

# SPORTS



Nathan Becker/Index

Junior middle blocker Allie Cherven sets for a teammate during the Bulldogs' win against Northwest Missouri on Saturday. The team lost Tuesday, snapping a nine-match win streak.

## Win streak stopped at 9 with loss to SIUE

Volleyball falls in five games to Cougars, record drops to 26-5

BY BRENT FOSTER  
Staff Reporter

The volleyball team's recent string of success came to an end Tuesday night.

The Bulldogs lost a five-set match (30-20, 19-30, 21-30, 30-23, 15-11) to No. 16 Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville. The loss snapped the sixth-ranked 'Dogs' nine-match, 16-game winning streak.

Truman (26-5, 9-1) struggled out of the gate, hitting just .023 and falling behind 1-0. The Bulldogs came back and took games two and three with relative ease, but SIUE was able to win the final two games, giving the Bulldogs their third five-set loss of the season.

Junior middle blocker Allie Cherven led Truman with 12 kills and four blocks. Junior libero Whitney Boehler finished with 25 digs. The Cougars out-hit the Bulldogs .167 to .156.

Before the loss to SIUE, the Bulldogs were cruising through

their conference schedule. They swept Northwest Missouri State University on Saturday 3-0 (-22, -19, -20) at Pershing Arena. This was the Bulldogs' ninth straight victory overall and their 15th consecutive victory against Northwest. This was the Bulldogs fifth consecutive sweep of a match.

Head coach Jason Skoch said he was pleased with how the Bulldogs played against Northwest.

"That was one of the happiest matches as far as me being pleased with their performance," Skoch said. "I thought it was one of our most complete matches, with all respect to Northwest. That's a very good team. Our biggest issue this year is we let other teams control the tempo. That was one of the first times, even though they were slowing and laying off, we didn't do the same. We kept pushing."

Truman used a strong defensive effort to keep Northwest off balance. The Bearcats were in the red all afternoon while being out-hit .248 to -.015. This was the 10th straight match the Bulldogs have out-hit their opponent.

Junior right side hitter Melis-

sa Keck said the Bulldogs seem to have found a rhythm.

"I thought we played really well," Keck said. "Everything looked really fluid. Our passing, hitting and setting were all on. It was definitely a good overall match."

Boehler said the Bulldogs kept up the intensity the entire game.

"I thought we played pretty solid all three games," Boehler said. "We usually have letdowns in the second and third games, and I think we actually stayed strong. Our offense is doing a lot better."

The defensive effort started up front with Truman out-blocking Northwest 14-6. Cherven led the way with five blocks while Keck and sophomore outside hitter Susie Leshler chipped in with two apiece. Boehler was a force in the back, averaging more than seven digs per game and totaling 22 for the match.

The Bulldogs were just as sound offensively. Keck led a balanced effort, totaling a team-high of 11 kills. Sophomore right side hitter Erin Hattey had nine kills, and outside hitters junior Eli Medina and Leshler each totaled eight kills.

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## Team defense sparks victories

BY BRENT FOSTER  
Staff Reporter

If defense truly wins championships, the volleyball team might be in position to capture its first national title.

The Truman volleyball team compiled a nine match winning streak prior to Tuesday's loss, and the strong play of the Bulldog defense was responsible for much of the team's success.

Although Truman was struggling offensively early in the season, its defense was able to keep the team going and has continued to help the Bulldogs improve their record to 26-5. The 'Dogs are averaging 17.7 digs per game, which is almost 1.5 digs per game more than their opponents. The Bulldogs also

are outblocking the opposition by almost a full block per game.

"The defense has been playing awesome," junior right side hitter Melissa Keck said. "We've definitely got our rotations down, and our serving and receiving and passing has been incredible. We've been really scrappy lately."

Junior outside hitter Eli Medina and junior libero Whitney Boehler lead the Bulldogs in the digs category. Medina tops the team with 432 digs, averaging 3.86 per game. Boehler ranks ninth in the conference in digs, averaging 4.59 per game.

The Bulldogs also have a couple main forces which have helped the team achieve their block total. Junior middle blocker Allie Cherven is second in the MIAA with 126 blocks, av-

eraging 1.30 per game. Junior middle hitter Lisa Weber ranks seventh in the MIAA in blocks, with 1.20 per game.

Boehler said good communication is proving to be an advantage for the defense.

"The defense has improved because, I think, we have a lot better communication," Boehler said. "We are starting to learn to understand how to play next to each other. A lot of different players have stepped in to help us out."

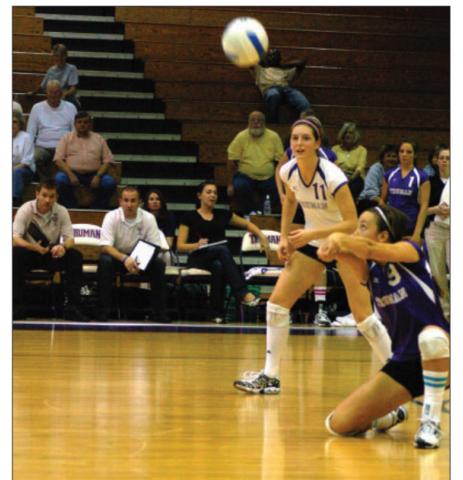
Truman's defensive statistics vary a little in comparison with the rest of the MIAA. The Bulldogs lead the conference in blocks with 2.81 per game. But the 'Dogs rank in the middle of the pack in digs per game.

So far this season the Bulldogs' defensive numbers are a little lower

than last year's numbers. Blocks are nearly identical to last year's marks, but digs have dropped by almost two per game, from 19.62 per game last year to 17.7 this season. Even though these numbers remain lower, they have been rising since the start of the team's recently-snapped nine-game winning streak.

Head coach Jason Skoch said defense might be what has sparked the recent surge by the offense.

"Our offensive numbers have been getting better and better," Skoch said. "I just noticed at one point that we weren't putting a premium on ball control, and we worked at that at practice. It is just starting to come together, like the offense helps the defense. We aren't as tired because we don't have Please see VOLLEYBALL, Page 19



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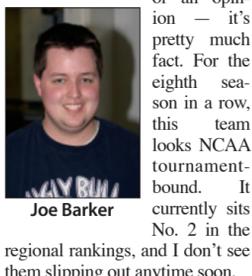
Junior Eli Medina digs a ball in a match against Northwest Missouri. Medina has 432 digs this season.

## Playoff chances revealed

Finally, I can start thinking about the playoffs.

All season long I have been trying to gauge where the Big Four — volleyball, football, men's and women's soccer — stand. I have dismissed questions of, "Will they make the playoffs?" with my patented response: "It's too early to tell." Now, as the calendar nears Halloween, I think I can make some predictions.

Volleyball: The volleyball team is in. It's not really a question or an opinion — it's pretty much fact. For the eighth season in a row, this team looks NCAA tournament-bound. It currently sits No. 2 in the



Joe Barker

regional rankings, and I don't see them slipping out anytime soon.

Even though it seems like a lock that this team is in, I wonder how far it can go. This year's incarnation has me changing my mind more than a politician. Before the season I thought the team was too young to make a run for that elusive national title. Then it went on a tear and beat the like of the University of Central Missouri. I started thinking the team had a shot. Then it lost to Washburn University, and I changed my mind again.

Prediction: Right now I don't think the volleyball team is national champion material, but I think it is capable of making a Please see PLAYOFFS, Page 19



Jackson Groves/Index

Junior quarterback Matt Ticich is wrapped up by a Pittsburg State defender during a game earlier this fall. Ticich passed for five touchdowns Saturday at Washburn, but the team fell 71-35.

## Washburn puts up 71 points to hand Bulldogs fourth loss

BY BLAKE TOPPMEYER  
Assistant Sports Editor

Washburn University required just one quarter to accomplish what the Truman football team did in an entire game.

The Ichabods (6-2, 5-1) posted five touchdowns in the second quarter, matching Truman's total offensive production, en route to their 71-35 victory against the Bulldogs (4-4, 2-4) on Saturday in Topeka, Kan.

Head coach Shannon Currier said it was shocking to watch the Ichabods post 36 points in the second quarter.

"You go into the game expecting to win, and all of a sudden to be down 50-22 at halftime is definitely disappointing," Currier said. "But at the same time, you can't stop and sulk or pout. You have to keep fighting."

With the loss, Truman dropped to 0-4 on the season against opponents with a winning record.

"When it comes down to it, players just have to make plays, and we haven't made the plays that we needed to win those games," sophomore running back Marvin Bemby said.

Behind their running game, the Ichabods scored on their first five possessions of the game and on seven of nine first-half possessions.

"We definitely allowed way too many points to have a chance to win," Currier said. "... We did a terrible job defending."

Washburn posted a school record 428 rushing yards and averaged 7.5 yards per carry. It marked the third consecutive week the Bulldog defense allowed more than 230 yards rushing.

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## Defensive woes plague Bulldogs

BY BLAKE TOPPMEYER  
Assistant Sports Editor

The points and yardage continued to pile up against the Truman football team's defense Saturday.

A week after allowing 40 points to Pittsburg State University, the Bulldogs surrendered 71 points and 590 yards of total offense in a defeat at Washburn University. The game marked the sixth time this season the defense has allowed 30 points or more.

Washburn gained the bulk of its yardage on the ground, compiling 428 rushing yards. Run defense has been the thorn in the Bulldogs' side the entire season. The 'Dogs are allowing an average of nearly 230 yards per game on the ground, which contributes to opponents averaging almost 37 points per contest.

"As the defensive coordinator and as the leader of this defense, I will certainly take any and all responsibility to my defense playing as poorly as they have played against the run," defensive coordinator Wallie Kuchinski said.

The Bulldogs rank near the bottom of the 10-team MIAA in nearly every statistical defensive category. The team is ninth in scoring defense, last in run defense and last in total defense.

Saturday marked the sixth

time this season Truman's opponent amassed at least 195 rushing yards.

Washburn utilized a double tight end set to exploit the Bulldogs. Kuchinski said the team has seen this formation at some point during the game from most of its opponents.

"Double tight end has given us a couple problems all year," Kuchinski said. "Since now that

has been a problem, that double tight end formation, we will practice it every single day, if a team runs it or if a team doesn't run it."

Kuchinski said the defense is making adjustments so it will be better equipped to stop the run, which is the unit's top priority.

"We're trying to make it a little more simple so we can perform at a higher level," Kuchinski said. "... [Sunday] night we tweaked some of our run fits, which is going to allow our players to play with more confidence now because we have an answer for the ailing for our run defense."

Junior defensive end Les Hamner said the Bulldogs' defensive players need to focus on fulfilling their respective jobs and must have assurance that the other defenders will succeed in their tasks.

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