

Tillis qualifies for nationals at Last Chance

BY LOGAN JACKSON
Staff Reporter

Not only did freshman Brian Tillis earn an A cut during the Last Chance Meet, he became the first swimmer in Truman's history to qualify for nationals during the Last Chance Meet.

Tillis won the 1,650-yard freestyle last weekend with a time of 15:55.78 at the Midwest Invitational at the University of Chicago. The meet is designed to give swimmers a final chance to put up an A-cut time. Tillis only needed a time of 15:58.09 to qualify for nationals. Head coach Mark Gole said his race was an outstanding one compared to his conference swim.

"[The race] was perfect," Gole said. "He was out a full second slower after 50 [yards], and he kind of dialed

back for the first 300 [yards], which we talked about doing. It only matters what you swim for the whole 1,650 [yards], not just the first 500 [yards]."

Tillis also broke his own school record in the event. His previous best time was 16:00.12, which he swam at the New South Intercollegiate Swim Conference championship meet Feb. 14. Gole said Tillis would have had an A cut during that meet if he hadn't started so fast. He also said Tillis worked on repetition to improve his race.

"He worked on nailing down his pace," Gole said. "He made sure that he swam the second half faster than the first. He's front-ended things from the start of practice, [but he didn't during this meet]."

Assistant coach Greg Naumann drove Tillis to Chicago to participate

in the meet. Naumann said the highlight of the race came during the last 500 yards. A swimmer has to average 29 seconds per 50 yards to earn an A cut in the 1,650-yard freestyle, and Tillis hovered around that time for most of the race. But his 50-yard split times in the last 500 yards consistently were under 29 seconds, which allowed him to make up for the beginning of the race.

"He was excited," Naumann said. "He had the fist pump in the air. He was probably a little more impressed or a little more happy that he was the first in Truman history to actually make a national cut in the Last Chance Meet. He was pretty stoked about all of it."

Tillis said he didn't think he had made the cut during the race. The

coaching staff uses signals to help swimmers know whether they're swimming at the correct pace. He said he was shocked when he saw the results.

"At first when I looked at [my time], I was surprised," Tillis said. "After looking at different signals, I thought I wasn't going to make it, so I was just accepting that. When I saw the times I was very excited and a little relieved."

The men's national roster now sits at seven swimmers. Seniors Jason Stokes and Andrew Berdine, freshman Eric Kaestner and Tillis all qualified in individual events. It is the most individuals the men's team has taken to nationals during Gole's four years as a head coach. Juniors Andrew McCall and Peter McCall and sophomore

Paul Wanamaker round out the seven members for the Bulldogs.

Adding Tillis to the national roster also helps Truman's 800-yard freestyle relay. Gole said this relay will be much stronger now that he can throw Tillis into the mix.

The NCAA National Championships take place in Houston, Texas, from March 11 to 14. Tillis said he is excited about competing in the national meet. He also said he has to work on several things, including relay-related drills.

"Right now, it's just getting back into shape," Tillis said. "As it gets closer to nationals, I'll focus on turns again. I'll also work on starts and relay exchanges because I'm going to be on [the 800-yard freestyle relay team]."



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Senior forward Georgia Mueller, shown in a game earlier this season, had 29 points and nine rebounds against Missouri Western on Saturday.

Mueller drops 29 on Missouri Western

BY KRISTA CRIDER
Staff Reporter

Senior forward Georgia Mueller delivered one final domination of Missouri Western State University on Saturday.

Mueller scored a season-high 29 points and pulled down nine rebounds in the game. She has had an impressive track record against Missouri Western during her time at Truman. In all but one of the six games she has played against Missouri Western in the past three years, Mueller has scored 27 points or more and improved her rebounds each year. With only one more regular season game left for Mueller, she said she wanted to go all out with her play.

"I guess I just decided that [since I only had two games left] I was going to shoot it if I was open," Mueller said. "My team did a really good job of getting me the ball when I was open, and Missouri Western didn't really double and triple [team] me as much, so that kind of helped me a little bit too."

Head coach Michael Smith said Mueller's performance against Missouri Western was her best of the year, and not just because of the points she put up.

"She put up big numbers, but she also did all the little things," Smith said. "She took a charge, she dove on the floor for some loose balls, and defensively she did a great job."

Mueller's past with Missouri Western has not always been positive. Her first year playing against the Griffons, Mueller said she had a negative experience that affected her mentality against the team the rest of her career.

"When I was a freshman, I remember I played against this really good post player [on Missouri Western], and she kind of embarrassed me a little bit," Mueller said. "Ever since, I remember thinking I was never letting that happen to me again."

Mueller is one of three seniors on the team, and she has the most playing experience. Because of her obvious seniority, she assumes her leadership duties with actions more than words. She said hard work and tenacity are traits she is proud of and putting up stats isn't necessarily a requirement to be a good leader, even though she obviously has no problem with that.

"I have never really been that much of a vocal leader," Mueller said. "I just try to go out there and get the job done. I guess I am more of a leader by example, and especially as a senior, you really want to go out there and make sure that you are doing your job and getting things done by boxing out and getting down on defense or nabbing a rebound. It's really those things that really make you more of a leader, I think, than whether you put up points on the board or not."

Mueller said another one of her roles on the team is her physical presence in the paint. She said she has improved, especially this year, by being a threat not just under the basket, but also on jumpers that previously might have been outside her range. She described this strategy as facing up the basket as opposed to looking for her shot.

Mueller will play her final game as a Bulldog at 1 p.m. Saturday against the University of Central Missouri in Pershing Arena.

Athlete of the Week

Georgia Mueller

Sport: Women's basketball

Year: Senior

Position: Forward

Hometown: Springfield, Ill.

Mueller scored a season-high 29 points against Missouri Western last Saturday, and she was one rebound away from a double-double. Mueller has scored 27 points or more against Western in five of her last six games. The first-team All-MIAA player is averaging 16.7 points, 7.4 rebounds and 2.6 assists per game this season.

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