

VOLLEYBALL | 'Dogs seek fifth straight 30-win season

Continued from Page 15
2006, but when healthy, she led the team in digs per game with 4.3 a contest.

"I think Whitney's going to have a breakout year as far as her digs are going to increase," Skoch said.

Setter Amanda Holliday, the lone senior on the team, is penciled in as the starting setter. Two freshmen — Ashley Petak and Julie Johnson are currently vying to be her backup.

Sophomore outside hitters Susie Leshner and Lauren Graybeal will see increased rolls for the 'Dogs. Although Leshner is just a sophomore, Skoch didn't hesitate to compare her to Shearman.

"She adds more power and she can do better things with a bad ball than Sarah," Skoch said. "She's not as versatile as Sarah yet, but if she keeps up with the ball control and everything, we'll be fine."

Graybeal has been the surprise of the summer. She played in just 15 matches as a freshman and struggled to adjust to a new position and a previously undiagnosed medical condition.

"She had to overcome some stuff," Skoch said. "First off, a new position which requires a lot more ball control than what she was used to. ... She also, and a lot of people didn't know this, but she had eye problems last year. They found out she was having depth perception problems, so she's had to work through that."

Holliday said the infusion of young blood into the team has helped energize the team energized for a return trip to the national tournament.

"I think, because we are younger, we have that hunger, that drive a little bit more," Holliday said. "People that weren't playing [last season] are going to have top spots, and they're going to have to push themselves and work harder."

A return trip to nationals could bring up memories of last year's upset at the hands of the University of North Alabama. Up 2-0, the 'Dogs blew a lead in the third set and lost on their home floor in the second round of the regional tournament, ending a 36-match win streak and the season. Holliday said the team has put the loss behind it this year.

"It's one of those things we dealt with at the time," Holliday said. "We are trying to grow from it and make ourselves better so something like that doesn't happen again. I don't think that we dwell on it by any means."

With all the changes to the team this year, some may have already counted the Bulldogs out in their quest for their elusive first national title. Although the team may be young, if things come together, good things could happen.

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Jason Skoch
Head Coach



File Photo

Junior libero Whitney Boehler returns a ball during a game last fall. Boehler is one of six juniors who will be counted on to propel the women back to the national tournament.

MEDINA | Junior emerges as team leader after appearing in every match her first two years

Continued from Page 15
doesn't just focus on stopping honorable mention All-American junior Allie Cherven.

"Eli has picked up her power enough, and everyone trusts her to get the job done," Skoch said. "If they focus on Allie too much, Eli can produce with one blocker."

Medina said she knows a bigger onus will be on her to produce offensively.

"I'm going to try my best and improve my offensive game — that's something I'm really going to concentrate on," Medina said. "My defense has been fine, but I want to step up and make up for what we lost."

To help improve her offensive numbers, Skoch is going to give Medina extra rest so her legs are at 100 percent on game day.

"She's earned my trust so I'm going to start resting her in practice more

so her legs are more ready at games," Skoch said. "She's going to get a little bit different treatment than other players because of that, but it's because I know — because of two years with her — she's there for every play. She works hard in practice. She's earned it."

If Medina develops an offensive game to go with her solid defense, the 'Dogs could replace one of the two All-Americans lost last year.

SOCCER | Team hopes to improve on 2006 campaign

Continued from Page 15
front of us gets better."

Cochran knows that already having a year with these players will make a huge difference.

"One thing that will help during the season is me knowing the players and the players knowing each other," he said. "Last year with such a young team we had to move players around a lot to try and find the right combinations of players up top to score goals. Through the spring we figured that out, and we can come in a lot further ahead this year. One thing I think is that players need to believe in each other and have that trust in each other. It's hard to be on every day. When someone is off, the other teammates need to make up for it. I think if we do that then we are going to do very well."

Cochran said he would like for his team to return to the NCAA Div. II Tournament, a place the Bulldogs have not been since 2005.

"We set goals together as a team, but I think a goal for me would be to see this team be one of the top four teams in the region, not just anytime in the season, but at the end of the season so that we have a chance to play in the tournament," Cochran said. "I think this team really has that ability."

The Bulldogs open up the season on the road against Bellarmine University (Ky.) August 24, with the home season kicking off August 31 against Northeastern State University (Okla.).



File Photo

Sophomore back Dan Russell gathers control of the ball in a contest last fall. Head coach Duke Cochran said he wants to see his team qualify for the NCAA Tournament. The 'Dogs last qualified for the tournament in 2005.

ATHLETICS | Bulldog sports teams provide appeal

Continued from Page 15

Athletic Fee, every student is forking over some money to the Bulldogs. It makes sense that you should get your money's worth and see a few games. Plus, it's a good thing to do in groups, and it's a nice break from the daily grind of the homework, paper, test cycle we all get stuck in.

One thing about athletics at Truman that I am not a fan of is purple and white. My high school had the same colors, and they don't seem to strike fear in the opposition. Plus, it doesn't make sense in my head when you think of our mascot, the ferocious Bulldog.

Who has ever seen a purple and white Bulldog? In fact, who has ever seen a purple and white anything? Who decided that these should be school colors? Whoever it was didn't consult me.

Hopefully I have answered at least your initial questions about the sports here at Truman. I know I didn't get too in depth but, hey, that's what this space is for the rest of the year — right here on the front of the sports section is the only place you will get opinions on Truman athletics. If you have any other questions, I would be happy to answer them. Simply e-mail me at jeb938@truman.edu.

Now, put down your paper and grab your itinerary for Truman Week. I'm sure you're missing something fulfilling. Go to that.

PARTY MART

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