

# Baseball loses two to conference foe

BY BLAKE TOPPMAYER  
Sports Editor

A streak spanning almost two decades continued for the baseball team Tuesday at Truman Baseball Park.

The Bulldogs hosted a doubleheader against the University of Central Missouri. The Mules won Game 1 9-6 and took Game 2 10-5 to extend their winning streak to 64 in a row against Truman. The Bulldogs (7-39, 5-27 MIAA) have not defeated Central Missouri, which currently is ranked No. 23 in Div. II, since 1989.

The Mules (35-13, 23-7 in the MIAA), who hit nine home runs in a doubleheader in Kirksville last season, bunted their way to victory in Game 1. Of UCM's 15 hits in the first game, five came off of bunt singles.

"It was very unexpected," head coach Dan Davis said of the bunts. "They did a good job with it. It wasn't like we weren't ready after the first one. We were playing in [at the corners]. They were just great bunts. A great bunt is hard to defend because you can't just play right in their face the whole time because the next thing you know, they're going to hit it by you. That's what they try to do, bring you in and then hit it by you."

The Mules had three bunt singles in a six-run second inning, which sparked the Game 1 win.

"They were pretty good bunts," freshman starting pitcher Eric Radel said. "They were all



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index  
Freshman catcher Bryce Bond pops up during game against Central Missouri on Tuesday. The Bulldogs lost both games despite averaging more than a hit per inning.

consistently right down the line, and then one of them got by me in the air on my left side."

The Bulldogs did bang out 10 hits in the game, including two apiece by sophomore outfielder Keaton Jones and freshman designated hitter Kevin Zukaitis, but they stranded 10 baserunners.

In Game 2, UCM starting pitcher Kris Webber pitched six innings

and allowed just two hits before Truman broke through against reliever Scott Reller for four runs in the seventh and one in the eighth.

"[Webber] was throwing three pitches for a strike, and he was down [in the zone] the whole time," Davis said.

The Mules used a three-run fourth inning and four-run sixth inning to garner the win in Game 2.

The losses to UCM Tuesday marked Truman's fifth loss in five days. The Bulldogs dropped three of four games last weekend to Washburn University.

Although Washburn (16-26, 11-21) is eighth in the conference standings, the Ichabods rank fifth in team ERA and used their pitching to limit the 'Dogs to 11 runs and 29 hits in the series.

Behind their effective starting pitching, the Ichabods won Games 1, 3 and 4 14-4, 3-1 and 8-3, respectively. Truman's freshman starting pitcher Matt Herrick bested counterpart Zac Engelken in the Bulldogs' 3-1 Game 2 victory.

"We have to give some credit to them because they pitched us very well," Davis said. "They threw the fastball for command. They moved it in and out on us. It was hard to really get a gauge on any kind of tendencies, what pitch they were going to throw at certain times or anything like that."

Washburn contained the Bulldogs on the base paths, further limiting Truman's run production. The 'Dogs, who are fourth in the MIAA in steals and attempts, attempted seven steals in the four-game series and were successful five times. In the seven games prior to last weekend, Truman attempted 20 steals and were successful 17 times.

"They held runners extremely well, and their catchers threw accurately," Davis said.

Even in the first game of Saturday's doubleheader, which the Bulldogs won, the offense supplied just six hits, and five were singles. But Herrick delivered Truman its third complete game of the season and limited Washburn to one earned run on five hits.

Herrick only struck out one batter, and he relied on location to be effective. He did not walk a batter and induced 13 ground-ball outs.

"For the first time, all my pitches were working pretty

well," Herrick said. "In my past outings, either my curveball wasn't working well or my changeup wasn't working well or both of them were off. But everything was working well [Saturday], and I was really hitting my spots well too."

Still, Herrick's first collegiate win did not come without a scare. After retiring the first two Ichabods in the seventh and final inning, Herrick allowed an infield single and a double, which brought the winning run to the plate. But the freshman got Nick Barnes to ground out to junior third baseman Corey Eagen to secure the win.

"With a base hit, it would pretty much just tie the ball game up, so I just put confidence in myself and especially my infield [to get the final out]," Herrick said. "My infield and outfield did a great job of making the plays behind me."

In the second half of Saturday's doubleheader, starting pitcher Corey Tomasek gave Truman a chance to win by pitching five innings and surrendering three runs.

On a day when Davis said Tomasek did not have his best stuff and allowed 10 base runners, the junior limited the damage by stranding five runners on base. But the Bulldogs' offense remained stagnant and produced just four hits.

Truman will end its season this weekend with a four-game home series against Northwest Missouri State University.

# Young staff inconsistent throughout season

BY ARRON HUSTEAD  
Staff Reporter

The young Bulldog pitching staff has been unable to find consistency this season.

This year, the staff is full of youth, including a starting rotation with four freshmen. Freshmen Kyle Veazey, Logan Frame, Matt Herrick and Eric Radel have combined for 30 starts in the team's 46 games.

However, none of those starters has an earned run average under six for Truman (7-39, 5-27 MIAA), and they have combined for only four wins in 30 starts.

Freshmen have also been providing innings in relief. Andy Updike, Kevin Zukaitis, Michael Staihr and Jordan Nietzel are among the team leaders in games pitched out of the bullpen, each

appearing in at least 10 games.

These freshmen are eating up innings for the team, with Veazey, Frame, Herrick and Zukaitis all among the team leaders in innings pitched.

"I guess those are the guys that did the best in the fall and over the course of the winter," head coach Dan Davis said. "You know, they ... probably fit into the mold of our starting pitchers more so than some of our older guys."

The freshman have been called upon even more than expected because senior A. J. Barton, the ace in 2007, is taking a medical redshirt this season.

Davis said another reason for having so many freshmen in the rotation is the fact that he wants some of the team's more seasoned pitchers on the mound in the later innings.

"We wanted some more experienced guys to come out of the 'pen, maybe to

shut down teams when we get into a little bit of a jam," Davis said. "Sometimes it's easier to get out of those with a more experienced guy."

The four upperclassmen who have seen innings this season have combined for 36 relief appearances in 46 games.

Overall, the staff has 171 strikeouts to 141 walks this season. Staihr, freshman Christian Witt and Frame are the only pitchers with at least twice as many strikeouts as walks.

Davis said confidence had been an issue for some of the freshmen at the beginning of the year.

"Now we're starting to see that guys are getting more comfortable in their roles and more comfortable at the college level and not afraid of pitching to contact as much," Davis said.

This showed in Herrick's start on April 29, when he gave up one run in a com-

plete game effort. However, he still has a 6.89 ERA this season in 32.2 innings.

Herrick said the staff has concentrated on pitching more aggressively and has shown a definite improvement in that area.

"At first we were kind of dancing around the strike zone," Herrick said. "You don't want to get in too close and get a hard hit off you. We've all kind of come together, and we had a few meetings about it, just being more aggressive and going after hitters."

Herrick said the staff has had to work extra hard to gain recognition because it's young and is for the large part, unproven.

Only four of the fourteen pitchers who have logged innings this season are upperclassmen.

"Mainly, I think it's a lot of us just kind of came in here, we really had nothing to lose, and we're just trying to prove to everybody that we can compete, even

though we are young," he said.

Frame is second on the team in innings pitched (39.0) and strikeouts (26), and he is the only pitcher on the staff to record multiple wins this season, compiling a 2-6 record. Prior to this weekend, Frame had led the team in both categories.

However, after pitching a complete game on March 29 against Missouri Western, Frame had arm tightness in his April 19 start against Missouri Southern.

"My arm's been a little sore and a little too sore to pitch this past weekend," Frame said. "There's some inflammation in my arm, and so hopefully I'll be able to pitch this next weekend. I'm just trying to get better right now."

With all the positives Frame has showed, there have also been games on the other end of the spectrum. Frame is giving up close to an earned run per inning this season.

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