

SPORTS

CLOSE WIN

The men's basketball team picks up its first MIAA victory

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Winless Griffons defeat women

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

The look on head coach Michael Smith's face said it all.

Missouri Western State University guard Tierra Ford stole a Truman inbound pass with 16 seconds left to play and took it the length of the floor for a layup to seal the Griffons' first win of the season 68-64 against the women's basketball team last night at Pershing Arena.

"Thirteen years [coaching], the most disappointed I've ever been," Smith said after the game. "It's like I've said, we get a little confidence 'cause we win one game, and we think we're good. And we're far from good, we're far from good. We're far from average."

The loss dropped Truman to 4-12 this season and 1-8 in the MIAA. Western improves to 1-13 overall and 1-7 in the MIAA.

The Griffons opened up a six-point lead at halftime, and Missouri Western never trailed in the second half. Truman tied the game at 59-59 on a jumper by junior point guard Laura Joya, but the Bulldogs never could put together a sustained run.

Western had a chance to ice the game at the line with 26 seconds left, but freshman forward Jessica Koch missed two free throws. On the Bulldogs' ensuing possession, they were unable to get a shot off as Joya threw an errant pass,

ending any hopes of a Bulldog comeback.

Turnovers continued to plague Truman. The 'Dogs turned the ball over 20 times, right on their season average, and had two turnovers in the final 20 seconds.

The Bulldogs tried to carry momentum over from their first conference victory of the season Saturday night against Northwest Missouri State University but were outworked and out-hustled most of the night. Western outrebounded the 'Dogs 33-29 and outscored them in the paint 44-18.

Senior forward Georgia Mueller paced the Bulldogs with 19 points, but she got to the foul line just two times.

Sophomore forward Malorie Kiecker chipped in with 14 points on 5-of-11 shooting, including two three pointers.

It took five weeks, eight games and one overtime period, but the Bulldogs finally notched a win in the MIAA.

The Bulldogs used a season-high of six three-pointers to down the Northwest Missouri Bearcats 72-68 in overtime Saturday night at Pershing Arena, ending a five-game losing streak in the process.

"I thought the difference was that down the stretch, our kids made plays when they needed to," Smith said.

Joya hit the biggest of the team's six three

"We're far from good. We're far from average."

Michael Smith
Head Coach



Junior guard Laura Joya gets trapped by a couple Griffon defenders during last night's game. Missouri Western forced 20 turnovers to defeat Truman 68-64.

Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Mueller returns from suspension

Senior averaging 17 points a game since sitting out vs. FHSU

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

For the first time in four seasons, the women's basketball team played a game without senior forward Georgia Mueller.

Mueller, the Bulldogs' leading scorer and rebounder for the past three seasons, was suspended by head coach Michael Smith for the Jan. 3 game at Fort Hays State University.

Mueller returned to action for Truman's Jan. 7 game against the University of Nebraska Omaha and was back in the starting lineup Saturday against Northwest Missouri State University and last night against Missouri Western State University.

Smith said the suspension was the result of a combination of factors relating to leadership and production on the floor. Smith met with Mueller the night before the game against Fort Hays and then met with the team following that.

Smith said the suspension was completely related to basketball and had nothing to do with off-the-court issues.

"This is all basketball-related," Smith said. "It's just a matter of what I felt was trying to make a change to prove a point, whether it be prove a point [or] make a change. After [Mueller] sat and watched that game, she knew what she meant to her team. She knew that out there she would have helped us."

Without Mueller in the lineup, the Bulldogs struggled to Please see MUELLER, Page 19



Senior forward Georgia Mueller did not play in the Bulldogs' Jan. 3 game against Fort Hays for what head coach Michael Smith called a basketball-related suspension.

Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

'Dogs, Smith need Georgia

It seemed like a good situation for both senior forward Georgia Mueller and Michael Smith last April when Smith was hired as head coach of the women's basketball program.

In Smith, Mueller was getting a coach with a history of success as Div. II assistant and NJCAA head coach. Smith appeared qualified to turn around a Bulldog program with just two winning seasons in this millennium.

In Mueller, Smith was getting a two-time first-team All-MIAA post player who entered this season with a chance to become Truman's all-time leading scorer.

But the match was too good to be true.

Troubles arose as Mueller tried to transition to Smith after playing for former head coach John Sloop for three seasons. Mueller is Truman's only player who played for Sloop for more than two seasons, and she started for Sloop all three seasons.

Smith brought different coaching strategies, expectations and philosophies than Sloop had.

Smith instilled a much different offense than Sloop used the past few seasons. Sloop utilized Mueller in a four-out, one-in offense in

which Mueller controlled the paint while four guards roamed the perimeter. But Smith prefers a motion-heavy offense with a lot of cutting, passing and movement.

Smith also places more importance on defense and film preparation.

But the biggest change, Mueller said Monday, was

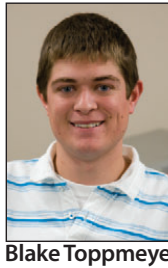
that Smith places a much greater emphasis on winning than Sloop, who had an 87-131 record — including a 35-112 mark in conference games — in his eight seasons on the Truman sideline. "[Smith] really expects us to win,

and I think that's probably the biggest difference," Mueller said. "It's not just, we come to play now — we are expected to win."

But the Bulldogs did not win, suffering seven consecutive conference losses before earning their first conference win Saturday, and the situation between Smith and Mueller finally came to a head when Smith suspended Mueller for Truman's Jan. 3 game against Fort Hays State University (see related story, opposite).

Smith said this week he hoped the suspension would give a wakeup call to Mueller, whose numbers are down across the board compared Please see COLUMN, Page 19

COMMENTARY



Blake Toppmeyer

Hammers plays in all-star game

Former Bulldogs' defensive end records five tackles in Cactus Bowl

BY JACK NICHOLL
Assistant Sports Editor

Les Hammers should start checking his e-mail if he wants to play football at the next level.

The senior and former Bulldog defensive end received a congratulatory e-mail in December letting him know he was accepted to play in the Jan. 9 Cactus Bowl, a Div. II All-Star game. When his mom received the same letter in the mail a couple of days later, he had yet to see the e-mail.

"The first time I found out was when my mom called me yelling on the phone

that I got invited," Hammers said.

Hammers took about two weeks off after the Bulldogs' last game in November, but he has been working out ever since to put on an impressive show for scouts at an opportunity such as this. He was a first-team All-MIAA selection, and he led the Bulldogs in sacks and tackles for a loss in the fall.

"I was pretty excited about it, because we have had a couple players go there, and they said it was a good experience," Hammers said. "I just couldn't wait to get down there and play some football."

Hammers recorded five tackles for the West team, including one for a loss, and a

quarterback hit. The West defeated the East 28-27 in the game that was played at Texas A&M-Kingsville. Hammers received plenty of playing time because there were only three defensive ends on the West team, and they were in constant rotation.

After hearing the news, Hammers visited head coach Shannon Currier on Dec. 31 to pick up his uniform and left for Kingsville Jan. 3. Currier was the one who originally nominated Hammers — all the coaches are given sheets to nominate players, then the Cactus Bowl Committee picks the final rosters.

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"If you want to play football after this, this is a job interview."

Les Hammers
Senior defensive end, on playing in the Cactus Bowl, a Div. II All-Star game



Senior Les Hammers was one of 10 MIAA players who played in the Jan. 9 Cactus Bowl, a Div. II all-star game.

Mayank Dhungana/Index