

Bulls beat SLU 11-8 for season first win

BY BEN YARNELL
Staff Reporter

Starting out on the right note is always important.

The Truman men's rugby team couldn't get much more right than a win.

The Bulls kicked off their fall season with a win Saturday against the St. Louis University Ramblers in Marceline, Mo.

Bulls head coach Bill Sexton said that although the win is nice, it wasn't his main focus for the game.

"The most important thing was that we got out on the field," Sexton said. "We had a bunch of new rookies out on the field. We played reasonably well. ... The winning part is when you do everything else right."

To start off the first game of the season, both teams were evenly matched

for much of the first half. It was not until 20 minutes into the game that St. Louis committed a penalty that resulted in junior Will Holleman kicking a penalty goal, putting the Bulls up 3-0.

The Ramblers answered right back with a try two minutes later. Coupled with a penalty kick of its own, St. Louis led 8-3 at the end of the half.

Early in the second half, St. Louis failed to capitalize on an opportunity to extend its lead after missing another penalty kick two minutes in. Scoring for both teams dried up until junior Dustin Ralph finally drove in a the team's only try to tie the score at 8.

"It was a real team effort to get down to the line," Ralph said. "I had to barrel through two of their big guys and just dove in."

With just three minutes left in the game, Holleman scored his second pen-

alty kick of the day, bringing the Bulls to a final score of 11-8.

Sexton said the game did show him a few points the Bulls will have to focus on in the coming week of practice.

"We need to work on our fitness," Sexton said. "We had only had about four or five practices leading up to this game, and it takes longer than that to [be fit]. That is why we have three weekends of matches before we have our first league match."

For the Bulls, it was the combination onslaught of the Ramblers' backfield, especially in the fly-half and fullback positions, that presented the biggest problem. Rambler players in both positions accounted for the majority of St. Louis' big breakaways.

"We were very patient on defense, and I was really pleased with that part of our game," Sexton said. "We were able

to create turnovers by basically keeping pressure on and forcing mistakes."

Sexton also said that although the Bulls defended well throughout the game, the lull in scoring during the second half showed a team that was "uninspiring" in attack on offense.

One of the points Sexton said he was most pleased with was the performance of the new players on the roster. Among those were freshmen Aaron Loida and Jake Green. Both Loida and Green came out of the St. Louis area, where they played rugby in high school.

"Both of them were actually pretty impressive — they did a lot of things right," Sexton said.

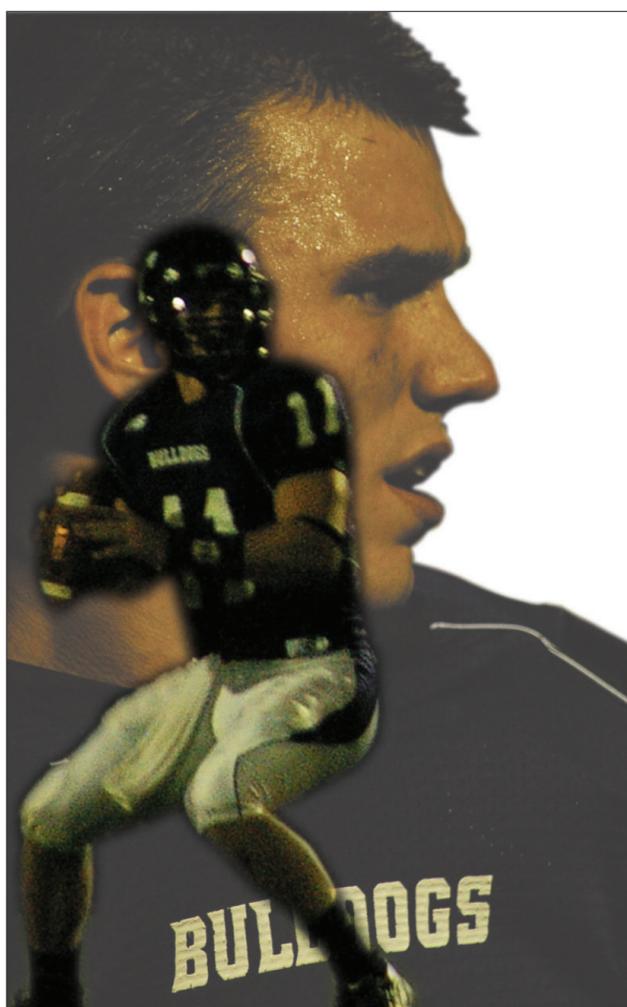
Sexton said Matt Engelbart was another one of the standout players new to the Bulls roster. The freshman, who had never played a game of rugby before in his life, came from a high school back-

ground of both football and wrestling. Sexton told Engelbart last Thursday he was going to start at flanker.

"All of Thursday and Friday, I was really nervous, but by the time Saturday came around, I was really pumped about it," Engelbart said.

Engelbart and the rest of the Bulls will be put to the test next week when they hit the road against the University of Missouri-Columbia next Saturday. The Tigers will present a tough challenge for Truman. The Bulls have squared off against Mizzou almost every semester but have not beaten the Tigers since spring 2005.

"Mizzou is going to be harder, faster and fitter than [St. Louis], and we are going to have to play at a higher level," Sexton said. "But that is just the way it has got to be. If we plan on being competitive, we are going to do better."



Photos by Jackson Groves and design by Jackson Groves and Jason Williams/Index

Junior quarterback powers aerial attack

BY RYAN TURNER
Staff Reporter

The Bulldogs played their first home football game under the lights in more than a decade Saturday night. Perhaps they should play at night more often.

Junior quarterback Matt Ticich gave a record-breaking performance against Upper Iowa University (1-1). On the way to leading Truman to a 2-0 start, he passed for a school and conference record 493 yards, while also scrambling for 23 rushing yards to give him a school-record 516 yards of total offense.

Like most of the near-capacity crowd, Ticich was unaware that he had set new school and conference records. He found out with about five minutes left in the game when it was announced over the public address system.

Head coach Shannon Currier said Ticich can consistently put up good numbers because of his level of preparation.

"He's a real passionate player, and he's so competitive," Currier said. "He wants to be the best player in the country."

Currier went on to say that Ticich puts forth huge effort both on and off the field.

"He watches an enormous amount of film," Currier said. "He's real focused throughout the week of practice. He has all of the intangible things that aren't controlled by [the coaching staff], which are his desire, his work ethic and his attitude. I think he can be the best quarterback in Div. II."

Last year Ticich was as an All-MIAA honorable mention and was disappointed that he wasn't on either the first or second team.

"That's also motivation for him," Currier said. "... That fired him up."

Ticich thought the key to the passing success was his supporting cast playing well.

"Receivers were getting open and making big plays for me," Ticich said. "A lot of catches, I guess one in particular, [freshman wide receiver Kendrick] Blue, it was a five-yard pattern that I threw, and he took it for about 50 yards and a touchdown, breaking tackles ... along the way."

Currier said if a few things had gone differently, Ticich could have set a national record.

"We had a couple of dropped balls on Saturday," Currier said. "Maybe we'd have set the national mark, but unfortunately we didn't have support from a couple of guys at different times, and we came 30 yards shy."

Against the University of Missouri-Rolla, Ticich threw for a game-winning touchdown pass on fourth down and five.

Currier said Ticich is aggressive and likes to go for it on fourth down.

"We have a lot of confidence in our guys to make plays," he said.

Ticich is versatile, providing Currier with a lot of options on offense.

"He's such a valuable piece to our offense," Currier said. "He can run, he can throw — any time you have a quarterback that's a dual threat, it's extremely difficult to defend him."

Ticich's accomplishments were noticed by more than just the PA announcer. Ticich was honored as MIAA offensive player of the week as well as one of three players named Div. II offensive player of the week.

Athlete of the Week

Matt Ticich

Sport: Football

Year: Junior

Position: Quarterback

Hometown: Temecula, Calif.

Matt Ticich broke the Bulldog and conference single-game record for passing yards with 493 through the air in the 'Dogs' 55-31 victory against Upper Iowa University. Ticich's efforts earned him MIAA Offensive Player of the Week and Div. II Offensive Player of the Week honors.



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