

## MUELLER | Junior forward wins Index athlete of the year

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tournament for the first time in three seasons.

Mueller's importance to the Bulldogs cannot be overstated. She accounted for 30 percent of the Bulldogs' scoring and grabbed 24 percent of the team's rebounds. Her leadership and ability to score were evident during a midseason seven-game losing streak that all but ended the Bulldogs' NCAA tournament hopes.

"It's always tough to go through a losing streak because you get frustrated, and the tension between teammates can rise a little bit," Mueller said. "You have to persevere through those losing streaks and try to keep your confidence and just not give up."

Senior guard Candace McGee said it is Mueller's ability to make everyone else on the floor better that makes her special.

"Obviously Georgia was our go-to player," McGee said. "She also got everyone else involved when people would collapse on her. She was just a really good player."

Mueller was able to benefit from the style of play the Bulldogs have implemented during her three seasons at Truman. The 'Dogs like to quickly get up and down the floor to avoid giving defenses a chance to set up. This gives Mueller a chance to get set up in the post before defenses can double- and triple-team her.

"It's just kind of how I've always played," Mueller said. "So I guess in that sense it's definitely a strength just because I've had so many years of practice in that kind of style of basketball."

In the Bulldogs' upset of nationally-ranked Emporia State University in the quarterfinals of the MIAA tournament, Mueller was held to just 14 points. However, she was able to get other people involved by dishing out

two assists and hitting four of five free throws down the stretch.

"The teams that were doubling her, she would pass it out of there and hurt them with the pass, and then eventually teams would go back and single them, and she'd hurt them again," Washburn University coach Ron McHenry said. "... That's what I like about Georgia [Mueller] — she's not caught up in herself at all. If you double- or triple-team her, she'll kick it out of there and let her teammates play."

In addition to being a team player, Mueller cemented her name in the Bulldog record book. In the first half of the March 1 victory against Pitt. State, Mueller broke Carol Jarrard's single-season scoring record of 576 points set during the 1981-82 season. With 632 points this season, Mueller needs 555 points to become Truman's all-time leading scorer. She currently sits in sixth place on the Bulldog career scoring list.

Many of Mueller's points came against MIAA competition. She finished at or near the top of every offensive category in the conference. She was first in points per game, second in rebounding, first in field goal percentage, ninth in free throw percentage and first in blocked shots.

Mueller's stats match up nicely to Emporia State guard Michelle Stueve. The MIAA player of the year and the conference's all-time leading scorer finished second to Mueller in scoring average and averaged one fewer rebound per game than Mueller. Mueller also ranked in the top 10 nationally in points per game and blocked shots.

Former head coach John Sloop said coaching Mueller was even better this season because she made a commitment during the summer to improve her game, which also made the team better.

"It was really an enjoyable experience, especially in terms

of all the hard work she put in last off-season over the summer," Sloop said. "She came back in by far the best shape she had been in since she'd been at Truman. I just really think she improved all areas of her game."

Mueller said she is able to improve every off-season by putting herself in game situations.

"I practice shooting and fundamental things that everyone practices, but I try and play as much as I can every day," Mueller said. "In the later years I've just focused on playing all different types of basketball, all different types of players — boys, girls, high school, college. The more you play, the more variety, which helps you adapt to all different types of situations."

Sloop said Mueller was not only a leader to younger players but also gained knowledge and guidance from the four graduating seniors.

"There was a lot of leadership in this group," Sloop said. "She was a big asset in terms of she was the anchor for us at the basket defensively. Offensively we were doing everything we could to try and get her the ball and get her some easy baskets. When it got late in the shot clock she was someone we could throw the ball to, and she would go make a play for herself."

Mueller provides a dynamic that opposing coaches must prepare for. McHenry said Mueller is able to surprise teams the first time they see her with all-around basketball abilities.

"She's their go-to player, and you can see why," McHenry said. "She's one of those players that you look at and you think she can't be that good, but all of a sudden you play her, and she's really good. That's what's neat about her. The whole league thinks the same way — you can stop her, but you can't stop her."



Photo submitted by Tim Barcus  
Mark Gole stands with members of the women's swim team at the Div. II championships this spring. Gole said he entered this season with less pressure to win nationals.

## GOLE | Hard work, long hours pay off for third-year coach as women finish first, men 20th at national championship meet

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and winning the championship," said Jack Steck, Missouri State head swimming and diving coach.

The Bulldogs had 12 national qualifiers by the time the Miami University (Ohio) taper meet in December ended, and they picked up two more before nationals. Every swimmer came into nationals strongly. All 14 swimmers scored points for Truman, and they claimed two national championships, one in a relay and one individually.

It wasn't only the attitude that worked in Truman's favor, but the decisions Gole made.

He approached sophomore Kate Aherne a month before nationals and told her he wanted her to swim the 200-yard individual medley — an event in which she did not have much experience. He even went as far as telling her he thought she could win it.

They found out on the first day of nationals he was right.

Aherne took home the only individual national title for Truman in the event. The result didn't take away from her other events, either. On the same day as the individual medley, she took fifth in the 50-yard freestyle.

Gole also made some last-minute switches in relays, some that paid off and some that didn't. He said he hates taking swimmers out of relays because of his experience in college but that he always will make decisions in favor of faster swimmers.

"I'm a very competitive person," he said. "I hate to lose, even if it's a friendly video game, or a game of darts or tennis, whatever. Whatever I am playing, I want to win."

Even with all the awards, it could be Gole's work ethic that stands out the most.

"His passion for the sport is incredible," freshman Carina Pautz said. "He eats, breathes, swims — swimming. That's all he thinks about,

that's all he does, every moment of his day."

The hours add up. Some days Gole will be at the pool before five in the morning and not get home until 10:30 at night. The weekends don't provide any breaks either — Gole will spend his Sundays writing workouts for the next week, which he can individualize for every swimmer.

"To think of how much he works to how much he gets paid — it would be scary," senior Emily Greenwood said. "... We know when we go to a race that we have trained harder than any other team in the country, and we owe it all to him."

After losing the title a year ago, Gole said he came into this season with less pressure on himself because the streak had been broken. After the 2006 season, Truman lost some of its best swimmers, and Drury was able to pick up some top recruits, which put added pressure on Gole to win.

Even though the Bulldogs approached the season with a different attitude this year, they were focused the entire time, no matter how good Drury's swimmers were. Steck said he noticed it before the season started while talking to Gole.

"He was talking about the disappointment of getting knocked off by Drury, and I could tell right then he was focused," Steck said.

Gole will set high expectations for each swimmer, and he said he will blame himself first if the swimmer doesn't meet those expectations.

But if a swimmer isn't giving it their all, Gole will show it, and the swimmers all know it. It's just another thing that makes him the coach he is.

"If you're not giving 110 percent in practice, sometimes he won't talk to you if you didn't meet his expectations," Pautz said. "I mean, it makes us as swimmers, better people, better athletes, and it makes us winners."

## AWARDS | Columnist gives accolades to players, teams, plays

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Stadium in almost 12 years extra special when he passed for 493 yards and four touchdowns. The performance put Tcich on the path to becoming a second team All-MIAA selection.

Best highlight reel play: Junior guard Banks Estridge sank a 75-foot shot during the men's basketball team's 73-68 win against Missouri Western State University on Feb. 20. The shot was a buzzer-beater to end the first half and put Truman ahead 37-36.

Worst play of the season: Sophomore Vanessa Emokpae's punt against Fort Hays (Sept. 29). Head coach Shannon Currier had been splitting the punting duties between Emokpae, a wide receiver, and sophomore kicker Mickey Masucci when Emokpae shanked a negative four-yard punt against the Tigers.

Needless to say, that was the end of Emokpae's punting days. Currier pulled the plug on the experiment, and Emokpae went back to just catching passes. Not that this was a bad thing. Emokpae made two diving touchdown catches in the Bulldogs' season-ending victory against Missouri Western to propel Truman to its second consecutive winning season.

Best team leader: The volleyball team entered 2007 minus three all-conference players who graduated from the 2006 team that went 36-2. But junior outside hitter Eli Medina stepped up and helped lead the 2007 team to an MIAA title and back to the national tournament. Although Medina's numbers didn't always stand out on the stat sheet, she was constantly hustling and diving for balls and led the team huddles after each point.

Most surprising team: The women's swim team deserves attention for this award for winning the national title despite being the underdog to Drury University, the 2006-07 national champions. The women's soccer team

also makes a strong case for winning the MIAA after it was ranked fifth in preseason polls.

But I will select the women's basketball team for this award. The women had their first winning season — at 16-13 — since 2001-02 and won their first MIAA tournament game since 1999 when the seventh-seeded Bulldogs beat second-seeded and nationally-ranked Emporia State University 77-70 on March 6. It still wasn't enough to save Sloop from being shown the door, but the Bulldogs exceeded the expectations of conference coaches, who picked Truman to finish last in the MIAA this season.

Biggest idiot: This goes, hands down, to Jake Long, former freshman quarterback of the football team. Long was arrested in January for drug possession — after he was arrested in August for assault on a law enforcement officer, burglary, property damage and minor in possession, according to the Jan. 24 and Aug. 30 issues of the Index. Long never played a down for the football team. I guess he was off doing more important things.

Most improved player: Junior forward Patrick Fandja evolved from a player who averaged about two points and two rebounds per game in 2006-07 to the men's basketball team's best low-post defender this year. He ranked fourth in the conference this season in defensive rebounds.

Most underrated coach: Men's and women's tennis coach Pete Kendall doesn't always get a lot of recognition, but he has guided the women to their first 20-win season ever and put both teams in the NCAA regionals.

The 2008-09 athletic season is not far away, and with the women's swim team and volleyball team seemingly poised for national title runs and the arrival of field turf at Stokes Stadium, next year could prove to be just as entertaining as this year was for the Bulldogs.

## FRESHMAN OF THE YEAR

Five members of the Index sports staff submitted their top three choices for Freshman of the Year. First place was given six points, second four points and third two points. Here are the results:

- |                                     |    |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Amy Ochs — Women's tennis        | 22 |
| 2. Chris Kovach — Men's golf        | 14 |
| 3. Ethan Freeman — Men's basketball | 12 |
| 4. Ashley Petak — Volleyball        | 8  |
| 5. Luke Crader — Baseball           | 2  |
| 5. Anna Grinter — Women's swimming  | 2  |

## OCHS | Freshman compiles 24-1 singles record from No. 5 spot

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lunge that because they could have. Once things got going, though, we just decided to leave things the way it was."

In doubles, she had been equally impressive. After playing only two matches in the No. 3 slot, she was moved up to the No. 2 position to play with Salmon for the rest of the season. Ochs and her doubles partners began the fall season with a seven-match win streak, and Ochs and Salmon put up four- and five-match win streaks later in the season. Ochs ended the regular season with a doubles record of 20-5.

"I really, really enjoy playing with Amy," Salmon said. "She's a great player. She's really fun to play with. She's very reliable. I know she's always going to hit the ball in and try and get me a winner, set me up to hit a winner or all of the above. Every time we get out on the court, she gets down to business. I wish we had more time to play together, but unfortunately I'm graduating."

Ochs has an aggressive style

of play — she hits the ball hard and is consistent in all of her strokes. She is fast around the courts and is not afraid to play the net. Kendall described Ochs' forehand as "a weapon."

"Our styles of play match up extremely well," Salmon said of her doubles partner. "She's got a really, really good forehand, and my backhand is my strength. It allows us to both use our weapons. She's also got a really great serve, and she sets me up a lot at the net to put balls away. I try and do the same for her."

Ochs has been playing tennis since the summer she turned 11 when she attended a summer camp run by her future high school coach. Since age 13, she has been training under Kendall, attending his summer clinics. She has worked this year to improve some of the finer aspects of her game.

"I've always been one to go for winners and try to end the point really soon, which isn't always the best," Ochs said. "When I was younger I used

to be really, really inconsistent, and I've been working on that a lot, trying to wait for the right shot to hit a winner on. It's what my coaches have been trying to drill into me. I guess I'm not the most patient tennis player. I guess is the way you could put it. ... [This year] I think my shot selection has really improved, learning when to hit certain shots."

Kendall said Blair was the first player who came to mind who had a freshman season that would compare to Ochs'. He cited Blair's 2005 freshman season, when she finished 26-3 in singles and 17-8 in doubles. Blair currently is the 'Dogs No. 2 singles player and is on the No. 1 doubles team.

Kendall said he is sure Ochs will have a promising future with the Bulldogs.

"She is going to continue to have a great career here no matter what number she plays, singles or doubles," Kendall said. "We would certainly anticipate her playing higher in the lineup next year."

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