

Rugby drops game against Bombers

BY BEN YARNELL
Staff Reporter

The men's rugby team lived up to its own expectations last weekend and lost.

Last Saturday, the Bulls traveled to St. Louis to take on the Bombers' B-side team and fell 34-5.

"We knew we were going to get beat," head coach Bill Sexton said. "They were bigger and stronger. We would have had to play out of our skulls to beat them."

The Bombers dominated the scoreboard throughout the entire game. The only try for the Bulls (1-2) came in the first half, when the team took advantage of a well-executed line-out, which resulted in a try by senior Leo Stephens which the Bulls failed to convert. The Bombers went on to score three tries in the first half, converting one, bringing the score at half to 17-5. In the second half, the Bombers repeated, scoring three tries and converting one.

"Really, though, it was a much better game than the score reflects," Sexton said.

Sexton said the team did well in several areas other than scoring.

The Bulls dealt admirably with a shortage of four men. Most notably was junior captain Justin Lacy, who was forced to sit out because of a concussion he sustained against the University of Missouri-Columbia two weeks ago. Another prominent Bull out of commission was junior Dustin Ralph, who previously accounted for all of the tries for Truman in the last two games.

"It was a great opportunity for us to get some of the young guys to get some more experience under pressure," Sexton said.

In addition to grace under pressure, his squad has shown great improvement in both its scrimmaging and lines-outs, Sexton said.

He said that even with the good play, the Bulls have plenty to work on. The most important skill the team will work on this week will be ball control, especially to avoid knock-ons. In rugby, a player must have complete control of the ball before he can move forward. If he does not, a knock is called and possession goes to the opposing team.

One extra tool the Bulls will be able to take advantage of this week is game film. Sexton

said he was able to record the game on his digital camcorder and that he plans to use this as a teaching point.

"It will be a good opportunity to watch what people did well and what people did poorly and then use it constructively," Sexton said. "We are going to look at this with the sole purpose of getting everyone on the same page."

All of this work will come in handy for the Bulls when they take on Kansas State University next Saturday.

For Sexton, the match will be a bit of a reunion. Not only is he an alumnus of K-State, but the coach for the current team, Danny Blea, is one of his former teammates.

Even with such a connection, Sexton said he does not know much about the K-State team.

"I think their pack is a little bit smaller this year than usual," Sexton said. "They look to have good team speed. They look like they will be very well-drilled."

Another source of scouting for the Bulls will be former teammate and current player for Benedictine University, Mike Fitzgerald. His team faced off against K-State last weekend,



Jason Williams/Index
With head coach Bill Sexton looking on, members of the rugby team work fitness skills at practice Tuesday. The Bulls, 1-2 on the season, have their first home match Saturday.

and the Bulls hope to use him as a wealth of knowledge.

The match also will add a challenge for both teams. With Monday's wet weather and the fact that the football team has occupied the rugby pitch, field conditions will not be ideal.

But sophomore P.J. Muelleman said he is not too worried. "We're used to it, and [K-

State] is not," said Muelleman. "There's not much we can do about it."

This weekend's match will be one of several firsts for the Bulls.

Along with being the first home match of the season, it will also be the Bulls' first league match. Last season was the first time in three seasons the team

failed to place high enough in its league to earn a bid to Western Conference tournament.

Freshman Nate Master said he is excited about both opportunities.

"This is huge," Master said. "All the games we played have been leading up to this. ... This is the first one where we all know it really counts."

Cross Country teams prepare for Invitational

BY JACK NICHOLL
Staff Reporter

Cross country meets aren't won by first-place finishers. They are won by how a team finishes cumulatively.

To finish with a good score, team members must be able to run together well. The men's team, lacking frontrunners, has been able to do this efficiently.

In the first race this season, the men placed their top eight runners within a minute of one another. In the second race, they finished with their top four within 11 seconds of one another and their top seven within a minute of one another.

When the men compete at

the Emporia State Jock's Nitch Invitational this Friday, they will work on moving their pack up so they can place higher as a team. Senior Bryant England said the men have room for improvement from last week, when they finished 24th out of 36 teams at the Southern Stampede in Joplin, Mo.

"I think last week we went out way too slow the first mile and put ourselves in a bad position," England said. "Can't win the race in the first mile, but you can lose it. So I think this week we're going to try to pack up four to five guys and go out a little quicker and try to get to the middle of the race, so we can be more aggressive during the middle miles."

Men's head coach Tim Schwegler said it is easier for the men to place higher in smaller events because with a less crowded field, it is easier to pass people.

"We can key more runners from different schools," Schwegler said of the smaller races.

Last year the men finished third out of 12 at the invitational. Schwegler said this year's goal is to finish as one of the top two teams. This would mean Truman would have to finish ahead of Emporia State University, which finished a spot ahead of Truman at the Southern Stampede.

England also stressed the importance of pack running in helping the team get a higher place.

"There's no way we can win if we have five guys all running at a different pace," England said. "The goal is that we can put five guys together from the get-go and then help each other work and move up throughout the race as a pack and then use the last mile just to pull out of the tank whatever we have."

England and freshmen Josh Mantooth and Bob Gorman have been the top finishers for the men, each finishing in the top four for the Bulldogs at each meet.

Similar to the men, the women will try to move up their main pack at the Jock's Nitch Invitational, where they finished third out of eight

teams last year. The women have a solid duo in their No. 1 and No. 2 runners, junior Dana Kelly and senior Grace DelNero. However, it doesn't matter how high those two finish if the three through seven runners don't also do their job.

So far this season, the women's top two and No. 3 through No. 7 runners have done a good job of staying together. In the first meet, Kelly and DelNero finished three seconds apart, and in the second meet they finished 17 seconds apart.

The next five Bulldogs also have done a good job, finishing within 48 seconds of one another in the first race. In the women's second race, which only featured five runners from

Truman, freshmen Morgan Cox, Kylie Raitel and Amanda Brown finished within 14 seconds of one another.

Head coach John Cochrane said the team will finish according to how the three through seven runners finish.

"They are going to be the ones that are going to be the difference in the race," Cochrane said. "Even if [Kelly and DelNero] go one-two, they aren't going to change enough."

Even with the pack of runners having more of an effect on Truman's place, the top two runners still have some impact. Cochrane said the strategy for them is going to be to run aggressively to make the other top runners work.

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