

Athlete of the Week

Andy Swedenhjelm
Sport: Wrestling
Year: Senior
Hometown: Norwalk, Iowa

Senior Andy Swedenhjelm won first place at his first Truman wrestling meet last weekend. He defeated his first three opponents by pin and beat junior teammate Loyde Braidlow 7-2 in the final of the 285-pound division. Swedenhjelm was a four-year letter winner on the football team before joining the wrestling squad. He was an All-American wrestler in high school.

Swedenhjelm makes immediate impact

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

Senior Andy Swedenhjelm is used to knocking people to the ground, but now he's doing it on the wrestling mat instead of the football field.

After exhausting his four years of eligibility on the football field, the four-year letter winning nose tackle decided to finish his Truman career as a wrestler.

Swedenhjelm had an immediate influence on his new team, going 4-0 and taking first place honors in the heavyweight division at the Central College (Iowa) Open on Saturday.

Swedenhjelm won his first three matches by pin before defeating his teammate, junior Loyde Braidlow, 7-2 to take home first place.

"[The match against Braidlow] could have gone either way," Swedenhjelm said. "It was real close the whole time. I mean, we wrestle each other every day in practice so we know each other's tendencies and styles."

Swedenhjelm made quick work of his first two opponents Saturday. He won his first match in just 52 seconds, and his second match lasted a little more than a minute. The championship match was back and forth, with Swedenhjelm winning by decision.

Before Saturday, Swedenhjelm hadn't wrestled in a match since the Iowa High School State Championships in 2005. But he is no stranger to success on the mats. Swedenhjelm was an All-American in high school and finished eighth in the national

freestyle tournament in 2005. Swedenhjelm said he was recruited to wrestle at several Ivy League schools but wanted to focus on football.

Although Saturday was the first time Swedenhjelm has competed in a tournament at Truman, he is not an outsider to the program. Because there are few heavyweights on the roster aside from Braidlow, Swedenhjelm stepped in and helped out at practice during his four years at Truman. Swedenhjelm said it was not until he sat down with head coach David Schutter during Winter Break that he decided to compete for the Bulldogs.

"I'd always kind of liked to [wrestle and play football], but I was here and I had a football scholarship, so I needed to put football first," Swedenhjelm said. "Now that I don't have any football left, I just figured why not try it."

Swedenhjelm had success during his four years on the football team. Last season he played in all 11 games for the 'Dogs, finishing with 45 tackles and three sacks. He started every game as a true freshman in 2005 and recorded 46 tackles.

The transition from football to wrestling could be tough, but Schutter said he is glad to have Swedenhjelm on the team and that the switch from football to wrestling has gone well so far.

"Andy's transition from football to wrestling has been a smooth one," Schutter said. "He came over with a good attitude, good work ethic. ... He's still thinking about football a little bit



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Senior Andy Swedenhjelm (right) attempts to make a move against junior teammate Loyde Braidlow during practice on Monday.

because he's trying to get to some pro days, but right now he's focused on being the best wrestler he can this year and possibly being an All-American. He or Loyde, one of them is going to get through to nationals, we hope."

When asked whether he liked football or wrestling more, Swedenhjelm smiled.

"I'm always a football guy, but wrestling's fun too," Swedenhjelm said. "It teaches you a lot of lessons."

GRADES | Sports editor gives men's and women's swimming teams top honors for first half of the winter sports season

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Still, Mueller will finish her career as one of the three best women's basketball players to wear the purple and white, joining Jarrard and Felicia Sutton in that category.

The women will finish this season with their ninth-consecutive losing conference record, but with time, I think Smith can turn this program around.

Women's swimming: B+

Junior Kate Aherne began the season with a bang, picking up a national-qualifying time in the second meet of the season. The

Bulldogs' top sprint freestyler and individual medley swimmer, Aherne has led the women with individual A cuts in five events and individual B cuts in two events.

Eight others have followed Aherne's lead and qualified for nationals.

Senior Erika Anderson, one of the nine national qualifiers, has been fantastic in the water this season. She won the 100-yard breaststroke and 200-yard individual medley against Div. I Missouri State University on Saturday.

Head coach Mark Gole said Monday that he is hoping the women can expand the national-bound roster to 12 to 15 by the end of the season. If they can do this, the women should finish in the top three at nationals, and possibly win their eighth title in the last nine seasons.

Men's swimming: B+

Four swimmers have A cuts and Gole said two more have a chance to qualify before nationals.

This would keep the men in line with their performance from recent

seasons. In 2007-08, five men qualified for nationals, and in 2006-07, four men qualified.

Senior Jason Stokes has been the highlight of the season. He set the Pershing Natatorium pool record Nov. 8 with a time of 20.77 in the 50-yard freestyle. Stokes seems to be poised for a top-eight finish in that event at nationals this March.

As a team, the men should be able to notch their fifth-consecutive top-15 national finish.

Wrestling: C+

Truman's strength in the heavyweight division was shown at the Central College (Iowa) Open on Saturday.

Wrestling for the first time in college after playing football for four seasons, senior Andy Swedenhjelm claimed first place at the open, while junior teammate junior Loyde Braidlow took second in the 285-pound division. Braidlow has placed in the top six at four invitationals this season.

Outside of the heavyweight division, however, it's been a tough season for the wrestling squad.

Equal Competition

Year	Dual win	National title
2007-08	Drury	Truman
2006-07	Truman	Drury
2005-06	Drury	Truman
2004-05	Truman	Truman
2003-04	Drury	Truman
2002-03	Truman	Truman
2001-02	Truman	Truman
2000-01	Drury	Truman
1999-00	Drury	Drury
1998-99	Drury	Drury
1997-98	Drury	Drury
1996-97	Drury	Drury
Totals	Truman: 4 Drury: 8	Truman: 7 Drury: 5

RIVALRY | Home dual meet on Saturday should be a good indicator of what each team will bring to national meet in March

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advantage, Gole said Drury will be the favorite Saturday.

"I'll state clearly that we are by far the underdogs," Gole said. "Their top times in every single event are ahead of ours. [Junior] Kate Aherne is the only one that's ahead of their girls. So we're going to have to find out if anybody else can step up."

In addition to Aherne, the Bulldogs also might have an advantage in the 100-yard breaststroke. Sophomore Emily Buss has the nation's second-best time in that event this season.

Reynolds said Aherne, a national champion in the 200-yard individual medley at the 2008 national meet, gives the Bulldogs a top swimmer who can compete with some of Drury's big guns.

"Kate is their rock right now," Reynolds said. "She's good wherever she swims. So I think when you look for Kate's events, wherever she's going to be, that's going to be a tough event [for Drury to win]."

Brian Reynolds
Drury Head Coach
on Truman swimmer
Kate Aherne

The Bulldogs will need all the points they can get from Aherne to win Saturday. Drury's roster includes three swimmers — Abbey Musch, Janelle Slattery and Li Tao — who won individual events at nationals last season and Jing Hua, a three-time individual champion at the 2007 national meet who missed nationals last season because of a back injury.

Traditionally, Drury has more top swimmers and Truman can boast more depth. But this season, Truman might not have the depth advantage. The Bulldogs currently have nine women qualified for nationals, and although Reynolds said he is unsure exactly how many women the Panthers have qualified, he said the number probably rests at 13 or 14.

"I don't think, outside of the distance events, we really have a weakness," Reynolds said.

Despite the rivalry, neither team is tapering for Saturday's meet. Drury competes against

Div. I Missouri State University today, and Anderson said the Bulldogs have been going through their most intense training of the season during the last two weeks.

In a recent trend, the team that wins the Truman-Drury dual meet has finished second to its rival at nationals. In four of the last five seasons, the team that won nationals lost the dual meet. Dual meets typically favor the team that can produce the most first-place finishes. Conversely, a team can win nationals without winning many events if the team has multiple swimmers finish in the top eight.

"They love to beat us, we love to beat them, but all in all, [winning the dual meet] doesn't make any difference towards nationals," Anderson said.

Nonetheless, Aherne said Saturday will be a good preview of what the Bulldogs can expect from Drury when the teams meet again at the national meet in Houston, Texas this March.

"It kind of gives us an idea of where they are, where we are," Aherne said. "They're just really good competition also, so it's always a welcome meet to have against them because it just helps us to prepare ourselves for conference, which is in a couple weeks, and then nationals."

BRAIDLOW | Wrestler was an All-American as sophomore

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heavyweight he's coached during his career at Truman. He credits Braidlow with being consistent and willing to make adjustments.

"Probably the biggest difference between Loyde and a lot of the other guys on the team is Loyde listens to me," Schutter said. "He never questions. He buys in and believes what his coach is telling him to do."

Braidlow said academics have been the biggest challenge for him at Truman, but being a part of the wrestling team has helped him become a more efficient student.

"Wrestling, I think, helps me academic-wise because I have a schedule," he said. "If I don't schedule out my time, then I'm screwed because I'm one of those guys that really procrastinates. It keeps me on task and on focus."

Braidlow's career at Truman got off to a slow start. He finished his freshman season with a 4-12 record, with only one win coming in the second half of the season.

But he quickly turned things around during his sophomore season, going 24-18 for the season and qualifying for the NCAA Div. II national tournament.

"I became a college wrestler," Braidlow said. "My freshman year I was still a high school wrestler, trying the same stuff I tried in high school. That stuff doesn't work in college. It gets you beat real quick, it turns out."

Braidlow said it was tough for him to cope with not performing well his freshman season. He showed his determination to be successful by fighting through it and improving a lot in just one season.

"There was three or four times when I was just like, 'I hate this sport,'" Braidlow said. "It was just a drain on me. If you can live through your freshman year and you're not redshirting, you're a starter. After that the clouds kind of open up and you can see the sun."

Schutter said Braidlow's biggest improvements since the first season have been his increased ability to work his way out

from under his opponents, ride people and keep them down.

"Loyde's learned what college wrestling is about," Schutter said. "How hard-nosed you've got to be, how you've got to work extra. He's learned and made adjustments to be successful at this level."

Braidlow said a benefit of being a heavyweight is that many heavyweights rely on the power-and-strength game and less on grappling around on the mat.

"I think it might put less strain on me being against bigger guys," he said. "You see these [lighter wrestlers], they're in all kinds of awkward positions, and their limbs are all in positions that I couldn't even dream about getting in."

Braidlow said strength is more of a factor in the heavyweight division because a lot of times the bigger guys are more straight-forward.

"You can be just kind of a rubber band, just kind of a string bean guy at the lower weight and still be successful, but at heavyweight you can't really do that and expect to be around for very long," he said.

Schutter said Braidlow has benefited from training with other good heavyweights on the team. Schutter said former wrestler Matt Craig probably was the second-best heavyweight he's had on the team during his tenure at Truman and Braidlow benefited from training with Craig for three seasons.

Braidlow said he has learned from past team leaders, and his style of leadership differs from what the team has seen in the past.

"I'm not going to just go scream at somebody for not doing their stuff," he said. "I'm going to do my stuff, and if you want to follow me, you can follow me."

Freshman James Crone said Braidlow mainly leads by example.

"If he needs to he'll step up and take charge of a situation," Crone said. "He's always willing to give advice if someone wants it."

"Loyde's what college wrestling is about. ... He's learned and made adjustments to be successful at this level."

Dave Schutter
Head Coach

TRACK | Team will compete against Div. I schools this weekend

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"We had a few good moments, and then we had some guys who could have had better races and hopefully will run a little better this weekend."

Cochrane said that despite some good finishes, there still is a lot of work to accomplish for both the men and women, including learning to be more aggressive in their events.

"We were disappointing in that we weren't very nasty competing," Cochrane said.

The Bulldogs will compete Friday and Saturday at the Iowa State Open against a variety of teams including those

from Minnesota, Nebraska, and some Div. I teams.

"There's going to be a lot of Div. I athletes and some Div. II athletes that are really talented and a couple Div. III schools that have strong track programs," Biermann said. "It's going to be a tough meet, but it's one meet we look forward to every year."

Biermann said junior sprinters Shaina Dochterman and Amber Clayton should do well at the Iowa Open. Clayton placed second last weekend in the 200-meter run.

Dochterman won the only running event for the Bulldogs in the 60-meter hurdles

with a time of 9.51.

Biermann said the women's field events have shown a lot of talent during the past few weeks. Senior distance runner Danna Kelly will be a competitor to watch this next weekend, Cochrane said.

Cochrane said the meet this weekend will be tougher than last weekend's Hawkeye Open and that his athletes must be prepared to compete well.

"We're taking people that are ready to go and compete against those people, or at least physically are — mentally is better," Cochrane said.