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Kelly places 2nd at Jock's Nitch

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

For the first two seasons of her cross country career, junior Danna Kelly ran behind former All-American Jacquie Faust.

Now that Faust has graduated, Kelly is getting her chance to shine, and she is making the most of the opportunity.

On Friday, Kelly finished second place overall at the Jock's Nitch Invitational in Emporia, Kan. Her strong finish helped lead the Bulldog women to a third-place finish. Her time of 18:11 was only 10 seconds behind Faust's time from last year at this meet.

Head coach John Cochrane said Kelly is really exerting her leadership skills this year.

"She has a very good work ethic that really rubs off," Cochrane said. "She's gotten more experienced and has gotten better and is more mature. She has learned more about the tactics and world of running."

Cochrane also said Kelly has shown some similarities to Faust.

"Right now she is fairly close to where Jacquie was when she was a junior," Cochrane said. "There's not much difference in their times. They are different athletes, but she's doing well."

Kelly said she knows that being the leader of the team brings about new challenges.

"It's definitely more responsibility than I had last year with Jacquie here," Kelly said. "It's been a lot of fun, and I've really enjoyed the new members on our team. We are a young team this year,

but it's been a lot of fun showing them the ropes, and it kind of helps me have a positive mindset and to lead by example because I am more of a leader."

This is not the first time this season that Kelly has found success on the course. Earlier in the season, she took first place at the Miner Invitational in Rolla, helping lead the team to a first-place finish.

Kelly said there are a lot of different things that go together in order to make a race successful, including running with teammate junior Grace DeNero.

"It always helps that Grace and I stick together as long as we can and talk to each other during the race," Kelly said. "That definitely helps. I kind of lost focus in the middle of the race, which you can't do that, but it ended up turning out OK, I guess."

Heading into the end of this season and into her senior season, Kelly said she has some goals for herself and the rest of her team.

"For this season, I want to see our team improve and work hard and see improvements as the year goes on," Kelly said. "Individually doing better in the conference meet than I have the last two years is obviously one of my top goals. As for my senior year, I don't really know what's to come but hopefully to improve and to have a better year than this year."

Kelly and the rest of the team will get their chance to show off their improvements when they host the MIAA cross country championships Oct. 20 at the Kirksville Country Club.

Athlete of the Week

Danna Kelly
Sport: Cross Country
Year: Junior
Hometown: Boone, Iowa

Danna Kelly claimed a runner-up finish at last weekend's Jock's Nitch Invitational. Kelly's time of 18:11 was more than a minute better than her time at the Invitational last year. Her efforts helped the women's cross country team place third out of 13 teams. Kelly has been the team's top finisher in each of its three meets.

COLUMN | Men's soccer matches 2006 win total with team effort

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the 'Dogs defense has not allowed a goal.

"I think that kind of shook them to the core a little bit of, 'No one scores more than one goal on us, let alone five,'" Cochrane said.

The team has achieved a school-record eight games without surrendering a goal, including and the entire month of September.

Think about that for a second. They played an entire month without the other team getting a lucky bounce, a cheap goal or a defensive gaffe that led to an easy goal. None of that has happened.

How are the Bulldogs doing this? How does a team that won eight games in 16 games last season match that total in 10? It's the same reason I thought the team would only be slightly better than last season.

On paper nothing really stands out. They don't have a go-to sniper on offense with gobs of goals. Nor do they have one defender who shuts down the opposing team single-handedly.

This year's squad is winning games because it plays as a team.

The offense doesn't have just one guy for opposing teams to worry about. Nine different Bulldogs have scored goals. This balance makes it hard to scout the Bulldogs.

Even if the offense wasn't working, the

defense hasn't let the Bulldogs down. Cochrane has a stable of defenders who are playing as well as any unit can. Part of the reason the team has eight straight shutouts is the opposing teams simply aren't getting good shots.

"Defenders know that they are there to not allow people to have free looks at our goal - to try to keep them from scoring," Cochrane said. "If they can do that we can have a chance to win no matter who we play. ... We're defending as a team."

If somehow the opposition gets past the stacked defense, they have to face off with red-hot goalie Kyle Talbot. In 11 career games in net, the freshman goalkeeper has allowed just six goals and boasts a 0.55 goals against average.

If the 'Dogs can keep this unbeaten streak alive and keep playing at a high level, the team could be headed back to the post-season for the first time since 2005. To make the playoffs, the team will need to navigate a difficult region.

"Right now there are about eight teams fighting for three spots," Cochrane said. "I think we've got a very good chance. But, it's the game of soccer. You got to roll the ball out and see what happens. I think we're good enough."

SOCCER | Men tie team record with eight consecutive shutouts

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"They just came out trying to show that they were ready to play," Cochrane said. "Once [we] scored the goal it completely deflated them."

The Bulldogs struck again in the 26th minute when sophomore midfielder Drew Pauk recorded his first collegiate goal. Green sent a ball from the right side of the field into the penalty box that forced the goalie to come out and try to make a play. When he didn't get to it, sophomore midfielder Ben Hoyt tapped it to Pauk, who finished from about six yards out.

"Hoyt hit it, and it just sat down right there," Pauk said. "I saw the goal and just tapped it in. ... It was really a great ball by Green to get it there and put the keeper in such a tough position."

The Bulldogs never gave the Tritons a decent scoring opportunity.

They managed just five total shots and didn't get a shot on goal all game.

The 'Dogs' schedule soon will get

tougher. Their next two games are against regional opponents who have a combined 15-4-1 record.

If they continue to play well, they have a good chance of getting a bid to the NCAA tournament.

"Your regional results are huge," Cochrane said. "Our region's about 23 teams deep, and there are 11 in the mix for four spots still. ... That's why every game is a tournament game at this point for everyone. There will be no easy games now."

No matter how tough the competition gets, Pauk said the Bulldogs aren't intimidated by anyone.

"I really don't think we're scared to play anybody," Pauk said. "We're going into every game thinking, 'We can win this game. Let's go out there and beat this team.'"

The Bulldogs will look to extend the shutout record to nine when they face 9-1 Gannon University (Pa.) on Friday at Truman Soccer Park. They will then stay at home to play 6-3-1 Tiffin University (Ohio) on Sunday.

"[Ben] Hoyt hit it, and it just sat down right there. I saw the goal and just tapped it in. It was really a great ball by [Ben] Green to get in there and put the keeper in such a tough position."

Drew Pauk
Sophomore Midfielder

VOLLEYBALL | Team's eight game winning streak snapped at the hands of No. 5 Washburn

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Skoeh said the place to fix mistakes is in practice.

"Practice will be tough, and you just learn that every time you try to be relaxed at practice and try to be soft on them, you can't because this is a good reminder that we still have a lot of work to do," Skoeh said. "It's actually kind of good because it was clear cut why we lost today, and we are going to work on some things in practice tomorrow. ... I'll be ready next time and my team will be ready next time."

The players also were disappointed after the tough loss.

"It was very frustrating, especially for returners," Medina said. "It kind of mirrored the game against North Alabama [in the 2006 NCAA Tournament] when we were up two games. A good team has to put

that away and that's the difference. We are right there. The one good thing is that this loss is not season ending."

Junior middle hitter Allie Cherven agreed with Medina.

"It's pretty much sickening," Cherven said. "To win the first two games and to lose the next three games is just really bad. We have to use this as a learning experience, come into practice tomorrow and work on the things we didn't do good."

On Friday, the Bulldogs continued their solid play against ranked opponents as they defeated then No. 14 Pittsburg State 3-2 (21-30, 31-29, 31-29, 24-30, 15-11) in Pittsburg. The win improved the Bulldogs record to 17-3 overall and 5-0 in the MIAA. The win ran the 'Dogs record

against ranked teams to 6-1.

The match was a grueling back-and-forth battle between the two MIAA powers. Leshler led the attack for Truman with 18 kills and .220 hitting percentage. Junior right side hitter Melissa Keck and Medina had 11 kills apiece.

Despite another victory against a ranked opponent, Skoeh said he wasn't necessarily pleased with the way the team played.

"I thought we played poorly," Skoeh said. "Pitt. doesn't need our help to win. We basically came in and gave them game one. It was embarrassing the way we came out to be honest. ... We were very fortunate to win that game."

Pitt. State out hit the Bulldogs in the match and had fewer errors.

Despite the tough game, Skoeh said the team has a lot of fight to get them out of tough situations.

"We've got fight, but we really put ourselves in bad holes," Skoeh said. "Game one, it was neck and neck. There first four points were easy for us, and we did something so ignorant with the ball that they just kept them around, and they got the confidence and just took it and run."

The Bulldogs will continue their string of games against ranked teams when they travel to Topeka for the Lady Blues Fall Classic. On Friday, the Bulldogs will play No. 17 West Texas A&M University and Panhandle State University (Okla.). On Saturday, the 'Dogs will take on Abilene Christian College (Texas) and Dallas Baptist (Texas).

Changing of the Tide

The Bulldogs controlled the first two sets Tuesday night against No. 6 Washburn University. Then, in a similar fashion to last season's NCAA second round tournament match, the women dropped the next three sets to drop their record to 17-4 on the season.

| | Truman | Washburn |
|--------------------|--------|----------|
| Games 1 and 2 | | |
| Hitting Percentage | .235 | .105 |
| Total Kills | 42 | 24 |
| Games 3, 4 and 5 | | |
| Hitting Percentage | .174 | .248 |
| Total Kills | 46 | 47 |

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