

LOSS | Senior guard Banks Estridge's layup to win game falls off rim as time expires

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Filchev led Truman with a career-high 18 points on 7-for-10 shooting. At times he looked unstoppable on the offensive end, as he made his first five shots, including his first career three-pointer, but he had a couple mental lapses that might have been costly.

Estridge tacked on 13 points and six rebounds and senior forward Patrick Fandja had 10 points. Pitt State was led by 13 points from sophomore guard Andy Smith. The Gorillas had four players in double figures.

The game against Pitt State University was preceded by another 'Dogs near-comeback in a 57-51 loss to Missouri Southern State University last Saturday.

Truman was down by 16 at the 15:31 mark of the first half, but a steady dose of defensive stops and timely shooting allowed the team to come within two with 27 seconds left. However, MSSU closed out the game by going 6-for-8 from the free throw line in the final minute.

The shooting woes plagued the Bulldogs for the first half as they went just 7-for-18 from the free throw line and 6-for-20 from the field.

"We got a lot of good shots, but when you get free throws and don't make them it's an empty possession basically," sophomore guard Alex Henderson said of the first half.

Henderson led the Bulldogs with 15 points on 4-for-8 shooting. The Bulldogs shot 39 percent as a team and 52 percent from the line. MSSU shot 43 percent for the game.

Schrader said the early deficit was a combination of MSSU sinking tough shots and Truman playing well but not putting up the points to show for it.

"For me, that's it — how are we playing?" Schrader said. "Are we playing well enough that we're getting shots, are we guarding them decently? And I thought we were."

The Lions instilled a full-court press for the entire game. To combat it, Henderson and senior guards Banks Estridge and Todd Kulage all played at least 25 minutes. There was little difference in the strategy even after Estridge sat out most of the second half with four fouls.

Having three guards on the floor also enhanced Truman's offensive setup. They had 26 points in the paint, and could have had more if not for a few missed layups.

"With our ball-screen offense it's pretty good to have ball handlers coming off the screen who can penetrate,"



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Freshman center Vesko Filchev goes up for a layup during last night's game. Filchev scored a career-high 18 points in the men's basketball team's 60-59 loss to Pitt State.

Schrader said.

Sophomore forward Ethan Freeman tacked on 14 points on 4-for-8 shooting, and Filchev had eight points and a team-

leading seven rebounds. Both teams had nine assists and 18 turnovers. Skyler Bowlin was the leading scorer for MSSU with 13 points and four assists.

Truman's next game is 3:30 p.m. Sunday at Emporia State University. ESU defeated the 'Dogs 63-58 in their first matchup Dec. 29.

OLYMPICS | Players don't care about wins and losses, only about having fun

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Thornton said that all the athletes on the Kirksville Special Olympics basketball team are similar to Jared Niemeyer in that they just enjoy getting out on the court.

"They're always excited with how they've done," she said. "They don't care if they've lost or if they've won."

Jared, who has Down's Syndrome, said he's been playing basketball for about two years. Jared also competes in bowling, soccer and track and field. Dan Niemeyer, Jared's father, said Jared and his teammates enjoy participating in athletics.

"The big thing is, it's just athletics and socialization," Dan Niemeyer said. "[That] is what it's all about."

Dan Niemeyer said his son first became involved in other sports like track and field before taking to the basketball court.

"He just likes shooting baskets and watching his older brother play and stuff like that," Niemeyer said. "So that's [why he got involved]."

Like Jared, all the Special Olympics athletes on the court last night have a developmental disability of some kind. But

that doesn't stop them from having fun or from finding athletic success. Earlier this season, the Kirksville team went undefeated in a Special Olympics basketball tournament in Mexico, Mo. Next month the team will compete in a regional competition and they will play in a state competition in March.

On the court Wednesday night, Jared and his teammates were rebounding, passing to their teammates and hustling on the court. One player ended up in the bleachers after his hard pursuit of the basketball.

Last night's roster included some players who are long-time basketball veterans. Take Lennie Henson, for example. Henson, 27, said she's been playing basketball since the fifth grade — and she can't get enough of the sport.

"It's fun," Henson said. Henson said she loves shooting the basketball.

At the end of last night's game, Henson said she wasn't really sure if her team won or lost. It didn't matter.

Because sometimes it's not about winning and losing. Sometimes it's about simply getting to play.

3-PT | MIAA shooting higher mark this year

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University of Nebraska-Omaha head coach Derrin Hansen, whose team is leading the nation with a 43.8 three-point percentage, said he doesn't think the change has affected the game at all. He said the only difference is that UNO is going under screens more often than they were last year.

The statistics show little difference from season to season. Heading into last night's game against Pittsburg State University, Truman was making 32.5 percent of its three-point attempts. Estridge's percentage dropped from 34.5 to 30.6, and sophomore guard Alex Henderson's percentage dropped from 46.2 to 39.7.

Henderson said he could feel the distance change at the beginning of the year but not anymore, and the only difference for him comes off the dribble.

Although Truman's percentage is slightly down from last season, the MIAA as a whole has improved from 35.5 percent last year to 36.7 percent this year.

Even without conference newcomer UNO, the MIAA has still improved to 36 percent.

As far as separating the long- and short-range shooters, the extra foot could have stopped weaker shooters from shooting threes. The Bulldogs are shooting more than three fewer three-

pointers per game than they did last season, but in the entire MIAA, the stat is only down 0.4 percent. The fact that weaker shooters are taking fewer shots could be the reason the percentages have not changed.

"I actually think it makes [teams] stronger," Thurman said. "There's probably less people taking those shots out there and the ones who are taking them are the ones who should be taking them."

The new line could spur more changes in the future, most notably a wider lane. The top of the key no longer intersects with the middle of the three-point line. But Schrader, who has experienced playing with a wider lane in Europe, said the change would not affect anything.

"Then that makes no difference too, because then you're moving the post out closer to the three-point line, which makes it easier to sag," he said.

Even though the new line might not affect the college game, it can give long-range shooters a stepping-stone if they are interested in playing in the NBA.

"It should be different from high school, there's no question about that," Thurman said. "I think there should be a distance difference from high school to college just like there is from high school to the NBA. I think it was a good move."

SMITH | Coach has watched just one film from Bulldogs' 2007-08 season to help instill new season, new style philosophy

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from the 2007-08 team that finished 16-13. Just two freshmen joined the program this season to help ease the loss of graduated seniors.

But Smith said he's not concerned about what happened in the past that led Truman to where it sits today as a program. In fact, Smith said that this summer after he was hired, he didn't watch a single film of a Bulldog game from last season. To this day, Smith only has watched one film — Truman's game last season against Quincy University — of the 2007-08 Bulldog team.

"I didn't want to prejudge this team because I'm a different coach," Smith said. "So I never watched any film [except for before the Quincy game]. It was a new team, it was a new year, it was a new coach, it was a new style, and I wanted everybody to start off on the same playing field."

But just because Smith hasn't viewed much film of past Bulldog teams, it doesn't mean he doesn't recognize the importance of video preparation. Smith said he constantly is trying to better understand the game, and as a result, he said he sometimes tapes televised Div. I women's basketball games and reviews the film later. By doing this, Smith said he hopes to learn something — such as a new inbounds play — that he can implement in his program.

Smith also has emphasized to his players the importance of film in scouting and preparation.

"Last year's film [with Sloop] was

more of just like a quick preview," Mueller said earlier this month. "This year, coach really tries to show us the plays of the other team and make sure that we know them well and maybe their defensive style too. ... He really believes that [film is] an important part of the learning process."

Slowly, Smith is starting to see the results of his efforts. Despite Truman's poor overall and conference records, the Bulldogs have been in the lead late in the second half in several games before letting the game slip away.

Eight times this season — including three of the last four MIAA games — the Bulldogs have lost by six points or fewer. Against

Emporia State University and the University of Central Missouri — the MIAA's top two teams — Truman had the lead in each game with less than nine minutes to play.

Smith also is using his background in recruiting to try to add talent and depth for next season's Bulldog team. Smith, who was the recruiting coordinator at Div. I University of Arkansas-Little Rock for two seasons, and assistant coach Taira Roth — also in her first season at Truman — hit the recruiting trail hard this season. Five players signed National Letters of Intent last semester to play for Truman next season.

"That's his bread and butter," Roth said of Smith's recruiting.

Smith keeps a piece of paper in his office with the number 92-162 written on it. That number represents the overall record and losing atmosphere of the University of Con-

necticut's women's basketball program before legendary coach Geno Auriemma was hired in 1985. Since then, UConn has won five NCAA Div. I titles and is one of women's basketball's top programs.

Smith said his goal is to transform the perception of Truman women's basketball, just like Auriemma did at UConn.

"Three or four or five years from now, people are never going to remember that [losing perception] if I do my job," Smith said. "That's what I expect."

Roth, for one, said she thinks Smith is up for his latest challenge.

"There's not a question that this program will get turned around," Roth said. "There's no question in my mind that we, at some point, will be competing for a conference championship. ... His determination to get this thing turned around is great."

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