Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Above: Sophomore Amy Ochs slices a backhand against Grand Valley State on Friday. Below: Senior Lindsy Blair hits a forehand Friday at the same meet. Blair claimed the only 'Dogs victory, a 1-6, 6-2, 6-2 at No. 1 singles.

Women dominate two matches, fall to No. 23 GVSU

Tennis team rolls into weekend matches on winning streak

BY JACK NICHOLL
Assistant Sports Editor

Eighteen straight.

That is the amount of wins the women's tennis team had in consecutive home 9-0 sweeps of Missouri Western State University yesterday afternoon and Fort Hays State University last Saturday.

It's also the number of straight wins the 'Dogs (13-2, 5-1 MIAA) have heading into their last two home matches of the season this weekend against Northwest Missouri State University and the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Both teams are in the top half of the MIAA standings.

"It's been pretty awesome," sophomore Anna Greenwald said of the streak. "It's been really fun just to play with these girls. I think it's been a boost in our confidence as a team."

Greenwald helped Truman's doubles teams to a dominating performance against Western (3-8, 0-7 MIAA), when the 'Dogs lost only one game combined in the three matches. Greenwald, who does not play singles in dual matches, got in some extra practice by playing an exhibition match after doubles took less than 45 minutes to finish. Greenwald said she was able to work on elements of her game against an opponent like Western.

"You learn a lot from playing in the wind especially," Greenwald said. "… And also just taking advantage — serving and volleying, returning and volleying. You get to work on your net game a lot."

The match against Fort Hays (5-9, 1-5 MIAA) was more of the same. The 'Dogs cruised, as they never lost more than four games in a set. The Tigers entered the match without their No. 3 singles player, who was out with a shoulder injury, and their No. 5 player had to retire in the first set because of a hip injury against freshman Dagmar Velez.

Fort Hays is near the bottom of the conference standings, and Kendall said the injuries did not help the Tigers' case. However, Kendall said the decreased competition helped the Bulldogs cope with the strong winds.

"We have a couple players who said they hate it, and we have a couple players who never say anything," Kendall said. "They just go out and play, so everybody is kind of individual on that."

Prior to the two conference wins, Truman had a match against No. 23 Grand Valley State University on Friday at the Truman tennis courts. The 'Dogs lost 8-1. They have won one match in two dual meets against ranked teams this spring.

> "The fact that it wasn't region, there wasn't a whole lot of pressure on it. We were just able to come out and give it out best shot."
>
> **Lindsy Blair**
> On the 8-1 loss against No. 23 Grand Valley State

Unlike the two Truman wins this week, the match against GVSU was closer than the score indicated. Two of the doubles matches were decided by an 8-6 score, and the 'Dogs won at least six games in seven of their matches.

"That always helps you when you play well against a good team," head coach Pete Kendall said. "We were really competitive, which is all you can ask."

Senior Lindsy Blair picked up the team's only win at No. 1 singles (1-6, 6-2, 6-2). The victory erased a recent trend for Blair in which she had trouble winning close matches against tough opponents.

"My last two singles matches had been kind of frustrating for me just for the fact that I thought I was in a position to win both of those matches, so it was good to finally get a win," Blair said.

Kendall said Blair's comeback was typical of her career at Truman — she keeps hanging in until the opponent starts making mistakes.

GVSU is a non-regional opponent, meaning the loss will not hurt the 'Dogs in the regional standings, where they currently are 11th.

"It's definitely fun to have that competitive [of] matches," Blair said. "And the fact that it wasn't region, there wasn't a whole lot of pressure on it. We were just able to come out and give it our best shot."

The women also were scheduled to play a match Sunday at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, but the match was cancelled because of inclement weather.

Men drop dual against No. 27 GVSU

No. 2 doubles team improves record against ranked squad

BY JACK NICHOLL
Assistant Sports Editor

Juniors Peter Bracha and Steven Hipkiss capitalized on one final break-point opportunity.

At No. 2 doubles and with the Grand Valley State University duo threatening to send the match into a tiebreaker, Bracha sent a backhand serve return crosscourt. The shot hit the paint on the right sideline for a winner.

Bracha and Hipkiss let out a simultaneous "Yes!" and fist pump after the shot, which gave the doubles duo a 9-7 victory Friday afternoon at the Truman tennis courts. The pairing had been unable to capitalize on break points throughout the match, including a match point two games earlier.

"It shouldn't have even been as close as it was," Bracha said. "We had so many opportunities, so many break points, and we just weren't able to convert them."

Although the No. 2 doubles team came out victorious, the Bulldogs were not as fortunate in most of the other matches. They lost 7-2 against the No. 27 Lakers (14-5). GVSU is a non-regional opponent, meaning the loss will not hurt the 'Dogs in their pursuit of a national return.

Truman's Sunday match against University of Missouri-St. Louis was cancelled because of the threat of inclement weather.

The Bulldogs' record now stands at 5-3 in dual matches with a 3-3 spring record. The Bracha/Hipkiss doubles pairing has been the strongest point this season with a 7-1 record in their first season as a pairing. Every other regular has lost at least twice in singles and doubles.

> "No. 2 [doubles] has been solid all year. They've been pretty tough."
>
> **Pete Kendall**
> Head coach

"No. 2 has been solid all year," head coach Pete Kendall said. "They've been pretty tough. They've done well."

The pairing's playing style matches up well. Bracha said Hipkiss prefers to play at the baseline while Bracha is more of an all-around player.

"I think that we both have been playing really well," Bracha said. "We're both really focused during our matches."

Apart from the doubles win, junior John Rothfusz picked up a 7-6, 2-6, 10-3 victory at No. 4 singles. Rothfusz, who sat out singles matches recently because of a shoulder injury, played Friday because the team predicted Sunday's match would be cancelled.

Rothfusz said that after the long first set, his opponent started to play better. Rothfusz again took control in the tiebreak.

"Second set I kind of got rolled," Rothfusz said. "I lost pretty bad. Then the third set for the tiebreaker I won pretty easily."

The win for Rothfusz snapped a two-match losing streak. He is 2-2 in singles this spring.

The 'Dogs lost the only other tiebreaker of the day, a 6-7, 6-2, 6-4 defeat of Bracha at No. 1. Bracha said his singles match was similar to doubles — he was not able to capitalize on opportunities.

The six other matches against GVSU were almost identical. The 'Dogs lost five sets at three games and five sets at four games.

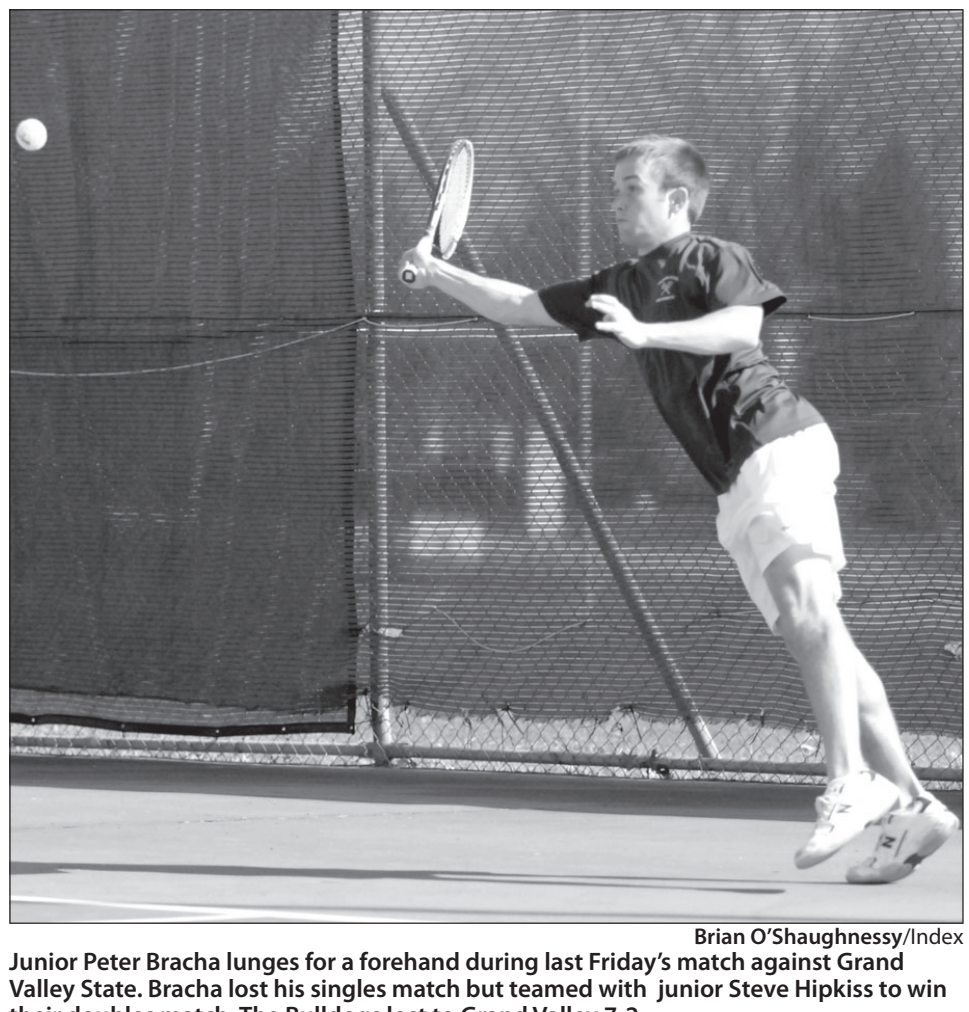
"We knew that [GVSU] would be really tough matches for us, but actually, I don't think they were quite as good on the men's side as I thought they might be," Kendall said. "We played them pretty close. They were all competitive matches, and that's what you're looking for."

The cancelled match Sunday continued a three-week trend of one men's match cancelled per week. None of the matches have been rescheduled.

The cancelled matches, as well as limited practice time because of weather, could factor into the reasons for some players' recent losing streaks.

The GVSU match extended No. 2 Hipkiss' and No. 3 junior Kyle Schlotz's losing streaks to five.

The men have their final two home matches this weekend. They play Northwest Missouri State University at 3:30 p.m. tomorrow and the University of Nebraska-Omaha at 10:00 a.m. Saturday.



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Junior Peter Bracha lunges for a forehand during last Friday's match against Grand Valley State. Bracha lost his singles match but teamed with junior Steve Hipkiss to win their doubles match. The Bulldogs lost to Grand Valley 7-2.

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