said. "And there is rarely a hitter who will tell you that their pitch is low and outside. It's the hardest pitch to hit, and it's even more a hard pitch to hit hard."

Jeannin only gave up two hits in Game 2 and coaxed nine groundball outs before handing the ball to junior Stephanie Martin to close out the victory in the seventh.

Truman only had six hits in the contest, all singles, and did not draw a walk. But the 'Dogs were able to manufacture two-out rallies in the third and fifth innings for the scores.

In the top of the fifth, Belcher made history when she got her 153rd career stolen base, which broke the MIAA record for career steals. Belcher was two-for-three and scored two of the three Bulldog runs in the game.

"Part of it hasn't sunk in yet, and I don't know if it will," Belcher said about the record.

In Game 1, senior pitcher Katie Noski took the mound. Despite giving up 16 base runners overall and a season-high 11 hits in 7.2 innings, Noski came out of the game having only allowed two runs with Truman down by one in the eighth.

The Bulldogs responded with two runs in the bottom of the frame, capped off by junior Dani Mayer's two-hit single to score Belcher for the winning run. It was Mayer's second game-winning hit in extra innings in less than two weeks.

"It was great to get the extra-inning win because I feel like sometimes we've come up on the short end sometimes when we've gone into extra innings," head coach Erin Brown said. "So it was great to get that clutch hit and have that success."

After Truman scored a run in the first inning, Minnesota-Duluth starting pitcher Kristin Danielson kept the 'Dogs scoreless until Mayer's extra-inning hit.

"The problem in the first game against the Minnesota-Duluth pitcher was she was throwing everyone inside,"

senior outfielder Christen Belcher said. "She was jamming me, and our righties, and we know how to turn on pitches — it's just hard to hit a good ball when all you're seeing is jam, jam, jam."

Brown said the players approached these games just as they would conference games because they are against regional competition. Truman defeated Minnesota-Duluth 7-1 on March 30.

"Because we have beat this team before, we know we probably should have beat them by more runs, but no one was on fire," Belcher said. "We weren't getting hits when we needed it, and we finally did in the eighth inning, but that was too close for comfort."

Truman needed the two wins to improve its status in the regional rankings. The 'Dogs currently are just outside the top 10 in the rankings, which are composed of teams from the MIAA, Northern Sun and Great Lakes conferences. Eight teams make the regional tournament, including the three winners of the conference tournaments and the top five

seeds outside of those winners.

The Bulldogs will need to make it far in the double-elimination conference tournament to either get an automatic berth to regionals or to improve their ranking. They currently stand sixth in the MIAA and are scheduled to play Northwest Missouri State University in the first round. Brown said Noski is scheduled to get the start in Game 1, with Jeannin coming in relief. Truman was winless in two games against Northwest Missouri in the regular season.

The four-game winning streak Truman is riding entering the conference tournament, which starts today in Kansas City, should give the Bulldogs some momentum.

"We needed those wins — we needed to stay above .500 so we are considered for regional ranking, and it was huge that we won," LaCombe said. "... I definitely feel like the feeling on the team — actually somebody mentioned it the other day — we all are very confident, and it's just like the beginning of the season."



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