

Roller hockey claims trio of W's

BY JOE BELL
Staff Reporter

Last weekend, the Bulldogs once again set off to St. Peters, Mo., for another full weekend of roller hockey. But this time the 'Dogs came back undefeated, climbed up to the second spot in the standings and improved their record to 9-3-1.

The Bulldogs kept the puck buried in the back of the net all weekend. They won their closest game by eight goals. Truman first took on Southern Illinois University-Carbondale and merced the Salukis a little more than four minutes into the third period by a score of 12-2. Sunday, the 'Dogs beat the University of Illinois 10-2. Later that day they defeated Div. I Missouri University of Science and Technology 11-2.

Truman got off to a rocky start in its first game. The Bulldogs scored two goals early but were stymied for the next 10 minutes of play.

"We came out a little flat and didn't play the way we wanted to at the beginning of the game, but we ended up pulling it together as we got used to the

big rink," sophomore forward Zach Rohne said. "That always seems to be a problem for us in the first game back, is getting used to that rink."

The rink in the Student Recreation Center that the Bulldogs use for practice is much smaller than the full-size rink they play on in St. Peters. Despite the initial setback, the 'Dogs soon found the net again. Once they did, it was all over for the Salukis. The Salukis went to the locker room early in the third period after losing by a score of 12-2.

In its next game, Truman came out with its guns blazing. The Bulldogs scored eight unanswered goals against Illinois during the first two periods and scored two of those goals off of power plays. The Fighting Illini became another mark on the Bulldogs' hockey sticks.

Truman dominated the puck against S&T, scoring four goals in the first period, three in the second and another four goals in the third. The Miners managed only one goal in each of the first and second periods.

Head coach Joe Nedelec said the Bulldogs' game against Missouri S&T was one of their

best all season, comparable only to their tough 4-3 loss to the University of Missouri-St. Louis on Jan. 25.

"I don't think I've seen the Truman A team look so consistently sharp as I have in [the game against Missouri S&T]," Nedelec said. "The puck control, everything. ... I'm just really impressed with how the guys are putting the puck in the net when they get their chances. Our power play is looking fantastic."

For the weekend, Truman ended up scoring 33 goals compared to the six goals that it allowed. This continues a trend of high goal scoring and tight defense by the Bulldogs.

Nedelec said there were a variety of factors that contributed to the team's offensive output and all the lines are pitching into the offense. Even the defense is making a solid contribution. The defense accounted for 12 of the 33 goals scored by the team this weekend.

Nedelec also said many of the team's special plays are beginning to show results. The offense is having success with its two varieties of power plays. One play involves the team skating in a "blitzkrieg" at the opponent's goal and launching a volley of shots, and the other involves a much more calculated method of setting up and taking a well-executed shot.

The third line also has employed a strategy of cycling the puck. The technique in-



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
The roller hockey team, shown here in practice earlier this year, picked up three wins this weekend behind a stellar offensive performance. The team scored 33 weekend goals.

volves getting the puck at the opponent's side of the rink and moving the puck around in a cyclical fashion to lure defenders away from the goal, so that the puck can be passed to a waiting offensive player for an easy shot.

But if the Bulldogs hope to continue climbing in the standings they will need all of the offense they can muster. The regular season's final two weekends are approaching and some very important games are looming on the horizon for Truman, beginning the weekend of Feb. 22.

"The next weekend we have is the biggest and the toughest weekend we're going to have this entire season," senior forward Drew Vandas said. "It is pretty much imperative that we win all four games next weekend. The first two games are against teams that we've never seen before, and [they are] two teams that are apparently playing pretty well."

The teams that Vandas is referring to are Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, which currently sits atop the Div. II standings, and the dark horse team, the

University of Tampa Spartans. Nedelec said the Spartans, who are 10-2 in their home region, are coming to play in the Great Plains Region to get some better competition.

Other teams on the docket for the weekend of Feb. 22 are Kansas State University and Missouri S&T. Nedelec said he hopes for another victory against the Miners, because the two victories against a Div. I team would look very good to the committee that selects teams for the national playoffs.

TRUMAN ATHLETICS News and Notes

Women's swimming: 'Dogs acquire special suits

The women's swimming team has a new strategy that has little to do with the way the Bulldogs swim, but a lot to do with style. The Bulldogs plan to use the new, extra-buoyant suits that were used at the Olympics last summer to improve their times at conference and nationals.

Head coach Mark Gole said the team was shipped suits to practice with before the season began, and that they drastically improved the swimmers' ability to stay above water, even those swimmers he referred to as "the team sinkers." Gole also said most teams at nationals would have the suits, so the Bulldogs got them to compete. Senior Jessie Lemaster said she is interested in seeing how the suits are going to affect the swimmers' times.

"Supposedly [the suits] make you more buoyant, and apparently they shave a lot of time off," Lemaster said. "I think almost everyone's got one, so I am excited to see what they are going to be like."

Baseball: Team moves forward without Bleish, Dilday

The baseball team will be missing a few of its top power hitters from 2008 this season. Outfielder Josh Dilday and shortstop Neil Bleish quit the team before the season, head coach Dan Davis said.

Dilday hit .294, hit five home runs and amassed 24 RBIs as a freshman last season. Bleish hit .325, belted a team-high six home runs and led the team with 28 RBIs. He also led Truman with 12 stolen bases. Bleish would have been a senior this season.

To compensate for the loss of Dilday, sophomore Jeff Davison moved from second base to right field. Sophomore transfer Drew Garwood should ease the loss of Bleish.

Men's swimming: Competition difficult at NSISC

Last year, the men's swimming team finished fifth out of seven teams during the conference meet. This year, the University of Incarnate Word no longer is in the New South Intercollegiate Swim Conference, but that doesn't make things any easier for the Bulldogs. The NSISC still contains five of the top Div. II swimming programs in the nation.

Last year's national champion, Drury University, and the runner-up, Missouri University of Science and Technology, both are part of the tough conference. Rounding out the conference are Delta State University, Henderson State University, Ouachita Baptist University and Truman.

Men's basketball: Team finds more consistent lineup

The men's basketball team seems to have found a consistent lineup. Senior guard Banks Estridge, sophomore guard Brandon Griffin, sophomore forwards Brian Nwelu and Ethan Freeman and freshman center Vesko Filchev have started the last three games for the 'Dogs. It is the first time all season Truman has gone with the same lineup for more than two consecutive games.

The Bulldogs have been outscored by an averaged of 79-57 in the last three games, but they have played three of the top teams in the conference.

Estridge has started every game this season and Freeman has started 17 of the 22 contests.

Braidlow leads 'Dogs again

Heavyweight picks up sixth placing in the Bulldogs' seventh tournament of the 2008-09 campaign

BY ARRON HUSTEAD
Staff Reporter

The big man on campus struck again.

Junior heavyweight Loyde Braidlow took fourth place at the Missouri Valley College Open on Saturday. This is the third consecutive tournament Braidlow has placed in and his sixth placing in seven tournaments this season.

"We've had some two-time All-Americans over the years, and a lot of those two-time All-Americans haven't done as well as fourth [at the Missouri Valley College Open]," head coach David Schutter said.

Braidlow was 5-2 for the tournament with both losses coming against third-place winner Travis Ewart of Missouri Valley College. Ewart defeated Braidlow 2-1 in their first meeting and 5-2 in the third-place match.

Braidlow got off to a quick start, defeating Missouri Valley College's Brett Johnston by pin at 1:32 of the first period. Two of his other wins came by at least five points.

Schutter said the competition at this tournament was some of the toughest the Bulldogs have faced all season.

"[It's] probably one of the deepest tournaments we've had to compete in, and we wrestled a lot better and notched quite a few wins," Schutter said.

The Bulldogs got a preview of next season this weekend as Truman signee Ryan Banning competed in the 133-pound division, wrestling unattached. Banning was 2-2, including a 15-0 technical fall against Lindenwood University's Jared Sawyer and a 12-6 victory against conference rival University of Central Missouri's Marcus Walker.

"You could tell [Banning] wasn't wrestling his best, and he still got two wins," Schutter said. "Most high school kids just go 0-2. It was nice seeing [him] there. It gives us a lot of hope for the future."

Schutter said he was disappointed with the result of the 197-pound division. Sophomore Thomas Redmon was 0-2, but he was close to placing in the tournament after advancing with byes in the first two rounds. Schutter said a mistake at the beginning of the second period of Redmon's second match likely cost him his chance to place.

"The difference between winning one match and placing is so fine," Schutter said. "[Redmon] was right there wrestling real well, and I actually made a coaching error putting him down. I should have put him on his feet. If I don't put him down he probably beats that kid and places."

Schutter said the decision changed the complexity of the match because Redmon was unable to get off the bottom in that period, and it wore him down.

Freshman James Crone had a rough first round in the 125-pound division, where he was pinned in the first period by second-seed Billy Exline of Missouri Valley College.

"He caught me in an awkward situation, and he's an All-American, so he was able to take advantage of it," Crone said.

Crone went on to pick up two wins in the tournament, beating Cumberland University's Sean Ford 6-3 and Hannibal-LaGrange College's Shane LeGrand 4-0.

Crone said the improvement in his performance during the past couple of weeks shows that he is peaking at the right time.

Freshman Zach Hayes was 2-2 in the 184-pound division, wrestling unattached.

"I'd say overall this year, it was one of the toughest tournaments in almost any weight class," Hayes said. "The teams that were there were really tough, and they're bringing in three guys in each weight class."

Hayes has competed in several open tournaments throughout the Midwest this season in lieu of traveling with the team.

"I've grown a lot this year," Hayes said. "It's kind of tough to travel by yourself and not be with the team. You have to face the adversity of finding your way there, not having a coach there, and not having someone to warm up with or coach you."

Hayes said his goals this season are somewhat different from those of the rest of the team. The team has been striving toward the regional tournament at the end of the year, but Hayes has another season before he can have the opportunity to try for a national championship.

"This year, since I can't produce that for myself and my team, it's more of just focusing on little things that are going to get me there in the end," Hayes said.

The team next competes against No. 6 University of Central Oklahoma on Saturday and will take part in the MIAA duals in Warrensburg on Sunday.

"This weekend's tough," Schutter said. "It's just like a Div. I weekend."

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