

SPORTS



FIRST LOSS

Men fall to 5-1 after 65-56 loss to Missouri Southern

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Thursday, December 4, 2008

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UG Enrollment: 3,000
Location: Jefferson City
Current Conference: Heartland
Mascot: Blue Tigers
Number of Teams: 11
Team Colors: Navy blue and white
Fact: Doesn't sponsor women's soccer or volleyball

The Tiger and the Hawk



UG Enrollment: 2,500
Location: Kansas City, Mo.
Current Conference: GLVC
Mascot: Hawks
Number of Teams: 11
Team Colors: Royal blue and white
Fact: Doesn't sponsor football

Design by Antonette Bedessie/ Index

MIAA considers expansion

Rockhurst, Lincoln seek admission to 11-team conference

BY BLAKE TOPPMEYER
Sports Editor

Bulldog athletic teams soon might be welcoming a new opponent to the conference slate, if the MIAA accepts the bids of two Missouri schools aiming to join the conference.

Rockhurst University and Lincoln University have submitted bid letters to the MIAA to join the conference and have sent out inventories detailing their athletic program. If either or both schools are admitted, Truman's Director of Athletics Jerry Wollmering said they likely would begin competing in the MIAA by fall 2010.

A four-person visit team that includes officials from conference institutions already has toured Lincoln's campus, and another, which includes Wollmering, will

visit Rockhurst on Dec. 11.

Conference officials then will meet on Dec. 16 in Kansas City to discuss the possibility of adding one, both or neither school. They will meet again Jan. 14 to 17 at the NCAA convention.

At that time, each school's institutional representative's council, which includes the athletic director, senior women's administrator and faculty athletic representative, might vote on the possible inclusion of Lincoln or Rockhurst. Ultimately, Wollmering said the final decision rests with the university presidents of the MIAA's 11 schools.

Wollmering said Monday he did not favor either Rockhurst or Lincoln and that he might prefer not to add either.

"I'm not sure I'm for any of them at this point," Wollmering said. "I'm not a big fan of mega-conferences. To me, the perfect

[number] would be 10 teams."

The MIAA expanded to 11 teams in 2007 when the conference added the University of Nebraska-Omaha, which officially began competing in the conference this season. UNO is the only school in the conference not from Missouri or Kansas.

Rockhurst Athletic Director Richard Konzem said a better travel situation is the primary reason for wanting to join the MIAA. Rockhurst competes in the 15-team Great Lakes Valley Conference, which includes schools in Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana and Kentucky.

Although Rockhurst, which is located in Kansas City, is on the western edge of the GLVC, it would be right in the heart of the MIAA.

"Our average trip is over 400 miles [in the GLVC]," Konzem said. "In the MIAA, Please see MIAA, Page 19

"I'm not sure I'm for any of them at this point. I'm not a big fan of mega-conferences."

Jerry Wollmering
Director of Athletics

Graybeal provides extra weapon

Every national championship team has one.

It's the player not listed at the top of scouting reports. It's the player the average fan might not notice during a game. But it's the player who can mean the difference between a win and a loss in close playoff games.

It's the X factor.

COMMENTARY



Blake Toppmeyer

For the New England Patriots during their string of three Super Bowls in four seasons, it was kicker Adam Vinateri. For the 2008 World Series champion Philadelphia Phillies,

it was outfielder Jayson Werth. For the Truman volleyball team, the X factor could be junior right side hitter Lauren Graybeal.

Graybeal stepped up and had a stellar performance during the Bulldogs' three wins in their run to the South Central Regional title and a berth to the national Elite Eight, set to begin today in St. Paul, Minn.

In Truman's three regional wins, Graybeal amassed 26 kills — compared to just two attack errors — and she hit .421. She was named to the region's all-tournament team.

"If the set is good, we know we're going to get a good swing [from Graybeal], and that goes a long way," head coach Jason Skoch said.

All this and just two days before the regional, Graybeal wasn't even

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Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Sophomore setter Ashley Petak and the Bulldogs begin play in the Elite Eight today.

Elite 8 begins today

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

Ten days ago, the volleyball team accomplished something it failed to do in its two previous seasons: win the South Central Region. This weekend the women will try to do something no Truman volleyball team has ever done: win a national championship.

The championship quest continues today at 2:30 p.m. in St. Paul, Minn., when Truman (32-8) takes on Nova Southeastern University (Fla.), (24-11), in the national quarterfinals.

Senior libero Whitney Boehler made it clear one thing will make this weekend a success.

"Winning it all," Boehler said. "We don't settle for anything less than that."

The 'Dogs quarterfinal opponent Nova comes into the tournament as a decisive underdog. The Sharks staggered to the finish line, losing five of their last seven regular-season matches. Nova caught fire in the regional tournament however, upsetting two teams as a six seed on its way to the championship.

But head coach Jason Skoch said Nova's low seed and slow finish at the end of the regular season is no reason to overlook the Sharks.

"No one's here by accident," Skoch said. "I mean they had a great run. Yeah, overall they weren't the best team in the region, but they shined when they needed to. Obviously they've got the goods. ... I really wanted to make sure we didn't take for granted Nova. A lot of people have already commented on the sixth seed."

One key to victory for Truman will be slowing down senior outside hitter Melinda Gorman and senior middle blocker Emily Carle. Gorman leads Nova in kills (371), kills per set (2.75) and total attempts (1,053). Carle leads the team in hitting percentage at .316 and in blocks with 0.85 per set.

Those two are one reason Skoch called this Nova team very athletic, and compared the Sharks to MIAA-foe University of Nebraska-Omaha, a team Truman defeated three times this season, including the first round of regionals.

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Defense helps volleyball win regional championship

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

The winning recipe for the volleyball team the last few weeks has been a balanced offense and strong defense. That recipe was more than enough for the 'Dogs to punch their ticket to the national Elite Eight.

Second-seeded Truman (32-7) upset top-seeded Emporia State University by sweeping them (25-15, 25-14, 25-18) on Nov. 23 to win the South Central Regional Championship. The Bulldogs advanced to the national quarterfinals for the first time since 2005.

The No. 5 Bulldogs have won 11 matches in a row and continue their season today at 2:30 p.m. against Nova-Southeastern University (Fla.) in the national quarterfinals in St. Paul, Minn.

"Considering we lost twice to [Emporia] during the season, we came in really focused wanting to

beat them really badly," senior outside hitter Dana Hanselmann said. "They maybe came in a little too cocky, especially since the last time was a pretty close match."

Unlike in the regular season when the Hornets defeated the Bulldogs twice, Truman had control of this match from the beginning. Emporia State led 2-1 in the its set, but that was the Hornets' only lead of the match as the 'Dogs used an overpowering defense to hold the Hornets to a -.044 hitting percentage, the third lowest any team hit against the Bulldogs all season. It was Emporia's lowest hitting percentage of the season.

The difference in this match and the previous two against the

Hornets was the Bulldog's ability to control Emporia's big three. In Truman's two regular-season losses to the Hornets, the 'Dogs were unable to stop the duo of outside hitter Arica Sheppard and right side hitter Britney Miller. The two combined for 64 kills in the two regular-season victories against the 'Dogs. However, in the regional championship match, Sheppard and Miller combined for only 4 kills, with both players hitting in the red.

The Bulldogs also held sophomore setter and MIAA player of the year Ting Liu in check. She finished with 19 assists for the match, averaging just more than six per set. Coming into the match she was averaging just

"I think we just came out and said, 'Enough's enough.'"

Whitney Boehler
Senior Libero

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Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
The Bulldogs held Emporia State University to a -.044 hitting percentage in the final of the South Central Regional and they also had 12 blocks.