



Chris Waller/Index

Sophomore middle blocker Lauren Graybeal goes for the dig in the Bulldogs 3-0 sweep of Missouri Western last night. The match was not only the home opener, but also the first conference match for the Bulldogs. The 'Dogs held Missouri Western to a negative attacking percentage by virtue of 60 team digs and 10 team blocks. The win improved the 'Dogs to 10-3.

Volleyball sweeps Mo. West at home

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

After playing its first 12 matches on the road and coming off of a disappointing loss Saturday, the No. 10-ranked volleyball team wanted to come out and make a statement in front of the home crowd.

Mission accomplished. The Bulldogs fed off of a big night from junior right side hitter Melissa Keck and junior middle hitter Allie Cherven, which propelled the 'Dogs to a three-game sweep of the Missouri Western State University Griffons last night at Pershing Arena in Truman's home opener.

Keck and Cherven combined for 19 kills in the game, with hitting percentages of .529 and .474, respectively.

The win improved the Bulldogs to 10-3 on the season, but more important-

ly, the win made the Bulldogs 1-0 on the conference season.

Head coach Jason Skoch said he knows the importance of going out and winning the first conference game.

"We've been playing bad," Skoch said. "We talked about how that doesn't matter because right now we are 1-0 in the conference and 2-0 in the region. So right now we are in first place."

Skoch also said it is important to finally come out and play at home.

"We've had some rough trips," Skoch said. "We didn't get into some of our tournaments until three in the morning, so sleeping in our own beds is huge. It was a good crowd with a lot of energy."

Cherven said because of the strength of the MIAA, all conference wins are crucial.

"They [games] are all going to be tough, but I think Central Missouri and

Washburn will be our toughest games," Cherven said. "We always have good games with them."

The win against Western was the first match for the Bulldogs since they competed in three tournaments to begin the season.

Revenge is sweet in sports. Knocking off two top-10 teams in the process makes it even sweeter.

The Bulldogs defeated then No. 9 the University of Northern Alabama, the team that knocked them out of the NCAA Tournament in 2006, and followed that victory up with a win in a five-set thriller against then No. 10 Hillsdale College (Mich.) in the Town-place Suites Classic in Findley, Ohio, during Labor Day weekend.

These two victories sparked the Bulldogs to a 3-1 record at the Classic.

Skoch said winning such a match against Northern Alabama can be a

huge emotional lift for his team.

"That game had a playoff feel, and both teams were playing out of their minds," Skoch said. "It's good because it shows that even though we have a lot of young kids this year, we can still play with anybody in the country."

The Bulldogs carried their momentum from the Townplace Suites Classic into the Sept. 8 to 9 Best Western Classic in Lawton, Okla. The Bulldogs won the first three matches of the weekend with victories against St. Mary's University (Texas), 3-1 (-24, -23, 22-30, -09) Cameron University (Okla.), 3-1 (-21, -19, 28-30, -15) and St. Edward's University (Texas) 3-0 (-19, -19, -22) before losing their fourth match of the tournament to University of Central Oklahoma 3-1 (28-30, 22-30, -27, 24-30).

The loss to UCO dropped the Bulldogs to 9-3 on the season heading into conference play.

UCO jumped out to a 2-0 lead before the Bulldogs were able to get things going.

The loss to Central Oklahoma was hotly contested with each game being decided by a string of runs.

Going 3-1 over the weekend was nice, but players and coaches know that leaving Oklahoma with a loss to an unranked team is frustrating and can be a momentum killer.

"We've been playing great competition and beating great competition," junior outside hitter Eli Medina said. "Not to take anything away from them, but we beat No. 2 in the nation and No. 9 in the nation, so to lose to an unranked team was pretty frustrating."

The Bulldogs will be back in action Friday against MIAA rival Northwest Missouri State University and then again Saturday against No. 5 Florida Southern College.

Cherven's offense powers team

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

Sometimes finding a go-to player to step up on a team can be tough.

But junior middle hitter Allie Cherven seems to be moving into that role quite nicely for the volleyball team. The Francis Howell Central High School (Mo.) graduate continued her dominating season with a huge weekend in the Best Western Invitational in Lawton, Okla.

Cherven attacked at a rate better than .350 in all four matches at the Invitational, including an .800 hitting percentage and nine kills against St. Edwards University (Texas). The Bulldogs swept St. Edwards in three games.

In the win against St. Mary's University (Texas), Cherven excelled once again. She finished second on the team with eleven kills.

Cherven totaled 48 kills in the four matches and helped lead the Bulldogs to three wins.

Head coach Jason Skoch has noticed Cherven's strong play and said he hopes it will help a struggling offense that hit only .189 in a 3-1 Saturday loss to the University of Central Oklahoma.

"Right now she's the only one that's consistent and solid or go-to," Skoch said. "We are struggling with offense right now. No matter what ball she gets, she is starting to use her mind to determine the play. If it's a bad set, she is swinging off the net, ... or if she has to tip, she has to tip."

Teammates also know the importance of Cherven's play on the court.

"She is always the spark out there," junior outside hitter Eli Medina said. "She can obviously put the ball down like nobody's business. Nobody can touch her. I love playing next to her."

Cherven led the Bulldogs with 19 kills and an impressive .342 hitting percentage in the loss to unranked Central Oklahoma.

"I thought I played really hard, and the rest of the team tried as hard as they could but we just weren't all coming together," Cherven said.

The 2006 Honorable Mention All-American is near the top of many offensive categories for the Bulldogs this season. She is first in kills and hitting percentage. She leads the team in total points and points per game. The junior also has played in all 13 of the team's matches this season.

Early this season, Cherven was named to the All-Tournament team at the Spikers Classic after she amassed 39 kills in four matches, including 15 kills in the Bulldogs' 3-2 victory against then No. 10 Hillsdale College (Mich.).

The Bulldogs are 10-3 this season, after losing just two matches last year. Being on the road for extended periods of time can have a grave effect on teams more times than not.

The Bulldogs played their first 12 matches away from Pershing Arena before opening MIAA play Wednesday

at Pershing against Missouri Western University. Cherven said she is excited to get back in front of the home fans to show the school how good the volleyball team is.

"I'm really pumped," Cherven said. "It has been a long three weeks, and I'm ready to come out and show everybody how hard we've been working. It's been a long three weeks with bus rides and everything, so it's exciting to finally get to play at home."

Cherven was a vital piece to the Bulldogs 3-0 sweep of Mo. West in the team's MIAA and home opener. She had 10 kills and a .474 hitting percentage.

Cherven is in her second year with Truman. She began her collegiate career at Div. I Pittsburgh University where she was dominant as a true freshman. Cherven said that there is a definite transition between Divs. I and II, and there are also several differences in the style of play between the two.

"The major difference would be ... [Div. II] is more defensive," Cherven said. "More digs, more rallies. At Pitt it was more about power. You had more 6-foot-4 and 6-foot-5 girls where here you have 6-foot and 6-foot-1 girls and get more rallies. I think it's a lot more fun here."

Despite coming from a major Div. I school like Pitt, Cherven said the fan support at Bulldog games is oftentimes greater than it was at Pitt games because people like volleyball at Truman.



File Photo

Junior middle blocker Allie Cherven has been a force on the volleyball court this season. Cherven leads the Bulldogs with 128 kills.

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