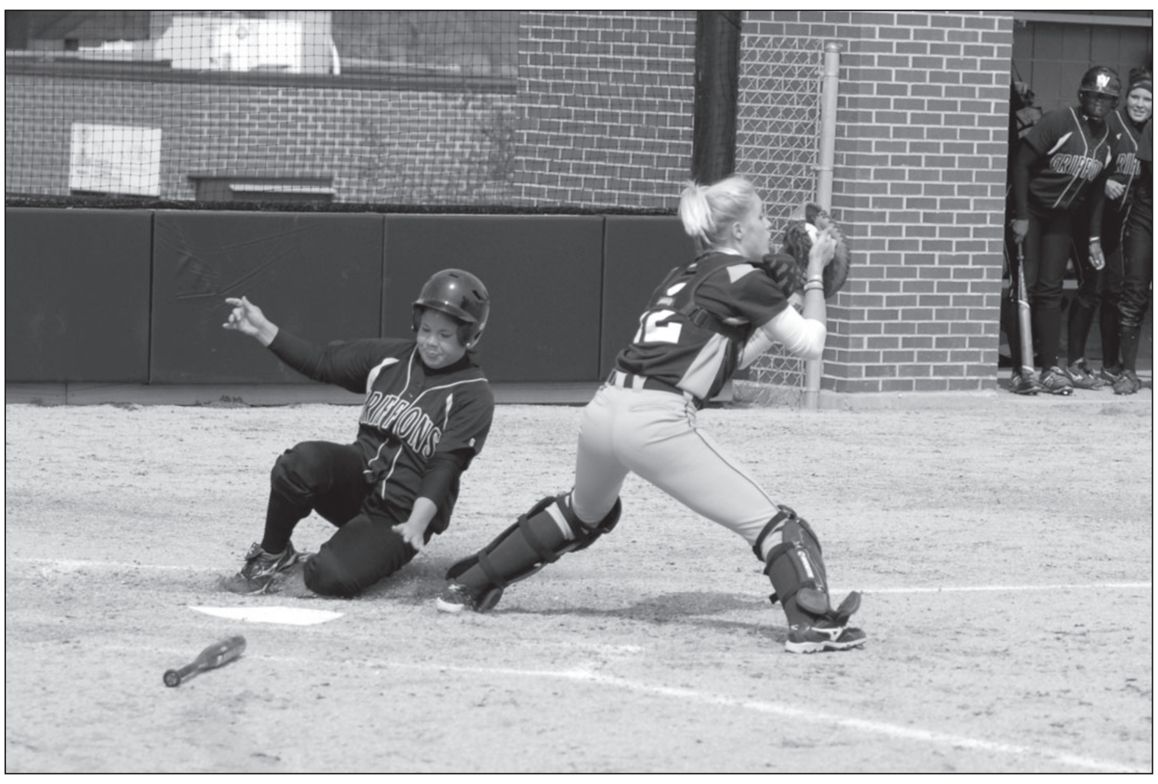
Softball falls in conference opener



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Top: Junior catch Erica LaCombe beats out an infield single in the fourth inning of Wednesday's 3-0 loss to Missouri Western. The Bulldogs lost the second game of the double-header 7-5 in a rain make up of March 31. Truman's record fell to 8-17 overall and 0-2 in the MIAA with the losses.
Bottom: A Missouri Western player beats a throw home in the first game of the double-header.

Rescheduled double-header against Mo. Western ends 10-day break

BY JOE BELL
Staff Reporter

As the saying goes, better late than never.

In what has become almost a circus of rescheduling, the softball team played a double-header yesterday against No. 21 Missouri Western State University. The Bulldogs lost Game 1 3-0, and they lost their second game 7-5. The team is now 0-2 in MIAA conference play and 8-17 overall.

This double-header marked the beginning of conference play for the Bulldogs. After their struggles in the beginning of the season against non-conference opponents, the Bulldogs were looking forward to starting over with a clean slate in conference play.

It had been a week and a half since the Bulldogs last played a game because of poor weather conditions. The team spent much of that time practicing in an effort to correct some of the major problems they had been having.

"We've had so many practices [since we last played], which can be good and bad," head coach Erin Brown said. "[They are] good to work on things, but then bad, frustrating, for the girls to have to go back inside after we've been in there for a month and a half."

> "We have the potential to play with anybody, we just need to become a little bit more consistent.
>
> **Alyssa Perry**
> Freshman utility player

Many of Truman's problems recurred during the doubleheader. Until the sixth inning of the second game, that is, when Truman scored five runs.

MWSU came into the double-header riding a 24-game win streak. Although MWSU boasts a middle-of-the-pack offense, its pitching is the team's standout strength. A team ERA of 1.76, along with its offense, has earned the Griffons a spot on the National Fastpitch Coaches Association's top-25 for the first time this season.

And the MWSU pitching performed as expected. In the first game, the pitching limited Truman to four hits. Truman managed to get only one runner to second base during the whole game off of stolen base.

The second game started off much the same way as the first. Truman was down 3-0 in the fifth inning when freshman pitcher Ashley Rotkvich came in to relieve. She gave up a three-run homer on the first batter she faced. MWSU scraped out another run in the top of the sixth. Down 7-0, the game appeared to be far out of reach for Truman.

And then the Bulldogs began to hit. And hit. With two runners on and two outs, senior outfielder Dani Mayer stepped to the plate and singled, which scored the first Bulldog run. In total, the Bulldogs got six hits in the inning and scored five runs. Prior to this, the Bulldogs had five hits for the two games total.

"In the sixth inning, we proved that we can play with anybody," freshman utility player Alyssa Perry said. "We have the potential to play with anybody, we just need to become a little bit more consistent."

In the bottom of the seventh, the Bulldogs continued to hit. Senior shortstop Kali Holleran hit a long fly ball that threatened to leave the park, but was she robbed by a spectacular sliding catch from the MWSU right-fielder.

The pitching also hampered the Bulldogs. In 14 innings, the Bulldog pitchers gave up 11 hits, 11 walks, 10 runs and three home runs. A combination of missing location and pitches not breaking combined to become big problems for the 'Dogs.

"[The pitchers] are working really hard — they're fighting out there," sophomore backup catcher Kristen Siegler said. "I think the frustrating part is [opponents] are hitting the pitches they miss their spots on. … [The other teams] are hitting the mistakes."

But these were only the first two games of conference play for the Bulldogs. If the team can figure out what caused its offensive outburst in the sixth inning of Game 2 yesterday, some pressure will be taken off of the pitching staff.

The Bulldogs head to Kansas City, Mo., today to play Rockhurst University. The team will play Fort Hays State University tomorrow and then will return home to play Drury University at 1 p.m. on Sunday.

Danielsen leads 'Dogs to 2nd place finish

Men's golf team posts two-day score of 602 to improve by 80 strokes

BY LOGAN JACKSON
Staff Reporter

Although the weather wasn't much better this past weekend than during the spring-opening tournament, the men's golf team was.

The Bulldogs finished second out of nine teams in the Northern Sun Spring Fling in Lincoln, Neb. The team originally was scheduled to play in St. Joseph, Mo., but bad weekend weather pushed the Bulldogs northwest.

Truman finished with a two-day score of 602 (301, 301), just two strokes behind first-place St. Cloud State University (Minn.). Truman's score of 602 was 80 strokes better than its first spring tournament.

Senior Scott Danielsen led the charge for the Bulldogs. He finished in a tie for fourth place with a score of 147 (74, 73) — just five over par.

Danielsen said the team stayed focused during both days, to place much better than its first tournament.

"I would say that our last tournament was windy, but it was windy for everyone," Danielsen said. "We really can't blame [poor play] on that. During this tournament, we just kind of stepped up as a team and shot to our potential."

The weather once again was a big factor during the tournament. With wind gusts as strong as 35 mph, the ball moved without even being touched. After dealing with similar gusts last week, the Bulldogs were prepared to battle it out with the wind. Danielsen said having practices in Kirksville also benefits Truman.

"It's so windy and cold [in Kirksville] that we're used to [poor conditions] and like playing in them," Danielsen said. "It gives us a huge advantage. As much as the wind sucks, we welcome it because it bodes well for us."

Sophomore Chris Kovach finished one shot behind Danielsen in a tie for sixth place with a score of 148 (74, 74). Senior Michael Spaulding finished in a tie for 13th, freshman Nik Bentzinger finished 22nd and sophomore Andy Herington finished in a tie for 33rd place.

"The first tournament is always a little tougher," Kovach said. "The conditions and course were tougher last week too. This tournament was a lot better. For me, the mental part of my putting was different. I really hit the ball well overall. We also had a different five guy, Andy Herington, and he really lightened up the mood."

> "We had to drop a score in the 70s, which is great. That shows the potential of this team. If they can get the right mindset, they could do really well."
>
> **Kevin White**
> Head Coach

Truman was in fourth place after the first day and was the only team to not have a single scorer in the 80s. On day two, Herington was the only Bulldog to have a score higher than 80, finishing with an 81.

"For the first time that I can remember, we did not have any scorers in the 80s during that first day," co-coach Kevin White said. "We had to drop a score in the 70s, which is great. That shows the potential of this team. If they can get the right mindset, they could do really well."

The Bulldogs made up quite a bit of ground on the second day, which had worse weather than the first. They shot the lowest score on the second day, two strokes lower than any other team. White said that even though the wind was still howling, the Bulldogs could concentrate because they had already dealt with those conditions. He also said they were at an advantage because it was the first tournament for several of their opponents.

The course, Wilderness Ridge, didn't hinder the team at all. Although it was more difficult than the course the Bulldogs usually play on, they weren't phased throughout the tournament. Wilderness Ridge is a private country club that will host the NCAA North Regional Championships at the end of the season.

The Bulldogs have this weekend off and then play in the Washburn Invite from April 12 to 14. The tournament will be in Topeka, Kan., and is an MIAA scoring event in which each team is awarded a certain amount of points depending on where they finish. The team with the most points at the end of the season is crowned conference champion.

"The one thing we'll take out of this [tournament] is confidence that we can finish high," White said. "We just need to take what we do against these teams and do it against the conference teams. We've showed the ability to play in the final group and play in some pressure situations."

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