

MUELLER | Senior forward adjusts to new coach's motion-style offense

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get any offensive consistency, shooting just 29 percent from the floor in the 71-46 loss to Hays.

"Georgia has been the main contributor for the last three years," sophomore forward Malorie Kiecker said.

"We had to look for different options to make offensive runs, so that was obviously different."

Mueller ranks No. 2 all-time in scoring, No. 1 in blocks and No. 4 in rebounds for the Bulldogs.

"He expects a lot from me," Mueller said. "My numbers aren't up this year. Obviously the place to look is 'Why aren't your numbers up?' That's really what coach is looking for."

Mueller is averaging 16 points and seven rebounds per game this season, down from last year's averages of 22 points and nine rebounds.

Smith, who is in his first season coaching the Bulldogs after replacing former head coach John Sloop, said Mueller's lower numbers this season partially can be attributed to the new motion offense implemented this season.

"Any time that a new coach comes in and tries to implement a new philosophy and a new style, again within a program where players are used to an old coach ... people are always going to go through

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1. CAROL JARRARD: 2,006
- 2. GEORGIA MUELLER: 1,701**
3. FELICIA SUTTON: 1,578
4. AMY EAGAN: 1,527
5. ANGIE GUM: 1,467
6. JENNIFER PERKINS: 1,461

a transition period," Smith said.

Part of Mueller's reduced offensive output might also come from fewer three-point shooters this season.

Last year, the Bulldogs had three-point threats in senior guards Candace McGee, Carmen McGee and Katie Fowler.

This forced opposing defenses to place more focus on the perimeter, allowing Mueller to face fewer double-teams.

Mueller also is not getting to the foul line as much this season. Last season, Mueller went to the line 117 times in conference play. This year she is on pace to get there just

32 times during MIAA play.

Despite the issues on the court this season, Smith said he is excited for Mueller to continue playing and finish her Bulldog career.

"I'm excited about Georgia finishing out her career here at Truman," Smith said. "Obviously she's done some good things in the past. But it's not just about the past. It's about the future."

Mueller said she has taken the suspension in stride and is moving forward with the season.

"All experiences are good, I believe," Mueller said. "This one taught me something. I'm hoping to put it behind me."



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Senior guard Eli Medina had three rebounds and three assists in 18 minutes during last night's 68-64 loss to Missouri Western.

COLUMN | Two-time first-team All-MIAA Mueller needs to get to the free-throw line more, command the paint, provide leadership for inexperienced team

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to her 2007-08 season, for which she was named Index Athlete of the Year.

Apparently it did just that. The game after her suspension, Mueller netted 21 points and hauled in seven rebounds. More importantly, she went 11-for-11 at the free-throw line. Smith said one of his goals for Mueller is for her to become more aggressive and get to the free-throw line at a higher rate.

"After she sat and watched that game [against Fort Hays, which Truman lost 71-46], she knew what she meant to her team," Smith said.

Smith and Mueller might never see eye-to-eye on some issues, but Smith said that since the suspension "everything has changed — her play [and] her leadership on the court and in practice."

"I've seen things that I hadn't seen before," Smith said. "That's what I've been waiting for."

That's a good sign for Smith because he needs Mueller. The only way to achieve Smith's goal of winning games this season is with Mueller in the lineup. Truman

man's 25-point loss against Fort Hays was evidence how the Bulldogs perform without Mueller.

And despite a disappointing start to the conference season, the women still have 11 conference games remaining. After last night's disappointing loss to previously-winless Missouri Western, Truman will have to play well down the stretch to crack the conference's top eight teams, which qualify for the conference tournament in March.

Smith can't expect Mueller to put up numbers like she did in 2007-08, when she averaged a conference-best 22 points per game. Mueller simply cannot score that many points in Smith's motion offense. In Sloop's offense last season, Mueller took 26 percent of her team's shots. This season, she accounts for 21 percent of the Bulldogs' field goal attempts.

But more than points, the Bulldogs need Mueller's leadership, during games and in practice. They need her to get to the foul line more often. They need her to help teammates get open shots by drawing double teams.

No player is more important

than the team. Smith demonstrated this when he chose to bench Mueller. Then again, no player is more important to the Bulldogs than Mueller, and she needs to put her team on her back for the season's final 11 games in an effort to get Truman back to the MIAA tournament.

"I'm going to just take [the one-game suspension] as hoping that he's just trying to light a fire under me and see some more passion out of me," Mueller said. "And I really hope that by the end of the season, I will meet his expectations, and he'll see what he wants out of me."

If Mueller does rise to her coach's expectations, Smith might look back on the Jan. 3 suspension as his best coaching move of the season.

For more coverage of Georgia Mueller, visit the Index Sports Blog at www.indexsports.wordpress.com

LOSS | Bulldogs staved off Northwest second-half comeback to win 72-68 in overtime

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pointers when she drained a three-pointer with 3:58 left in overtime to give the Bulldogs a three-point lead, which helped set the tone for the remainder of the period. The shot broke a string of six consecutive missed three pointers for Truman.

Truman led 42-34 at halftime on the strength of five three pointers. But like several previous games this season, the Bulldogs' lead vanished as Northwest opened the second half on an 11-0 run to take a three-point lead.

"We were up by eight at halftime, and we knew that we'd been up before, and we'd kind of let it slip," Kiecker said. "So we knew we had to come back with momentum, and once again we didn't come out right again hard."

But the Bulldogs survived the initial second half onslaught from Northwest and never fell behind by more than five before rallying to force overtime.

This year was the second time in the last five seasons that the Bulldogs have started the MIAA 0-7. They also started 0-7 in 2005 before winning their eighth game.

Freshman guard Breanna Daniels led the Truman charge with 13 points in just 17 minutes off the

bench. Mueller chipped in with 10 points and five rebounds.

The 'Dogs also got a much-needed lift off the bench from senior guard Eli Medina. She finished with 11 points in only her eighth collegiate game since joining the team following the volleyball season.

"Eli is just a very good player," Mueller said. "Obviously from volleyball she's just a presence on the court, and I think when she's out there, she just really gets things done and gets after it and adds a little spark. It's just really great to get to play with her."

Truman has struggled most of the season to find a consistent threat from beyond the arc, making just 55 threes this season, which is the lowest in the MIAA.

The performance from beyond the arc was key for Truman as the Bearcats were dominant near the basket. Northwest outscored Truman 38-24 in the paint.

The Bulldog defense also was stifling from beyond the arc, holding the Bearcats to 1-for-15 shooting from three-point range.

The Bulldogs will take the week-end off before hitting the road at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday to play up against the University of Central Missouri.

"We knew we had to come back with momentum, and once again we didn't come out right again hard."

Malorie Kiecker
Sophomore forward

HAMMERS | First-team All-MIAA Truman defensive end ranked 109 of top 205 defensive ends, hopes to make Missouri's NFL Pro Day

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Currier nominated multiple Bulldogs, but Hammers was the only one the committee picked. Players are chosen on the basis of multiple categories, including their statistics, previous awards and pro potential.

"I was hoping that he would [make it]," Currier said. "I figured he had the abilities to do so and being he was first team All-Conference, he was the most deserving of our players just because he had the highest honor from the conference-awards standpoint."

Hammers currently is ranked 109 out of the top 205 defensive ends, according to nfldraftscout.com. Josh Buchanan, the pro prospects specialist at d2football.com, was indirectly quoted as saying Hammers has no chance of making the NFL.

On the Sunday after Hammers arrived in Texas, the players were divided into teams. Hammers said the teams were separated for most of the week including different hotels and practice times.

The scouts arrived on Monday. Hammers was prepared to do a full-scale workout, but they wanted the players to run only the 40-yard dash. About 80 scouts were there, including ones from the National, Canadian and Arena Football leagues. They passed out player information surveys at the beginning of the week, but other than that, the players let their playing skills speak for themselves.

"If you want to play football after this, this is a job interview," Hammers said. "This is the time when you shine and make it or you just look back. It could be your last day."

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the players went through two-a-day practices, just like they would during pre-season camp. Thursday included a light game with two walk-throughs. By the time game day came on Friday, many of the scouts had seen enough.

"They pretty much came and watched us practice because you know what a player does from the way he practices," Hammers said. "Then I'd say from the 80 [scouts] that started, there were 10 or less at the game."

Ten players from the MIAA were on the roster, including Pittsburg State

running back Caleb Farabi and Northwest offensive lineman Reid Kirby. Despite the increase in competition and decrease in playing time, Hammers almost matched his average tackles per game during the regular season.

Hammers joins former defensive back James Thabouteau, who played last year, as the only two Truman players in recent memory to play in the Cactus Bowl. Former offensive lineman Pat Murray was invited to play in the Cactus Bowl in 2007 but

instead played in the East Coast Bowl and Texas vs. Nation games.

"When recruits come in they like

to go someplace where people are recognized on a national level," Currier said of Truman football. "So anytime we have kids who are nationally recognized or get a chance to play at the next level, prospective student athletes like that."

The next step for Hammers will be to go to the University of Missouri's NFL Pro Day in March, something Hammers was told to do by a New York Jets' scout who visited during the season. None of the players at the Cactus Bowl were invited to the NFL Combine.

If Hammers puts on an impressive showing at the Pro Day, he could get a shot at the next level, if not, he might have played his last down.

No matter what happens, one thing seems certain: his mom will be the first to find out.

"This is the time when you shine and make it or you just look back. It could be your last day."

Les Hammers
Senior defensive end

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