

Fandja lifts men to win

Senior forward drains shot at buzzer to give Bulldogs first conference win of season

BY JACK NICHOLL
Assistant Sports Editor

The play wasn't designed to go to senior forward Patrick Fandja.

With 3.1 seconds left, the ball at midcourt and the score tied in last night's men's basketball game against Missouri Western State University, head coach Jack Schrader took a timeout. He drew up a play in which Fandja set a screen for sophomore forward Ethan Freeman to get the in-bounds pass and drive to the basket.

The only problem was Missouri Western had the play guarded.

Junior guard Matt Taylor instead inbounded the ball to Fandja, who was the safety option. Fandja took the ball at the top of the key, turned, dribbled in two steps and made the long two-point jumper as time expired for the 69-67 Bulldog (6-10, 1-8 MIAA) win last night in Pershing Arena.

"I told Matt when we got out of the timeout, 'If it seems they're going to switch, I'm going to come to you, and just look at me,'" Fandja said.

It was a fitting end of the game for Fandja, who finished with a career-high 23 points on 9-for-12 shooting, and added 12 rebounds. It was the Bulldogs' third double-double this season.

The win was the first conference victory for the Bulldogs this season, and it snapped a nine-game losing streak.

"I think that [win] put us right back to it's like the beginning of season again," said senior guard Banks Estridge, who had seven points and nine rebounds.

"We're going to take every game with a little bit more confidence. I think that's what our team needs right now."

Truman took a 36-25 advantage at the end of the first half, but Western came back to take a 64-59 lead with 2:55 remaining. Fandja, Freeman and sophomore guard Alex Henderson all made baskets that tied the score before Truman made one final defensive stop.

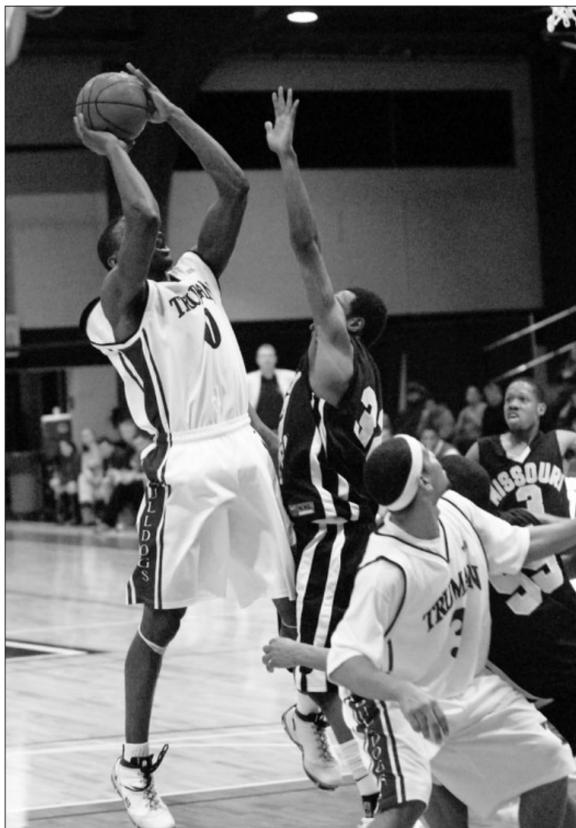
Western had the ball after a timeout with 16 seconds left and a four second time differential in the shot and game clocks. Schrader called a zone defense, something Western was not expecting, and the Griffons were not able to get a shot off.

After that, it was all Fandja.

The win against Western came at the heels of a 73-64 loss to Northwest Missouri State University on Saturday night in Pershing Arena.

Truman and Northwest entered the game without a win in MIAA play. The Bearcats have defeated the 'Dogs in their last four matchups and in nine of the last 11.

The winner of the game, Northwest, gained some momentum heading into the second half of conference play while the loser, Truman, now has a more difficult time qualifying for the conference tournament at the end of the season.



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Senior forward Patrick Fandja scored a career-high 23 points and had 12 rebounds in Truman's 69-67 win last night against Missouri Western.

After the first 26 minutes the score was tied at 41. No team led by more than five points, and there were nine lead changes. Then Northwest pulled away with a seven-point run in the middle of the second half to take the lead for good.

"We got a little soft in our zone," Schrader said. "They made a couple baskets. It was a four-five point game, so not much different than the first half. And at the end, they made some hussle plays."

Even with the run, the Bulldogs recovered from the scoring draught to bring the score to within three points when Estridge sank a three-pointer at the 4:19 mark. But Northwest made free throws down the stretch — 16-for-23 in the second half — to close out the game.

Estridge led the 'Dogs with 21 points on 8-for-17 shooting. Henderson and sophomore forward Brian Nwelu also scored in the dou-

ble digits. The Bulldogs started the game 5-for-6 from the three-point range and ended at 9-for-16.

"We take what they give us," Schrader said. "They were going under the screen so we rose up and shot it."

The Bearcats' two leading scorers, Hunter Henry and Elijah Allen, had 22 and 24 points, respectively. Henry is third in the MIAA in scoring and first in rebounds.

"Henry got a lot of his points on effort plays — second shots, loose balls, scrambles — stuff like that," Schrader said. "Allen just got some mismatches inside."

The Bulldogs play at the University of Central Missouri on Wednesday night. The Mules have a 12-3 record, 5-3 in the MIAA, this season. Truman lost both games played against UCM last season.

Truman doesn't return home again until Jan. 28, when the Bulldogs play Pittsburg State University.

TRUMAN ATHLETICS News and Notes

Basketball: Assist/turnover ratio improved

The women's basketball team is beginning to conquer the turnover problem that has haunted the Bulldogs for most of the season.

The Bulldogs ranked seventh in the MIAA with an assist to turnover ratio of 0.72, entering last night's game against Missouri Western State University. The Bulldogs rank 10th in the conference in turnovers, averaging 20 per contest. But in four of the last six games, the Bulldogs had more assists than turnovers.

In its first 10 games, Truman had more assists than turnovers just one time.

Head coach Michael Smith credits a lot of the recent success in this department to the play of junior point guard Laura Joya. In five games from Dec. 29 to Jan. 10, Joya's assist-to-turnover ratio was 2 to 1.

Basketball: Men approach first off day

The men's basketball team will have the first of its two conference days off this week. The team does not have a game this Saturday and will resume play at Central Missouri on Wednesday.

Because there are 11 basketball teams in the MIAA, one team is left out of a conference game each Saturday and Wednesday, the two days per week conference games are usually played on.

The Bulldogs' next off day is on Wednesday, Feb. 25 during the last week of the regular season.

Pat Murray: Former Bulldog with Denver

Former Bulldog offensive lineman Pat Murray has made another stop in his quest to become an offensive guard in the NFL.

Murray was signed to the Denver Broncos' active roster on Dec. 9. He previously had been on the Seattle Seahawks' practice squad.

Murray appeared in preseason games with the Seahawks, but he did not make the active roster. He also has worked with the Green Bay Packers.

Swimming: Aherne wins Swimmer of Week

Collegeswimming.com named junior swimmer Kate Aherne Swimmer of the Week for her efforts against Lewis University (Ill.) last weekend. It is the second such award for Aherne this season.

Aherne set four pool records at the consecutive dual meets in the 400-yard individual medley, 100-yard freestyle relay and the 200- and 50-yard freestyle. Her 400-yard individual medley time of 4:31.61, an event she normally does not swim, also gave her her fifth A cut of the season.

Her time of 1:54.51 in the 200-yard freestyle also earned her a B cut in the event. Aherne had five first-place finishes during the weekend and one second-place finish in the 200-yard freestyle relay.

The Bulldogs defeated Lewis 157-46 Friday and 167-36 Saturday.

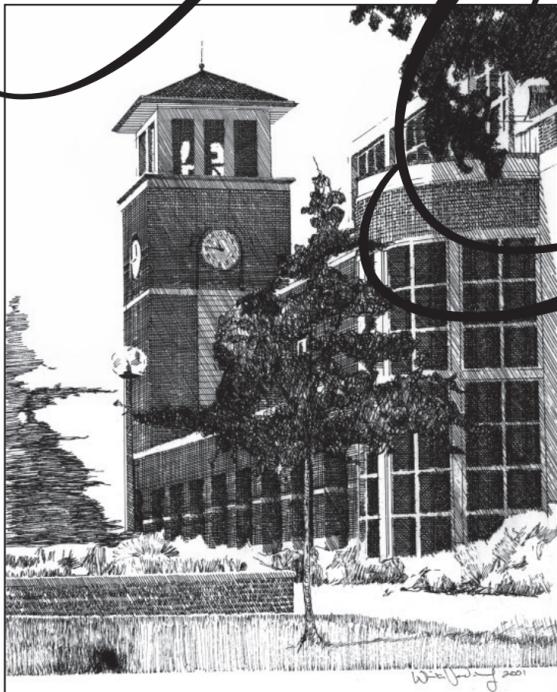
Basketball: PA announcer recognized

Drew Yost, the public address announcer for Bulldog basketball games, was recognized at last night's men's game against Missouri Western State University. Yost will soon be leaving the country to serve in Afghanistan.

Sports Information Director Kevin White stood with senior players Banks Estridge, Patrick Fandja and Todd Kulage prior to the game and presented Yost with a gift. Yost's name was also recognized over the PA system.

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