

Baseball drops two of three to Drury

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

The Bulldogs' pitching staff couldn't keep up with the Drury University Panthers' bats last weekend.

Drury pounded out 49 hits and scored 30 runs in the series and took two of three from the 'Dogs (1-8) in Springfield, Mo.

"We're not walking guys like we did in the previous two years, but that's another thing that you have to command the zone," head coach Dan Davis said. "So it's not just about not walking guys, but it's about throwing to location and making sure you don't leave pitches over the middle of the plate, and that's what we are doing right now."

Drury established its offensive prowess early in the series. The Panthers scored four runs in the first two innings of Game 1 on Friday. Bulldog freshman right-hander Christian Witt was chased from the game after just 1.2 innings. Truman never had a chance to get back into the game — Drury scored four runs in the fifth and five in the seventh to break the game open on its way to a 14-4 victory.

Sophomore Logan Frame allowed eight runs on 10 hits, including four triples, in two innings of relief. Frame, 0-2, has seen his ERA balloon to more than 23 in 5.1 innings this season.

The Bulldogs frequently have played from behind this season. In nine games this season, Truman has been outscored a combined 19-8 in the first two innings.

Truman picked up its first win of the season 9-6 in the second game Friday in extra innings. Senior third baseman Eric Mathews had three hits and drove in three runs. In the fourth inning he singled to right field with two outs to give the 'Dogs a 2-0 lead.

"That put us ahead early on and got that momentum going," Mathews



Members of the baseball team look on against Quincy earlier this season. The Bulldogs got their first win of the season last weekend, but they were unable to slow the Drury bats and finished 1-2 in the three-day span.

Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

said. "[The hit] gave the pitcher a lead to make him comfortable."

Mathews also picked up an RBI single, which capped off a four-run 10th inning.

Freshman pitcher Seth Huninghake kept the Panthers at bay for

most of the afternoon. He allowed one run on four hits in six innings.

He also recorded 12 groundball outs and struck out three. Huninghake has allowed three earned runs in 11.1 innings this season. Freshman Kevin Zukaitis picked up the win.

He pitched 2.1 innings in relief and allowed no runs on one hit.

The 'Dogs appeared to be in control when they scored two runs in the top of the seventh to take a 5-1 lead, but Drury responded by scoring four runs off senior pitcher AJ Barton.

Drury tied the game in the seventh by scoring four runs with two outs.

The 12 hits were a season high for Truman.

The pitching woes returned for the Bulldogs in Game 3 on Sunday. Drury scored single tallies in each of the first four innings before breaking the game open with a three-run sixth in a 12-5 victory. Freshman Ryan Trimble started for Truman and was tagged with the loss. He went 3.2 innings and allowed four runs on eight hits. Truman trailed 12-1 before scoring four runs in the ninth.

The Bulldogs' team ERA rose to more than eight this weekend, which is where the team finished last season.

Truman's bats haven't helped the pitching staff much. Even though the Bulldogs finished with 30 hits in three games this weekend, they are hitting .247 as a team, more than 100 points lower than their opponents. Senior outfielder Keaton Jones, who leads the team with 13 total bases, said it is not time to panic.

"I wouldn't call it a concern just because early in the year it's always kind of a struggle getting outside for the first time," Jones said. "I think we've shown over the past couple years that later in the year hitting will start to come around."

Despite the struggling offense and pitching, the Bulldog defense has been a bright spot early this season. The 'Dogs have committed nine errors in nine games this year, far better than the 2008 campaign when they finished with 95 errors in 50 games. Against Drury, Truman committed only two errors in the three-game series.

The Bulldogs open MIAA play this weekend at Fort Hays State University. The 'Dogs will play a four-game set Friday through Sunday, with two seven-inning games to be played Saturday. Last season Truman finished 6-30 in conference play and lost its first 12 MIAA games.

Softball completes opening weekend 2-4

BY JOE BELL
Staff Reporter

The transition from practice field to game field can be a difficult one to make at the beginning of the season. The softball team was on the rough end of that transition last weekend.

The Bulldogs headed to Huntsville, Ala., to play in the Charger Chillout tournament. The team came out and impressed in its first game of the weekend against Bellarmine University (Ky.), with a 5-1 victory, but finished their first weekend with a record of 2-4.

The 'Dogs ran into trouble in the second game of the tournament with a 9-1 loss to No. 22 University of Alabama-Huntsville. The team then lost to the Missouri University of Science and Technology, 5-2. They played the University of Indianapolis on Saturday and dropped a game 5-2 to the Greyhounds. The Bulldogs went on to lose to Kentucky Wesleyan College 3-0 Sunday and defeated the University of Southern Indiana 3-2.

Several problems plagued the Bulldogs all weekend. At the plate, the 'Dogs had trouble getting hits at times when they needed them and stringing hits together. They only had five innings during the tournament in which they had two or more hits and they scored 10 of their 12 total runs for the weekend

in those innings. "A little bit of pitch selection and adjusting to umpire's strike zones [were problems for us]," head coach Erin Brown said. "The umpire's strike zones were, overall, pretty low. ... Our catchers were catching balls on the ground, and they were being called strikes. And so [we had to] make adjustments — either stepping up in the box and hitting that pitch before it drops or scooting back and not swinging at it."

There were also issues within the pitcher's circle. Senior Stephanie Johnson delivered a five-hit, one-run performance in the team's first game, but she came down with an illness and was unable to pitch the rest of the weekend. Johnson's absence left the pitching duties to transfer student, junior Richelle Van Gennip and freshman Ashley Rotkovich, both of whom had never pitched in a Div. II softball game before.

"It was pretty hard [pitching in a Div. II game]," Van Gennip said. "I just worked really, really hard. ... It's not like junior college at all."

The Bulldogs were fairly quiet against Bellarmine until the last inning of the game. Before that, neither team had strung two hits together in one inning. The 'Dogs finally got to the Knight's pitcher and rocked her for six hits

and five runs in the seventh. Alabama quickly jumped onto the Bulldog pitchers in the next game, scoring six runs on three home runs. Even though Truman did manage to score first in that game, Truman didn't manage to put up more than one hit per inning during the whole game.

Missouri S&T chipped away at Truman throughout the game with 18 hits. The Bulldogs had two innings in which they had two hits but only converted them into one run for the game.

Van Gennip came out to start her second game of the weekend against Indianapolis and pitched considerably better, only allowing six hits, but she also gave up seven walks. Truman stranded seven runners on base for the game.

Van Gennip pitched again for the first game Sunday. She allowed six hits, but cut down on her walks by only giving up two after adjusting to the umpire's strike zone. She also experienced some bad luck, as some of the hits she allowed were bloop hits that found their way through the defense. The offense provided zero runs and only two hits.

It was not all bad for the team this weekend, however. The Bulldogs pulled it together for the final game of the weekend in which the offense was able to score three



Sophomore infielder Alex Weber, shown in a game last season, was 5-for-15 from the plate during the weekend. The 'Dogs were shut down for the most part, as they hit .209 as a team.

File Photo

runs off of six Bulldogs hits, and the pitching gave up only five hits. Brown said the pitching got considerably better throughout the weekend. The offense was perfect in eight stolen base attempts and the defense showed off some amazing plays.

Brown said this was a

good time for the team to make mistakes, showing the Bulldogs what they need to work on to play their best softball by the end of the season. But in the meantime, the Bulldogs will be making their transition back to the game field to prepare for the rest of the season.

"I think we're actually going to get outside this week," senior third baseman Rebekah Shea said. "It always helps to be on dirt and not on a gym floor. I think we're just going to continue working ... on the fundamentals and trying get back into the swing of things."



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