'Dogs win two on road

Win vs. SBU snaps streak, highlights weekend for women

BY JACK NICHOLL
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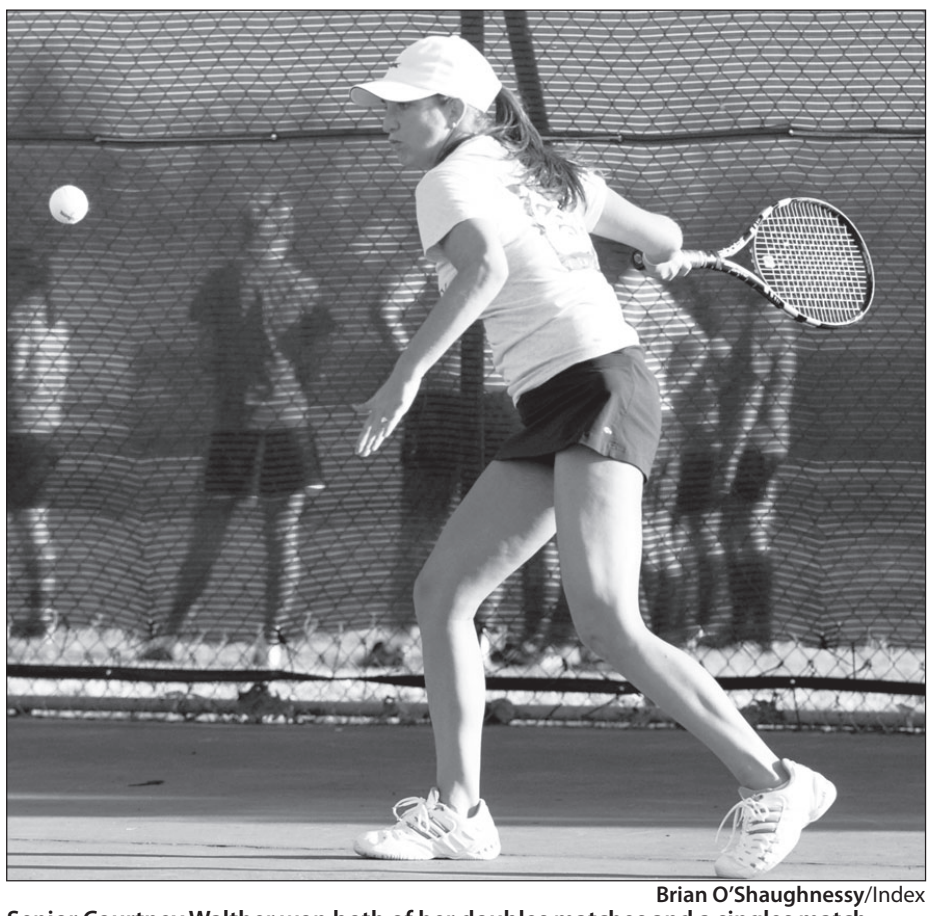


Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Senior Courtney Walther won both of her doubles matches and a singles match against Southwest Baptist and Missouri Southern during the weekend. The win against SBU marked the first time in Walther's career Truman beat the Bearcats.

Entering this season, seniors Lindsy Blair and Courtney Walther had never defeated Southwest Baptist University in six tries.

That changed last Friday.

The Bulldogs defeated SBU 6-3 in the conference opener, and they followed with an 8-1 victory Saturday against Missouri Southern State University. The six wins against SBU matched Truman's combined total against the Bearcats in three matches last year.

"[It was] huge to beat Baptist right off," head coach Pete Kendall said.

With the wins this weekend, the 'Dogs improve to 9-0 in dual matches and 2-0 in conference.

Truman last defeated SBU in the spring of the 2005 season, and since then, SBU has had the 'Dogs' number, especially in postseason play.

"I think that was a huge win for us," Walther said, echoing Kendall's statement. "… It gives us more momentum for the rest of the season, because we knew in the beginning that that was going to be one of our tough matches in conference."

The Bulldogs won two of three doubles matches to start off, with victories at No. 1 and No. 2. It was the first time since 2002 that Truman won more than one doubles match against SBU.

"One thing we always had to deal with against SBU was our doubles because I know last year, we never won more than one out of three doubles matches going into singles matches," Walther said. "And that really hurts you when you are already on a 2-1 or 3-0 deficit."

In singles, the women recorded wins at No. 1 and Nos. 3 through 6. At No. 2, sophomore Amy Ochs was defeated 3-6, 1-6 by Jenna Hendrickson — the same player who ended Ochs' 24-match singles winning streak last season at the conference tournament. Ochs is 1-2 against Hendrickson in her career.

At No. 5 singles, freshman Dagmar Velez survived another tight first set in a 7-6 (8-4), 6-4 victory. But the closest match was at No. 4, where freshman Ellen Russell won 6-1, 2-6, 6-2. After their singles matches ended, Blair and Walther stood next to the court for the last part of the match and gave Russell pointers. The two took an increased leadership role last weekend because Kendall was not able to attend the meet.

"[Blair and Walther] were just standing by me the whole time and cheering me on and talking to me every switch over and just really motivating me," Russell said.

Russell was successful against MSSU as well, as she won her singles match 6-2, 6-0. She has yet to lose any match this spring — singles or doubles — and she has a 14-2 singles record overall.

In doubles, Russell and Ochs did not lose a game all weekend. They are 12-1 as a pair this season. Russell said she plays more of a net game while Ochs is more of a baseline player.

"I feel like our games blend really well together," Russell said. "She has amazing ground strokes and so it sets me up a lot for up at the net."

Russell wasn't the only successful player in the MSSU match, which was originally scheduled outdoors but was moved indoors because of weather. The 'Dogs only loss was at No. 1 singles, and many of the matches were not close. Truman did not lose a game at No. 2 singles and in two of the doubles matches.

The women have matches this weekend at Emporia State University, Washburn University and Lewis University (Ill.). Kendall said Washburn is one of the top teams in the conference.

Streak against SBU continues

No. 2 men's doubles team records only win in MIAA opener

BY JACK NICHOLL
Assistant Sports Editor

The men's tennis team historically has had trouble against Southwest Baptist University.

SBU knocked Truman out of the NCAA Tournament in three out of the last four seasons, and the Bulldogs have not defeated the Bearcats since spring 2001.

The streak continued last Friday.

Truman lost 8-1 at No. 22 SBU in its conference opener, despite SBU having replaced two of its top players from last year.

"I feel they were deeper than in past years, all the way down to [No.] 6, and their doubles were a little bit better, which I wasn't expecting," junior Kyle Schlotz said. "They surprised me. They were a good team."

Schlotz had the closest match of the day at No. 3 singles in a 7-6 (8-6), 4-6, 4-6 defeat. His match was the only one to reach three sets, but none of the other matches were blowouts — Truman was bageled in only one set all day and 10 of the 16 sets were decided by three games or fewer.

"The score was a little less indicative of the way it really looked," head coach Pete Kendall said. "We had two or three other matches that were really close. Certainly the team score could have been 6-3, easy."

One of the players SBU lost in the offseason was its No. 1 singles player, which meant many of the players on both teams had never played each other before. Junior Steven Hipkiss said the new competition threw Truman slightly off.

> "If we play to our potential, I think they're not unbeatable."
>
> **Kyle Schlotz**
> Junior

The 'Dogs' only win came from the No. 2 doubles pairing of Hipkiss and junior Peter Bracha, and even that one came down to the wire. Bracha and Hipkiss went up on an early break, but their serve was broken at 7-5 and they had to break back to close out the match.

"We thought, you know, we pretty much had it in the bag … then all of a sudden it was tied and we thought we might be in for a dogfight," Hipkiss said.

Bracha and Hipkiss are an undefeated 4-0 this season at No. 2 doubles. Hipkiss partnered with freshman Eric McCullough in the fall because Bracha was studying abroad.

"Overall, I think we played really well," Bracha said. "We were focused the entire match and that's the most important thing for us."

Truman lost the other two doubles matches 8-4 and 8-2. In singles, Schlotz and sophomore Colin Boswell at No. 5 singles had the two closest matchups. Boswell lost 6-7 (6-8), 4-6.

Although Schlotz didn't win his singles match, the score was much closer than the first time he played against No. 3 SBU player Agustin Mollar last spring. In that match, which SBU also won 8-1, Mollar was victorious 6-4, 6-3.

"I feel like I'm improved, because I kind of remember playing him and … I wasn't even competing against him," Schlotz said.

Truman and SBU usually play each other more than once every season — they have had at least one postseason dual match every year since 2003. If the teams meet later this year, the result could be different.

"If we play up to our potential, I think they're not unbeatable, because we have a deep team too, and I feel we should win a lot of four-to-six matches," Schlotz said.

The men were supposed to play another match Tuesday against Missouri Baptist University, but the match was cancelled because of weather conditions. The match will not be made up because Baptist does not have room to fill its schedule later in the season. Truman performed well against MBU earlier this season at the Principia Tournament on Feb. 13.

The 'Dogs will have their hands full this weekend with more conference competition. Weather permitting, they will play away matches against Emporia State University tomorrow and Washburn University on Saturday. Just like SBU, the last time the 'Dogs defeated Washburn was in 2001.

TRUMAN ATHLETICS
News and Notes

Wrestling: Team wins academic national title

The Truman wrestling team accomplished something this season that no other Div. II wrestling program ever has. For the third straight season, the team earned the title of Academic National Champions.

This title ties the Bulldogs with the Colorado School of Mines for the most academic championships with five.

"Our No. 1 team goal starting the season was to win back-to-back-to-back National Academic Titles," head coach Dave Schutter said. "We focused on that, and we got that mission accomplished. But then on the other side we probably didn't put enough into our training. We might have let some things slide because we were so focused on winning one of those."

Schutter said the team now has a new achievement to work toward.

"Next year, we have that history behind us now and we're going to get refocused and now step up to a new level on the athletic side of it," he said. "We've never had three All-Americans in a year and now that's our new No. 1 goal."

The Academic National Champion is determined by averaging the cumulative GPA of 10 members of the team, eight of whom must have competed in their squad's Div. II National Qualifying Tournament.

Nine Bulldogs were named Academic All-Americans. Junior Dean Schultz was named to the second team and eight others received honorable mention.

"We have study hall all year long," Schutter said. "Guys help if somebody is [having difficulty] in a class and somebody has already had it before, they'll say, 'Hey, you need to study for this or you need to prepare a little harder for this class than you normally would.' So everybody helps everybody out."

Tennis: Kendall misses meets with injury

Head tennis coach Pete Kendall missed the men's and women's tennis matches last weekend because of an injury to his quadriceps tendon. Kendall recently injured his leg putting the windscreen down while sanding the tennis court.

"Didn't realize [the windscreen] had gotten on the ground behind me, and I went to take another step back and it had trapped my feet," Kendall said last week.

Kendall currently has a brace on his leg, and he had surgery performed more than two weeks ago. After the brace is taken off, Kendall said he will start rehabilitation. He said the leg should be back to full strength by the start of the 2009-10 school year.

Doctors told Kendall to avoid the long car rides for the meets last weekend and this upcoming weekend. Instead of Kendall, assistant volleyball coach Ben Briney traveled with the team last weekend and Associate Athletics Director Linda Anderson will travel with the teams this weekend, Kendall said last week.

Briney was the head athletic trainer for three sports, including tennis, when he worked at Southwest Baptist University.

Senior Courtney Walther said Briney talked to some of the Bulldogs during their matches, including Walther and her doubles partner senior Lindsy Blair.

"[Briney] gave us some good advice and he told us, I guess in both of our doubles matches, just to play our game, because if we keep it in play, they're the one's [who] are going to make the errors," Walther said.

Women's Tennis: Russell earns MIAA award

Freshman Ellen Russell was named MIAA Player of the Week for the week of competition that ended March 22.

Russell went undefeated in singles and doubles matches against Lincoln University, Southwest Baptist University and Missouri Southern State University. Russell and her doubles partner, sophomore Amy Ochs, dropped just three games in doubles in the span.

Including the fall season, Russell is 16-2 at No. 4 singles and 12-1 at No. 2 doubles. She has not yet dropped a match in the spring season.

Football: Emokpae expects to return by May

Junior wide receiver Vanness Emokpae continues to battle back from an ACL injury that sidelined him for 10 of 11 games during the 2009 football season.

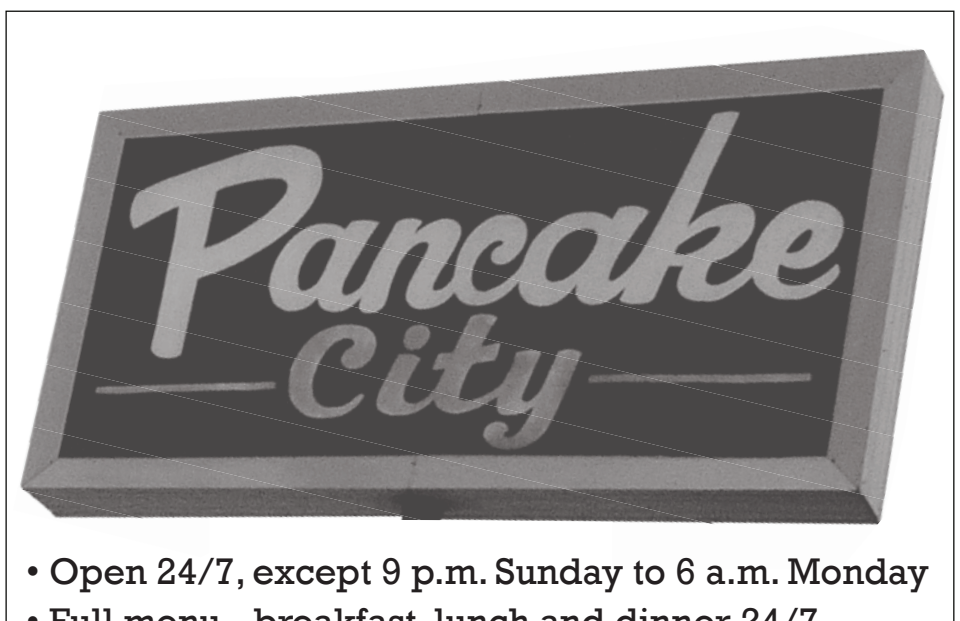
Emokpae said he expects to be cleared for full contact in May. He said he won't participate in the Bulldogs' intrasquad Spring Game in April. But Emokpae said he will participate in non-contact drills during spring practice, which starts Monday.

In 2007, Emokpae had a team-high 462 receiving yards and was second on the team with 35 receptions. Emokpae was injured during Week 1 of the 2008 season. He caught one pass for 11 yards in his only game. Because he played just one game, Emokpae qualified for a medical redshirt, meaning he will have two more years of athletic eligibility.

Baseball: Records fall from 23-20 slugfest

During Truman's 23-20 loss to Pittsburgh State University on Sunday, several offensive conference and team records fell. Pitt State tied an MIAA record with nine home runs during the game. Pitt State shortstop Rhett Rigby tied an MIAA record with four home runs in four consecutive at-bats. The 13 total homeruns for the game were one short of the NCAA Div. II record.

This was the seventh time in school history the Bulldogs have scored at least 20 runs. But they have lost each of the last three games during which they scored at least 20 runs. The last time the Bulldogs won a game in which they scored at least 20 runs was a 25-6 victory against Missouri Valley College in 1992.



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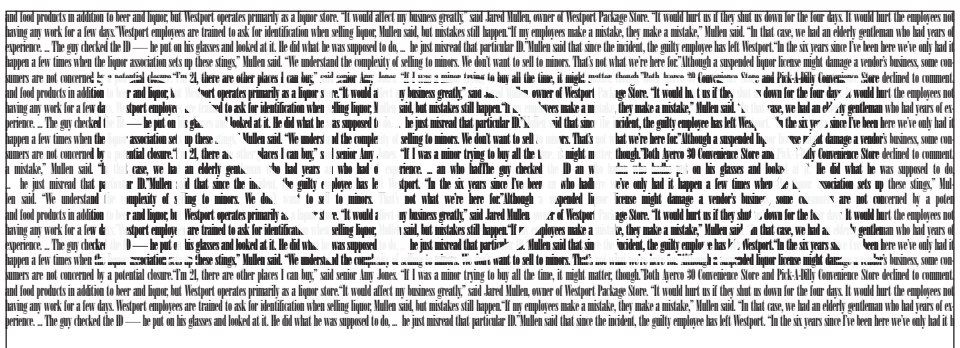

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