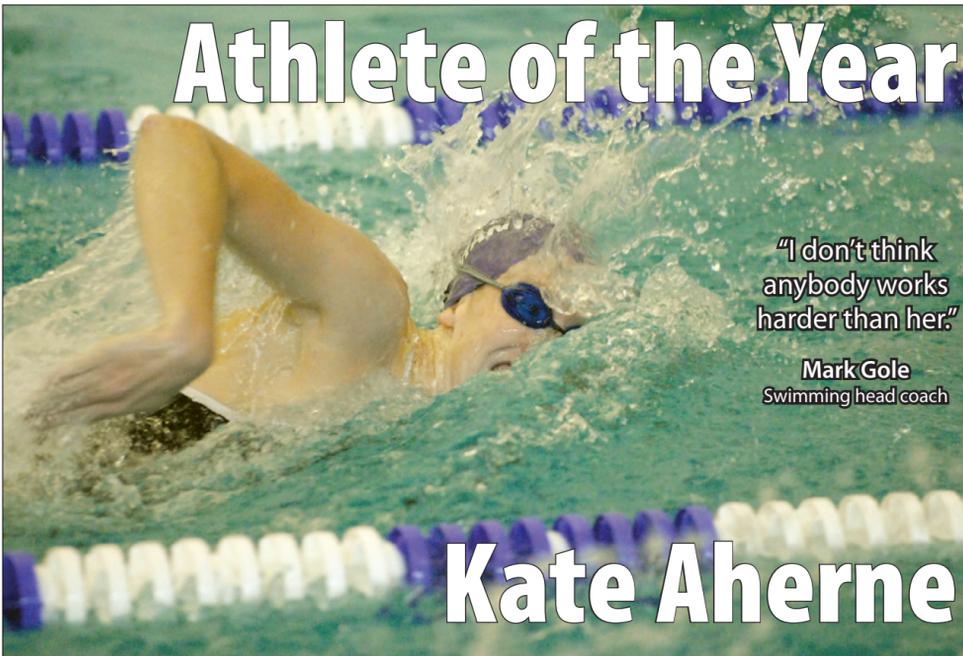


SPORTS

PHOTOS OF THE YEAR
 Photographers pick the four best
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Athlete of the Year

"I don't think anybody works harder than her."

Mark Gole
Swimming head coach

Kate Aherne

Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Junior Kate Aherne won the 200-IM for the second straight year. She also garnered seven All-American honors. Her performance helped the women's swimming team to a fourth place finish at the NCAA Championship.

Junior swimmer wins 200-IM for 2nd straight year

BY KRISTA CRIDER
Staff Reporter

At a loss for words, all head coach Mark Gole could think to say about what sets junior swimmer Kate Aherne apart from her peers is that she has "it." Whatever "it" is and wherever "it" came from, he couldn't say, but he did say that of the 15 years he has spent coaching, she is one of the few athletes he has coached that has had "it."

"She is a rare find when it comes to an athlete," Gole said. "There's a lot of times when athletes question — it's just human nature — but Kate doesn't question anything. ... She's unique in the sense that she can understand what she and her teammates do and go through at practice, then if anybody ever questions it, she's comfortable coming to us, finding out why and then she is able to understand it 100 percent. She just gets it. She understands what we do, why we do it and how to do it."

It could have been the "it" factor that allowed Aherne to continue her streak of pure domination in the Div. II swimming realm. She finished the season at nationals with seven All-American honors, a championship victory and the Div. II national record in the 200-yard individual medley, a race Gole

deemed "the ultimate test of versatility and speed."

Aherne also touched in a second-place finish by .01 seconds in the 50-yard freestyle that immediately followed her championship race. She shattered a school record in the 100-yard freestyle as part of the second-place 400-yard freestyle relay.

"I was really happy with how I did this season," Aherne said. "Every season has gotten better, and this is definitely the best one yet. I felt like I worked harder than I had before, and it really paid off."

Aherne placed top-four in all of her individual events and said this and the success the relays had at nationals made her experience surreal and mind-blowing.

"My expectations of myself are always just to go as fast as I can and get my best times, which I did, but just coming out of nationals with the places I got, that was not something I ever expected to do," Aherne said.

Aherne attributed her success to the help and training Gole has provided and her ability to motivate herself into working hard every day. She said her teammates play a huge role in supporting and pushing her to be her best.

"You're only as good as the people who you practice with and who you swim with," Aherne said.

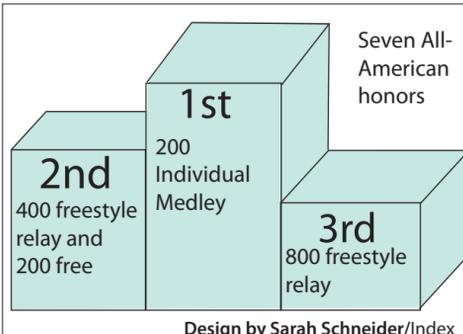
"She pushes herself to the limit, sets her goals high, then achieves them."

Kendra Brunkow
Junior teammate

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

Eight members of the Index sports staff submitted their top five choices for Athlete of the Year. Points were awarded on a 5-4-3-2-1 basis, and tiebreakers were broken by the number of first-place votes, then second-place votes, etc. First-place votes are in parentheses. Here are the results:

1. **Kate Aherne** — Women's swimming **30 (4)**
2. **Danna Kelly** — Cross Country/Track **29 (2)**
3. **Allie Cherven** — Volleyball **13**
4. **Georgia Mueller** — Women's basketball **11**
5. **Eli Medina** — Volleyball, women's basketball **10 (1)**
6. **Jessica Wiegart** — Women's soccer **7 (1)**
7. **Lindsay Blair** — Women's tennis **6**
8. **Jason Stokes** — Men's swimming **3**
- 9(tie). **Katie Reuck** — Women's soccer **2**
- 9(tie). **Matt Ticich** — Football **2**
11. **Katrina Biermann** — Track and field **2**
- 12(tie). **Banks Estridge** — Men's basketball **1**
- 12(tie). **Kelsey Kuykendall** — Women's tennis **1**



Kaestner shines in the pool

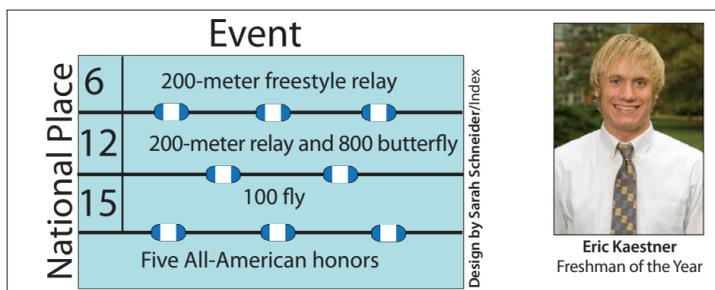
Freshman swimmer nabs five All-American honors

BY LOGAN JACKSON
Staff Reporter

Just two weeks into his first collegiate swimming season, the entire men's team figured out that Eric Kaestner was the real deal.

Head coach Mark Gole posted a time of 49 seconds in the 100-yard freestyle race during one of the Bulldog's early practices. It's an impressive time, especially for a freshman racing in his first "get out swim," a swim that, if completed under the time posted, the entire team will get out of practice the next day. If Kaestner could swim under 49 seconds in the 100-yard freestyle at their next meet, he would give his teammates a much-needed rest.

Gole said the team was surprised Kaestner was given the



Eric Kaestner
Freshman of the Year

challenge so early in his career, but Gole wasn't surprised Kaestner succeeded.

"Based on how much speed he had, we knew he was going to be a player on this team from the get-go," Gole said. "The scary thing is, technically, he has a lot of room for improvement."

This was just a glimpse into Kaestner's first collegiate season. Kaestner finished the regular season earning an A cut in the 100-yard freestyle and

the 100-yard butterfly. At the national meet, he was one of three men's swimmers to earn an All-American award in an individual event. He ended the meet with a total of five All-American awards, just two shy of the maximum possible.

Kaestner said he was surprised he did so well early in his college career, considering the drastic changes from high school swimming.

"There were huge chang-

es," Kaestner said. "My work out improved insanely. I had to work harder than I ever had in my entire life. There were also [higher] expectations."

Although Kaestner has handled collegiate swimming well, his practices have not always been a smooth ride. Gole said Kaestner tried hard in practice but always seemed to save himself. He also said the Winter Break

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COACH OF THE YEAR

Seven members of the Index sports staff submitted their top three picks for Coach of the Year. Points were awarded on a 3-2-1 basis, and tiebreakers were broken by most number of first-place votes, then second-place, etc. First-place votes are in parentheses. Here are the results:

1. **Mike Cannon** — Women's Soccer **19 (5)**
2. **Jason Skoch** — Volleyball **13 (1)**
3. **Mark Gole** — Swimming **6 (1)**
4. **John Cochrane** — Track/XC **2**
- 5(tie). **Pete Kendall** — Tennis **1**
- 5(tie). **Joe Nedelec** — Roller Hockey **1**

Cannon leads team to Elite 8

BY BRENT FOSTER
Assistant Sports Editor

Mike Cannon, women's soccer head coach, came within a game of leading the team to its first Final Four in Truman history last November. But if it wasn't for a gutsy effort and a coaching decision he made during a game more than a month earlier, the Dogs season could have ended long before the Elite Eight.

After starting the season 8-0, including two wins against ranked teams, the Bulldogs hit a skid midway through the season. They entered their March 16 matchup against Northwest Missouri State University in desperate need of a victory. The Bulldogs had played eight of their last nine games on the road. Truman found itself down a goal early but battled back to tie the score on a goal by junior forward Riley Mahn, who Cannon sent in off the bench. With the score tied at two late in the second half, the Bulldogs caught a break when they needed it most. Junior midfielder Katie Reuck found the back of the net off a deflection by a Bearcat player. Truman won the game 3-2.

The rest is history. Truman went 9-1-0 in its next 10 games before bowing out to Seattle Pacific University in the Elite Eight.

"To me that was the one game that I go, 'If we don't win that game, I don't know [if we can keep winning]' because after that we kind of had a run into the playoffs where we got results," Cannon said.

Junior midfielder Theresa Bauler agreed with Cannon's assessment of the victory against Northwest.

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File Photo

Mike Cannon led the women's soccer team to an 18-4-2 record and the school's third trip to the Elite Eight.

Editor revisits year in Truman athletics

The volleyball and women's soccer teams brought excitement to Truman athletics in the fall, and the turnover of two head coaches kept things interesting in the spring.

No matter the season, including the summer, the Bulldogs never failed to create newsworthy events. The athletes provided excitement as well. Two home football games and multiple basketball, softball and baseball games were decided on the last play.

Here is the less-than-900-words breakdown of the important athletic events this year.

July 25: Heavy rains break through windows in Pershing and ruin the basketball/volleyball floor. Volleyball practices are moved to the Student Recreation Center, and three matches

COMMENTARY



Jack Nicholl

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