



SPORTS

NEAR PERFECT

Michael Stair pitches one-hitter in 2-1 victory

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Thursday, March 19, 2009

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Skoch leaves post for West Texas A&M

Assistant coach Briney will be among candidates vying for vacant head coaching position

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

A new face will be roaming the sidelines for the volleyball team when it opens play next fall. Head coach Jason Skoch resigned last Wednesday to take the same position at Div. II West Texas A&M University.

Skoch applied for the opening two weeks ago and was offered the job last Wednesday. Both Truman and West Texas agreed not to release information about the hiring until Skoch had a chance to tell his team. Skoch met with the players Sunday night and informed them of his decision.

"It would take a great situation to pull me away from [the players at Truman]," Skoch said. "I love my team, and I love what we've got going on. Not just the success on the court, those girls are awesome. They're the sole reason I stayed at Truman."

Director of Athletics Jerry Wollmering said there is no firm timetable on finding a replacement for Skoch but said he hopes to have a new coach in place by the end of the spring semester.

Assistant coach Ben Briney will not go with Skoch to West Texas. Briney is applying for the vacant head coach position, and he will be considered to replace Skoch. Briney will continue to run spring practice for the team while the search for a new coach goes on.

"I'm saddened to see [Skoch] leave," Wollmering said. "I really thoroughly enjoyed working with [him]. I think he's a great coach. I think he's a great person. We're losing an all-around great person for our volleyball team and our community."

"It would take a great situation to pull me away from [the players at Truman]. I love my team."

Jason Skoch
Former Truman volleyball head coach

Skoch said the final deciding factor for leaving Truman was that the West Texas job allows for a better situation for his family. Skoch and his wife Karen are both originally from Oklahoma, and Skoch said the chance to coach closer to home was too great to pass up. He said the move cuts his drive time to see his family in half. Skoch said the new job will increase his salary, which gives his wife Karen a chance to be a stay-at-home mom for the couple's 1-year-old son Jay.

West Texas' Director of Athletics Michael McBroon said Skoch's salary will be \$60,000 with a chance to earn more through bonuses. Skoch earned \$42,320 in 2007-08 at Truman, according to the Missouri Blue Book.

Skoch also said West Texas offers other

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Blake Toppmeyer/Index
Former head coach Jason Skoch watches his team at the national tournament this year. Skoch had a 137-22 record in four years at Truman.

Briney deserves shot as head coach

The Bulldog volleyball program is going down the toilet.

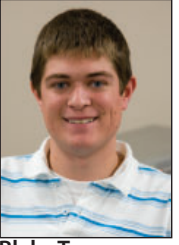
At least, that was my original thought last Friday when I heard that Truman volleyball head coach Jason Skoch was resigning from his post to take the head coaching position at West Texas A&M University.

Even before the loss of Skoch, I knew next year's Bulldog team would have to overcome the loss of six seniors, including three All-Americans. Combine this with the subtraction of a coach who compiled a .862 winning percentage in four seasons at Truman, and I sensed a program deep in turmoil.

But upon further review, I realized all is not lost, and the Bulldogs are not destined for an 11th-place MIAA finish next season.

Despite the loss of Skoch and the

COMMENTARY



Blake Toppmeyer

Swimming Nationals



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Junior Kate Aherne had four top-three individual finishes at the national meet last week. The women placed fourth.

Aherne leads women's swimming to fourth place

Junior repeats as individual champion in 200-yard individual medley

BY KRISTA CRIDER
Staff Reporter

The NCAA Div. II National Championships March 11 to 14 in Houston, Texas, proved to be a bittersweet ending to an impressive season for the women's swimming team.

Their fourth-place finish this year snapped a 10-year streak of finishing third or better at nationals.

"We couldn't have done any better than we did," head coach Mark Gole said. "We had a few little minor mis-

takes, but in the grand scheme of things, they wouldn't have helped us move up. Everybody, in my opinion, did a very good job."

The Bulldogs finished with 333 points at the meet, behind the University of California-San Diego with 425, Wayne State University (Mich.) with 453.5 and the national champions Drury University (Mo.) with 618.5 points. The Bulldogs produced multiple All-American athletes, including junior Kate Aherne and senior Erika Anderson, who earned seven All-American honors each. Gole said many of the athletes on the team gave fantastic performances.

"I can't think of any specific highlight because, in my opinion, we had countless ones," Gole said.

Gole went on to highlight multiple swims, including Aherne's 200-yard individual medley championship race in which she broke her own Div. II national record that she set that morning. Gole called it one of the biggest swims he's ever seen.

Gole also praised Aherne's second-place finish by .01 seconds in the 50-yard freestyle, which took place 15 minutes after her championship victory in the 200-yard individual medley, and her school record-breaking race in the 400-yard freestyle relay, which placed second. Aherne swam a 49.88 in the 100-yard freestyle to shatter the school record by almost a second. Aherne said she was proud of how the entire team performed at the meet.

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4th place still something to take pride in

If it's any indication of how hard it has become to win the Div. II swimming and diving nationals, head coach Mark Gole said he is just as happy with the women's fourth-place finish this year as he was with their first-place finish last year.

"We could not have done any better than we did," Gole said. That's right. The women had their worst finish in 11 years, their score was nearly doubled by national champion Drury University and only 10 swimmers scored individually, down from 14 last year. And they had a great meet.

The swimming team should not be thrown under the bus for finishing fourth. They still will tie the volleyball team this year for the title of most successful Truman sports program, and they train as hard as anyone. Monday, on his first day back from the tournament, Gole had the non-national qualifiers run 3.1 miles before jumping in the pool to swim 2,000 yards.

Without further ado, here are five positives to take from this year's meet.

1. Junior Kate Aherne
Aherne finished first, second, second and third in her four individual events. None of the results come as a surprise. Aherne is the type of athlete who can

make you forget Truman competes at the Div. II level. She has 20 All-Americans from three years on the team. The maximum she could have right now is 21.

To understand the talent Aherne has, look no further than her results on Day 1. In the prelims of the 200-yard individual medley, she broke her own national record. In the finals of the same race, she broke her record again. Then, 15 minutes later, she finished second in the 50-yard freestyle by .01 seconds to break another school record.

On Day 3 Aherne set her third and final school record of the meet in the 100-yard freestyle. The previous record belonged to Diana Betsworth, the best swimmer in Truman's history. Any time a Betsworth record falls, it's worth noting.

Next year Aherne could win as many as four individual national titles — something Betsworth never did in a single season.

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COMMENTARY



Jack Nicholl

Men place 20th at NCAA

Stokes, Kaestner and Berdine grab All-American awards in individual events.

BY LOGAN JACKSON
Staff Reporter

It might not seem that impressive, but considering the competition, senior Jason Stokes said it's a place the men's swimming team will accept.

The Bulldogs finished 20th out of 28 teams at the NCAA Div. II National Meet last week.

"[This meet] was great," Stokes said. "Everybody swam lights-out. The guys stepped

up when we needed them to. Almost everyone went lifetime bests. Records were broken, and everyone did really, really well."

Stokes led the way for Truman in the last meet of his collegiate career. He earned five All-American awards by finishing in the top 16 in one individual event and four relay events. His individual All-American came in the 50-yard freestyle.

Stokes finishes his career with a total of 17 All-American awards.

This national meet was one of the fastest that Div. II has seen. To put things in perspective, Stokes finished the 50-yard freestyle with a time of 20.51 and earned 16th place. Last year

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Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Senior Jason Stokes placed 16th in the 50-yard freestyle at the March 11 to 14 national meet in Houston, Texas. The men placed 20th.