

Baseball team drops several close games

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

The baseball team was close to finishing its five-game weekend trip 3-2, but the 'Dogs could not find a way to close out games late.

Truman lost two games in the final at-bat, including Sunday's 6-3 loss to Henderson State University (Ky.), when the Bulldogs surrendered a walk-off grand slam.

The Bulldogs finished the trip 0-5, dropping their record to 0-6 for the season.

Except for a 9-1 loss to Missouri University of Science and Technology University, the Bulldogs had chances to win the other four games of the weekend.

"One of the great things I saw about our club was when we lost a game, or fell behind, we found a way to battle back," head coach Dan Davis said.

The Bulldogs appeared to have the first victory of the season in their grasp against Henderson in the final game of the road trip. Trailing 2-0, the Bulldogs rallied with three runs in the sixth inning, fueled with a two-run double by freshman shortstop Steven Rose.

But Truman could not hold the lead. In the bottom of the seventh, the first three batters

for Henderson reached before sophomore right-hander Kevin Zukaitis recorded a strikeout. But on the first pitch after the strikeout, Henderson's second baseman John Waylock drove Zukaitis' pitch over the fence to end the game.

"Once we get over that hump, with just one win, things will start falling our way," freshman pitcher Seth Hunninghake said. "Balls will start falling in, and we'll get on a roll I think."

The Bulldogs also looked like they were on their way to a victory in Saturday's second game against Missouri S&T but saw the lead slip away again. Hunninghake, making his first collegiate start, allowed two runs in four innings to put the Bulldogs in position for a victory. The Bulldogs took a 7-6 lead in the seventh inning with an RBI double by sophomore designated hitter Matt Herrick. But the lead did not last. The first batter of the inning for Missouri S&T reached on an error by sophomore pitcher Kyle Veazey. The next two batters singled before the Miners scored the winning run on a passed ball. The error by Veazey was the only Bulldog error in the game.

"Swagger is probably the thing we need most," sophomore second baseman Luke Crader



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Sophomore catcher Bryce Bond connects on a pitch earlier this season. The 'Dogs hit .219 during the five-game weekend stretch, and they lost two games in the last inning.

said. "Having a little confidence, going out and knowing that we can finish a game would help."

Sophomore pitcher Michael Staihr continued to be a bright spot for the Bulldogs' pitching staff. Staihr pitched 4.2 scoreless

innings of relief during Sunday's 5-3 loss to Henderson. Staihr has allowed no runs in seven innings with four strikeouts this season. Both of his appearances this season have been in relief.

"He's that guy that comes in

with no fear and throws strikes and finds a way to get outs," Davis said. "I think he's in the perfect situation for us."

Offensively, the Bulldogs got a huge weekend from junior outfielder Keaton Jones. Jones

hit .462 Saturday and Sunday and drove in four runs. Davis said Jones struggled a little bit in the leadoff spot Friday against Ouachita Baptist University (Ark.) and the first game Saturday against Missouri S&T, so he moved sophomore outfielder Kenny Swanson into the leadoff spot and dropped Jones to second. The move paid off for Jones. He went 6-for-10 the rest of the weekend with four runs batted in.

Other than Jones' surge, the rest of the Bulldog offense did not give the pitching staff much to work with during the close games. The 'Dogs hit just .219 for the weekend.

Truman pitchers had a hard time finding the plate throughout parts of the weekend. Bulldog hurlers hit 12 batters during the five games, including seven in Friday's 12-5 loss to Ouachita. But Davis said he was not concerned about control, because the pitchers were being aggressive and trying to throw inside, something he wants to see more of this season.

"I do like the fact that we are trying to throw inside," Davis said. "We'll get better at it as the year goes on."

The Bulldogs return to action this weekend with a three-game set at Drury University.

Baseball returns to bring sports out of lull

It's 20-something degrees outside, I'm still dressing like an Eskimo when I walk to class and I'm thinking about one thing: baseball season.

Yes sir, it's time to get out the 'ole ball glove. The Truman baseball team already has taken to the diamond, Major League Baseball players have reported for spring training and the World Baseball Classic will be underway soon. Meanwhile, thousands of Americans currently are wasting their days trying to decide who they will pick in the first round of their fantasy baseball draft.

Baseball seems to brighten the mood of all sports fans. After football's BCS national championship game and the Super Bowl, sports just slip into a dark hole for a couple weeks. But then baseball returns to save sports fans from the boredom of the NBA All-Star

Game. (Seriously, did you watch it? I didn't think so.)

I don't care how popular football becomes, baseball still is America's finest sport for many sports enthusiasts. And I think the reason for that lies in a few simple factors.

1) Baseball abounds with quantifiable data. Baseball stats easily allow us to make comparisons between players. Fans love this. We can debate whether our team's third baseman is better than yours, and there are plenty of stats to support an argument.

It's not that other sports don't have quantifiable data. But in basketball, for example, there just isn't enough data to satisfy us fans. The categories of points, rebounds, assists, steals, blocks and turnovers really account for the major basketball stats. Sports like soccer

have even more limited data.

In baseball, there are a variety of statistics to choose from. Traditionalists still rely on batting average, homers and RBIs for hitters and win-loss record and ERA for pitchers. But then there are the new-age stat lovers, who are more interested in on-base percentage and slugging percentage for hitters and walks-plus-hits per inning for pitchers.

Then there's football, in which there are plenty of stats, but too many categories make it challenging to make comparisons. Football has passing, running, receiving, defensive and special teams stats. Thus, it's quite difficult to compare a running back with a wide receiver because their numbers just aren't interrelated. In baseball, despite the variety of statistics, you basically have three categories: hitting, pitching and defense. This makes it easy to compare virtually all hitters no matter what position they play and all pitchers with other pitchers.

2) Baseball is the ultimate

combination of individual and team sport. Baseball incorporates many team aspects in the game, and there are standings to reflect overall team performance.

But within this team component, the game is filled with individual, one-on-one battles. Every time a player comes to bat, it's the pitcher versus the hitter. Until the ball is hit in play, the rest of the team doesn't really matter.

Other sports can't simulate this. There are your traditional individual sports, like boxing and golf. Then there are the team sports — soccer, football and basketball. In these team sports, there are very few times when players from opposing teams can be showcased against each other one-on-one. I think this helps make baseball extra special.

3) It's often said that baseball is a thinking man's game. I find this to be true. The game is simple enough to allow the common man to debate the finer facets of the game and slow enough that you are allowed time to discuss strategy.

Basketball is simple enough but not slow enough. Because of the continuous flow of basketball, spectators don't really have time to analyze what the team should do.

Football, on the other hand, is slow enough — with plenty of dead time between plays — but not simple enough for the average sports fan. In football, as the team heads to the line of scrimmage, it's tough for the average fan to say, "I think I'd run a z-38 fly here." Unless you played at least at the college level, you probably have no idea what the heck a z-38 fly is.

Baseball, however, has simple enough plays for everyone to understand. It doesn't take college-level playing experience to understand the hit-and-run, the squeeze play or the concept of hitting the ball to the opposite field.

Largely because of these three factors, I think most sports fans have a special sense of affection for baseball. So even though it's February, get ready to play ball!

COMMENTARY



Blake Toppmeyer

Classifieds

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For Rent

For Rent: Wagner Enterprises rental properties are available for 2009/2010 lease. New units from one to four bedrooms are all within two blocks of campus! Complete with washer/dryer in each, all electric, central heat and air, private parking, and maintenance staff. For more information call: 660-627-5437.

For Rent: Two-, three-, and four-bedroom houses. Close to campus. Refrigerator, stove and washer/dryer. Call Kevin at 216-6618.

For Rent: One-bedroom apartment with one bath, central air, washer/dryer hook-up, located behind Domino's Pizza on East Patterson. Newly remodeled. \$300/month. Call 660-66-2796 M-F 8-5

For Rent: Two-bedroom apartment available for sublease. May 15 to Aug 15 (can be discussed). Central air, washer/dryer, and close to TSU. \$530/month, but can be negotiated. Call 314-368-8057 for information.

For Rent: Foxfire townhouses Two-bedrooms, all electric, water & trash paid, stove, refrigerator, wall unit a/c, off street parking, \$450 units with w/d hookups, \$475 units with washer & dryer. Leasing now for May, June, July & August 2009. Call Ken Read, Owner/Broker 660-626-5488 or Heritage House Realty 660-665-5638 or view rentals at www.kirksvillerealestate.com.

For Rent: New two-bedroom duplex, two blocks from TSU, total electric, includes stove, refrigerator, dishwasher, washer/dryer, outside storage area. Off-street parking. \$575 rent, \$575 deposit. Call 660-341-4627

For Rent: Downtown apartment! Four large bedrooms next to the new Picklers Famous. \$800. Call Kirksville Property Management at 660-665-6380

For Rent

For Rent: Vista Heights. One- and two-bedroom units still available. Call Kellie Nigh at 665-9224 or 626-3914

For Rent: Free rent for one month! Available exceptionally nice four-, five-, and seven-bedroom houses for '09-'10 school term. Beautiful kitchen, large bedrooms. All appliances, including washer/dryer. Walking distance to campus. Pets allowed upon approval. 660-665-3779

For Rent: Cable included! Washer and dryer included! 2 bedroom, 1 bath, total electric, central Air, dishwasher, stove, refrigerator,, in brick 8-plex close to campus, all for \$450. Call Kirksville Property Management at 660.665.6380

For Rent: Three-, to four-bedroom apartment, one and a half block from campus. Central air, washer/dryer, off-street parking. 660-341-1805. Also, two-bedroom apartment in complex.

For Rent: Call Kirksville Property Management for apartments, duplexes and houses! We have several available for May and August leases, many close to campus. Visit our new office, conveniently located downtown at 106 E Washington, or check out our listings on our Web site at www.KirksvilleProperty-Management.com. Call today for your appointment 660-665-6380

For Rent: Three one-bedroom efficiency apartments with stove and refrigerator, water/trash. Close to TSU. Off-street parking. Available Aug 1. Two for \$235/month and one for \$265/month plus utilities. Call 660-216-1952. Broker/owner.

For Rent: Nice house! Four-bedroom, 2 1/2 bath, located near TSU and KCOM on a quiet street. Great for family or rental. \$84,500. Contact 636-734-2140 or 217-553-6154 for more details.

For Rent

For Rent: Spacious two-bedroom apartment available to sublease for summer 2009. On-site laundry, appliances include dishwasher and microwave. Comes semi-furnished at \$465/month. Other expenses include water, electricity, and internet (if desired). Walking distance from campus in Waterworks building 704. Call 314-808-4766 for more info or a showing.

For Rent: Nice two- and three-bedroom units in the Water Works, Boardwalk, Park Place, St. James, and New York apartments. All within walking distance of Truman. Call Four Horizons, Inc. at 660-665-3400

For Rent: Four-bedroom home, two bath/shower, washer/dryer, big kitchen, new appliances. Huge living room and dining room, hardwood floors. Close to TSU. \$725/month. This house is huge. May 2009 lease. Pets welcome. 660-216-1445

For Rent: Four-bedroom, two bath homes with nice appliances, high efficiency furnaces and central air. New carpet & vinyl, washer/dryer included. Lawn maintenance provided, clean, close to TSU campus with plenty of off-street parking. Our rents have not increased in 10 years but have been lowered. No pets allowed. For more information call Larry, owner/agent 660-341-0941 or 660-627-4761. Available May 15.

For Rent: New two-bedroom duplex apartments. Near downtown. Walk-in closet, washer/dryer, dishwasher, refrigerator, range, central air, garbage disposal, outside storage. May and Aug availability. \$400. 665-2796, M-F 8-5.

For Rent: Cozy two-bedroom, one bath house close to TSU. This home has hardwood floors, carport, washer/dryer, and central air. Available May 2009 for \$425/month. Call Jeff Behrman owner-agent 660-626-7598 or visit www.housesinkirksville.com

For Rent

For Rent: Free rent for one month! Sublease for second semester only. Gather a few friends for exceptionally nice home. All appliances, including washer/dryer. Also, very nice four-bedroom house within walking distance, at discounted rate. 660-665-3779

For Rent: Free rent for one month! Exceptionally nice one-, two-, and three-bedrooms houses for the next term. Some with new cabinets and carpet. Some walking distance from campus. Pets allowed upon approval. Deposit holds. 660-665-3779

For Rent: Attention professional students: Multiple high quality two- and three-bedroom modern affordable apartments with countless amenities available immediately, currently available for May 2009, June 2009, and August 2009 leases. Locations are all in an established "safe" residential/rent progressive area of the city. This beautiful complex is all electric (no gas price fluctuation or asphyxiation worries) and is geared for professional conscientious individuals who place a high emphasis on safety, privacy, and an attractive surrounding less than 5 minute commute from campus. Please call 626-7695 for details. Student references gladly given on request.

Wanted

Wanted: Are you 21 or about to turn 21? Jobs becoming available at Top Talls for waitress/bartender and short order cook. Apply during business hours. 660-341-9585.

Wanted: Would like to lease a horse to mature individual who has an interest in riding and enjoying horses. Reasonable contract. Tina 660-216-0777.