

Track team splits squad at two events

BY BEN YARNELL
for the Index

With MIAA conference championships on the immediate horizon, the Bulldogs were looking for one final tune-up. Instead, they got two.

Last weekend, the Truman men's and women's track teams pulled a split shift, competing at the Kip Janvrin Simpson College Open in Pella, Iowa, and the Drake Relays in Des Moines, Iowa.

Head coach John Cochrane said the purpose of splitting up the teams was to allow some athletes in different events to see a

different level of competition.

"We thought that by taking them there, we would be able to prepare them a little better for later things," Cochrane said.

Among the teams that competed at Drake were the men's 4x100 relay team, and the women's 4x100 team and 4x200 team. Senior Sean Bergstedt also competed in the 400-meter hurdles. Bergstedt and the 4x200 team were the only Bulldogs to place in Des Moines with the relay team taking home third, and Bergstedt fifth. He was the highest-placing Div. II athlete in the event.

But Bergstedt said he was hoping for more, having previ-

ously finished third and fourth in the 400-meter hurdles at Drake. He said he saw competing against higher-caliber runners as a chance to tune up for the NCAA Div. II national meet at the end of the month but that the race did not go as he and Cochrane had planned.

"I was supposed to hurdle 13-steps through five hurdles, and I only 13-stepped through three," Bergstedt said. "And then, there was this big gust of wind in the middle of the race that kind of just knocked me off my feet. I wasn't expecting it."

The majority of members of both teams were focused on Pella

and Simpson College. While there, the men claimed top-10 spots in eight events. Leading the pack of 'Dogs was junior Tad Dallas, who took second in the 10,000-meter run with a time of 34:10.41.

Other top finishers for the men included the Ackermann brothers, seniors Joe and Jake, who finished fourth and fifth respectively in the 110-meter hurdles.

Cochrane also noted that other Bulldogs made improvements on their performances, such as freshman Bob Gorman and senior David Yonce, both in the steeplechase.

On the women's side, the team had only one fewer top-10 finisher. Senior Danna Kelly had the high-

est single finish in the meet. She took second in the steeplechase with a time of 11:16.20, earning her a national provisional mark.

Also coming up big for the Bulldogs was sophomore Katrina Biermann, who tied for fifth in the pole vault and took eighth in the triple jump.

Even with these finishes, Cochrane said he hoped for a little more before conference.

"We had some good performances in some meets but not what we were hoping for in others," he said. "It was just kind of there, and we'll pass on."

Sophomore Shaina Dochterman, who competed at both

Simpson and Drake, said she feels prepared for the upcoming championships.

"There is going to be a lot of competition, but I feel really confident about what I can do," Dochterman said.

With the combined events portion of the meet already complete, many conference teams have posted points for the overall team score. Cochrane said, however, that the Bulldogs will work with whatever comes their way.

"Where we finish, we finish," he said. "The sun will come up on Monday no matter what ... It might be behind a cloud, but it's going to come up."

Athlete of the Week

Christen Belcher

Sport: Softball

Year: Senior

Position: Right fielder

Hometown: Lee's Summit, Mo.

Christen Belcher broke the MIAA career stolen base mark of 152 set in 1998 with a steal against Augustana College (S.D.). She currently is fourth in Div. II in steals this season. This weekend, she went 3-for-7 with three runs scored and an RBI in Truman's two wins. She is hitting .425 this season.

Belcher breaks stolen base mark

BY JOE BARKER
Managing Editor

In the fifth inning of Sunday's game against Augustana College (S.D.), softball head coach Erin Brown gave senior Christen Belcher the green light to take second.

The right fielder rocked back and took off toward second base after the Vikings' Mickey Anderson released the pitch. The throw from Anderson was high — perfect for a catcher to throw to second base.

Belcher hit the dirt and, for the 42nd time this season and the 153rd time in her career, stole a base.

"She was safe by a mile," Brown said. The steal gave Belcher the claim of the top base stealer in MIAA history, breaking the mark set in 1998 by Becca Alt of the former University of Missouri-Rolla.

"Once I was safe at the base I was excited, but I didn't show it," Belcher said. "My teammates were yelling for me and just giving me all kinds of encouragement and supports. I was just doing mental backflips — it was just really rewarding."

Knowing the record was within reach, Brown decided to send Belcher on the first pitch. The Vikings, knowing Belcher's tendency to steal — she averages more than one per game — cheated the shortstop toward second in preparation for the throw from the catcher. Still, Belcher easily beat the throw.

"As I was running, I was thinking the same thing as always: Slide low and foot to the bag, and just hope for the best," she said.

Belcher reached base in the third inning but never got a chance to break the

record. Brown wanted to wait for the third pitch of the at-bat before sending Belcher, but sophomore second baseman Erica LaCombe singled on the second pitch of the at-bat.

Brown said she told Belcher she was going to send her on the next pitch, had there been one.

"The thing with her is she doesn't care [about stats], she just wants to win," Brown said.

Belcher started her base-stealing career as a Bulldog with 24 steals in 35 attempts in her freshman season. In 2006 she shattered the old Truman record of 37 stolen bases by swiping 45. She added 42 in 2007 and with 42 more this year, she sits alone atop the MIAA record book.

"I had no idea any of this would ever occur," she said. "I didn't know any of the numbers. I didn't know any of the records."

The record comes in the midst of Belcher's statistically best season. With the MIAA tournament still looming, Belcher already has established career highs in batting average, slugging percentage, runs, doubles and runs batted in. Her season average of .425 is second-best in the MIAA.

Her 42 steals this year are best in the MIAA and fourth-best in all of Div. II.

"I think of her as just one of the toughest outs to get," Brown said. "As an opposing team, gosh, I would hate to see her in the lineup."

Despite the record, Belcher hasn't gotten caught up in being the new all-time leader in steals.

"It hasn't really set in," she said. "... It's probably the milestone of my career at Truman, but it's really just surreal."



Joe Barker/Index

Senior Christen Belcher leads off during a game earlier this season. Belcher broke the all-time steals record Sunday against Augustana College.

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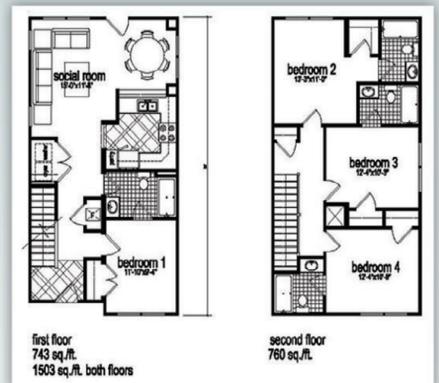
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