

Wrestlers place high at Coe Invitational

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

If the Bulldogs can get four wrestlers to the finals and place nine overall late in the season, the team should be just fine.

Four Bulldog wrestlers took second place and nine out of 16 wrestlers placed for the Bulldogs in the nine-team Coe College (Iowa) Invitational on Nov. 17. No team scores were kept at the event.

Despite a strong effort, the Bulldogs were unable to get over the hump and claim a first-place finish. Head coach Dave Schutter said an extra win from everyone would have made a big difference.

"Just one more win," Schutter said. "Look at where each individual would have placed for Truman. If everybody could have managed one more win, our four finalists all would have been fourth and our two sixths would have been fifths. Just one more win out of everybody, and it would have been a great day."

Schutter also said it still is very early in the season.

"We got our feet wet a little bit more," he said. "It's early in the season. ... It's a starting point. It's our second date on a 16-date schedule. Then we have regionals and nationals. It's a starting point, and we want to climb up every week and get better."

Three of the Bulldogs' four second-place finishers lost their championship matches to wrestlers from Coe College. Coe College currently is 4-0 in duals and ranks seventh nationally in the latest NWCA poll. The Kohawks dominated the invitational, with six wrestlers taking first place.

The Bulldogs were led by returning junior All-American Blake Peterson (165), who won his first two matches before falling in the championship match 11-9 to Tyler Burkle of Coe College.

Peterson said that this early in the season, it takes time for everyone to get adjusted.

"I think it will be a matter of time," Peterson said. "... We are really focusing this year on peak performance, and getting to the finals of a tournament like Coe is just a stepping stone of where we need to be. If we are winning every early in the season

of the year, then we might need to reevaluate the pace that we are peaking. Our goal is to be at the top of the podium in March."

Sophomore Dean Schultz also took second-place honors for Truman.

He went 3-1 the day before losing in the championship round 4-3. Junior Matt Craig (285) went 2-1 before losing by fall in his championship match. Senior Rob Nahlik (125) rounded out the Bulldog second-place finishers by going 2-1 before falling to Clayton Rush of Coe College 12-7.

Nahlik said the wrestlers the Bulldogs faced in the finals are the type of wrestlers they will have to beat at regionals.

"Blake and I and Matt weren't really tested before the finals," Nahlik said. "When we got to the finals, it was like, 'Wow, these guys are pretty tough.' The guys we saw in the finals are the guys we are going to have to beat in regionals. We have to get in better shape."

A good sign for the Bulldogs was the return of senior Dan Keller, who saw his first regular season action since tearing his ACL last season. The 2005 national qualifier went 2-2 and took

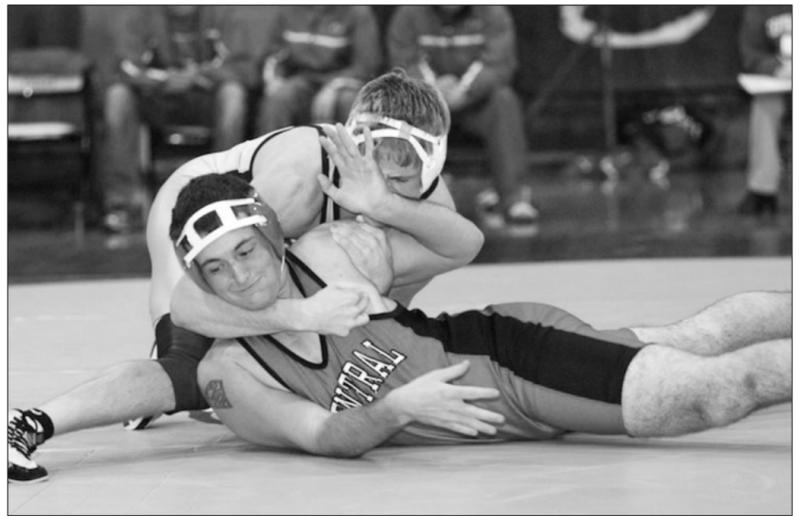


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Sophomore Dean Schultz applies a headlock on a wrestler from Central College in a dual meet earlier this season. The 'Dogs claimed four second-place finishes at Saturday's Coe College Invite.

home fifth place (133). Keller had not wrestled since the MacMurray Open on Dec. 9, 2006.

Other wrestlers placing for the Bulldogs included sophomore Bryan Isbell with fourth place (184). Sophomore Mitch Bainbridge took sixth place

(141). Junior Tim Wolkey came in fourth (197). Sophomore Andy Bader was fifth (157). And senior John Horman brought home sixth place (285).

The Bulldogs will get back on the mats Saturday at the Simpson Invitational in Indi-

ana, Iowa, where Coe College also will be wrestling. Truman's next dual match will be Dec. 16 against Upper Iowa University. The Bulldogs do not have another home match until Jan. 16, when they will take on Millikin University (Ill.).



Jason Williams/Index

Freshman guard Alex Henderson goes up for a shot in a preseason practice. The Bulldogs dropped two games last weekend in South Dakota's Thanksgiving Tournament.

Men's basketball still looking for first win

BY BLAKE TOPPMAYER
Assistant Sports Editor

The men's basketball team's schedule took little pity on the Bulldogs' inexperience.

Truman opened the season with four games away from home, all against high-quality opponents. After losing two games in the Minnesota State-Mankato Tipoff Classic to begin the season, the 'Dogs (0-4) fell 69-46 to the No. 7 University of South Dakota and 65-57 to Augustana College (S.D.) at South Dakota's Thanksgiving Tournament.

Truman's first four opponents have a combined 18-4 record this season.

Freshman forward Ethan Freeman said that despite the two weekend defeats in the Thanksgiving Tournament, he thought the team displayed some positive signs of improvement.

"We knew we were going to play two really good teams," Freeman said. "I can say that we left the tournament happy with ourselves. Even though we got [two losses], I think we really found something that we were looking for — taking our level of intensity and motivation from the practice court to the game court."

A lack of offensive production continued to plague the Bulldogs. After the weekend games, Truman is averaging just 54 points per game. In the two games in South Dakota, the 'Dogs shot a combined 38 percent from the floor.

Schrader said South Dakota and Augustana used a matchup zone coupled with some defensive pressure to shutdown the 'Dogs. The Bulldogs continued to pile up turnovers during the weekend and now are averaging nearly 15 turnovers per game.

"We know what to do offensively — we just don't know how to use it effectively yet," head coach Jack Schrader said.

Despite losing big to South

Dakota, Truman remained competitive in its other three contests this season, largely because of its defense. The Bulldogs have yet to allow an opponent to score 70 points.

Against South Dakota on Friday, Truman stayed close with the Coyotes until late in the first half. A three-pointer from senior forward Nick Certa followed by a free throw from junior point guard Banks Estridge pulled the Bulldogs to within two points with less than seven minutes to play in the first half. But South Dakota went on a 21-7 run before halftime to squelch Truman's upset hopes.

The Coyotes used a balanced offensive attack, with five players scoring at least nine points. Certa and Ethan Freeman led Truman with 10 points a piece.

Freeman is one of four freshmen seeing a lot of action on the court early in the season. He started both games in the tournament. Freeman said that with the help of the more experienced players, especially Estridge, he is making the transition to the college game.

Schrader said the freshmen have helped Truman play strong defense and that he expects better offensive production to follow later in the season.

The Bulldogs posed a more balanced offensive attack Saturday against Augustana. Four players reached double figures, led by Certa's and junior forward Patrick Fandja's 13 points each.

Truman played its best half of the season in the second half against Augustana, when the Bulldogs outscored the Vikings 39-29 and shot better than 56 percent from the field. But it wasn't enough to overcome an 18-point halftime deficit and a season-high 19 turnovers. Augustana scored 19 points off turnovers.

Fandja helped generate the comeback with nine points and four rebounds in the second half. The 6-foot-6 forward is

averaging in double figures in both points and rebounds per game this season. This comes after he averaged just two points and two rebounds per game a year ago.

"This is the first time in college he's had extended minutes," Schrader said. "And he's been as solid as a rock."

Fandja said more comfort in the offensive system has helped him improve his game.

"Now I just play the game," Fandja said. "Last year, every time I got in, I needed to figure out what I'm going to do, what I'm supposed to do next. When you think while you're playing, that can really take you out of the game."

The Bulldogs will have the opportunity to claim their first win of the season in their home opener 3 p.m. Saturday against NAIA Hannibal-LaGrange College.

Freeman said the team needs to continue to play solid defense and perform better on the offensive side of the ball against Hannibal-LaGrange, a team Truman beat by six points last season.

"I think everyone's now a lot more comfortable with our offense and what's expected out of it," Freeman said. "So now we just have to execute it."

Following the game against Hannibal-LaGrange, NCCAA Central Christian College (Mo.) will come to Pershing Arena on Dec. 15.

Schrader said that after battling through a difficult slate of games to begin the season, two games against non-NCAA schools should provide Truman with a good opportunity to garner its first victory. However, he also said that Hannibal-LaGrange still could challenge the Bulldogs.

"Hannibal-LaGrange will be one [where] we have to have our heads screwed on," Schrader said. "We need a taste of victory. I don't care against who. We just need that taste."

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