



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Senior guard Eli Medina squares up against UCM's Kara Fleming during Saturday's game. Medina largely shut down Fleming on the defensive end, which was a big factor in Truman's 83-58 victory. The Bulldogs finished the season 8-19.

# Senior trio leads women to victory

**Bulldogs win four of season's final six games, finish 8-19**

BY BLAKE TOPPMEYER  
Sports Editor

Saturday was a day for the seniors, and the women's basketball team's senior trio did not disappoint.

Senior forward Georgia Mueller scored 23 points and grabbed nine rebounds, senior center Sarah Gordon tied a career high with 10 points and added five rebounds and senior guard Eli Medina played lockdown defense against one of the MIAA's top point guards.

Backed by the efforts of the three seniors, Truman defeated the University of Central Missouri 83-58 on Senior Day in Pershing Arena.

The Bulldogs finished the season 8-19, 5-15 in the MIAA, and won four of their last six games. Truman also finished in a tie for eighth place in the conference standings and only missed out on a spot in the MIAA tournament because of tiebreaking scenarios.

"We couldn't have ended it any better," head coach Michael Smith said. "There's nothing better than winning your last game of the season."

The Bulldogs led 42-36 at halftime and used a 20-5 run that spanned the first 10 minutes of the second half to put the game away. UCM made just one second-half field goal during the first nine and a half minutes of the second half.

Saturday marked the Bulldogs' biggest win against an MIAA opponent since Truman beat the University of Missouri-Rolla 61-23 on Jan.

23, 2002.

The Jennies (17-10, 12-8) shot just 40 percent from the floor while Truman posted a season-best 60 percent shooting clip. Medina led Truman's defensive performance with her efforts in slowing down UCM's point guard Kara Fleming, who leads the MIAA in assists per game and was selected as Second Team All-MIAA. Fleming had seven points, three assists and three turnovers Saturday and played just 23 minutes. She spent most of the game in foul trouble and eventually fouled out.

"Eli was the difference [Saturday] on Fleming — she frustrated her, got her in foul trouble," Smith said. "And Fleming's the one that hurt us at their place."

Fleming scored 18 points and had seven assists in UCM's 59-55 win against Truman on Jan. 23. Medina played just 21 minutes in that game and did not start because she was still transitioning to the basketball team after finishing her career with the volleyball team in December. Medina started Saturday and played 33 minutes. She guarded Fleming whenever Fleming was on the floor.

"I think if you come out right in the beginning and you're just kind of bumping them, bugging them, letting them know you're there, I think that kind of gets in their head a little bit," Medina said. "[Fleming] was in foul trouble early, and it just kind of wore on her throughout the game."

For Mueller, Saturday's game was a fitting end to her career. She scored 23 points on 8-of-11 shooting and finished her career with 1,897 career

points. Mueller ranks second on Truman's all-time scoring list. She also ranks third in all-time rebounds, first in blocks and second in field-goal percentage.

Mueller has said throughout the season that she's struggled to adjust to the new offense and strategies of Smith, who is in his first season as Truman's head coach. But Mueller finished the season playing her best basketball. Mueller averaged 19.7 points and 8.2 rebounds per game during the final six games of the season.

"I just wanted to go back to playing my game," Mueller said of her performance Saturday. "It was a tough transition [to a new coach,] and I was going to go out, and I was going to play my game how I play."

Mueller said she received help Saturday from her teammates' good shooting, which limited UCM's effectiveness in double teaming her in the post.

Gordon was one of the Bulldogs who shot well. The 6-foot-4 senior knocked down all four of her field-goal attempts. Gordon capped off the win by draining her first career three-pointer with 22 seconds remaining.

"It felt awesome," Gordon said. "There's not a better way to go out."

Gordon received sporadic playing time throughout her three seasons at Truman after transferring from the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga, but she clocked 16 minutes in her final game.

"Twenty years from now when I look back on this, I'm not going to think about all the games I didn't play in," Gordon said. "I'm going to remember today. It was really special."

## CHASING JARRARD

Senior forward Georgia Mueller finished her career second on Truman's all-time point leaderboard. She passed three players on the leaderboard during the season.

- POINT LEADERBOARD**
1. CAROL JARRARD: 2,006
  2. GEORGIA MUELLER: 1,897
  3. FELICIA SUTTON: 1,578
  4. AMY EAGAN: 1,527

# Georgia finishes strong, ends career playing her way

Senior forward Georgia Mueller caught the pass in the lane, about six feet away from the basket, with her back to the hoop.

No sooner had Mueller caught the pass than a second defender from the University of Central Missouri converged on her in the post. But Mueller quickly pivoted, split the two UCM defenders and shot a soft, right-handed layup that glanced off the backboard and fell through the net for Mueller's second field goal of Saturday's game, her last in a Bulldog uniform.

The basket wasn't flashy. Most fans in Pershing Arena probably didn't even notice the play's significance: Mueller had just beaten two defenders to score a basket with ease.

It was nothing out of the ordinary for Mueller, though. She battled two — sometimes three — defenders for most of her Truman career, which ended after Mueller scored 23 points in the women's basketball team's 83-58 win against UCM on Saturday.

"[Opponents] were just determined to stop her," said Hank Janssen, Bulldogs' color commentator on KRES radio. "You stop her, and you'd win

the game. And so she saw [double-teams] all year."

Even with multiple defenders guarding her, few opponents were able to shut down Mueller. She finished her career second on Truman's all-time scoring list and ranked in the top four all-time of numerous categories.

Mueller averaged 19 points and 8.6 rebounds per game from her sophomore through senior seasons.

She started working against double teams in her first practice as a Bulldog. Former head coach John Sloop, who recruited Mueller and coached her for three seasons, believed in double-teaming post players in games. Thus, Mueller always had to go against two defenders in practice. This prepared her for what she started seeing in games as her career progressed.

Mueller quickly picked up offensive techniques that not only helped her score against two defenders, but also against taller defenders. For most of her career, the 5-foot-11 Mueller was the tallest Bulldog on the floor. Even as the tallest Bulldog, she was undersized for a center. Mueller drew the tallest defender on the other team, meaning she consistently battled

against players who were a couple of inches taller than her.

Because Mueller couldn't simply shoot over the taller defenders, she found a way to work the angles or use her body to shield defenders and prevent a blocked shot. The jump hook — both right- and left-handed — became a prominent shot in her repertoire, and by her junior season, she had perfected a fade-away jump shot.

It was a fade-away shot that Mueller wasn't even allowed to shoot in high school. Mueller said her coach at Springfield High School (Ill.) encouraged her to go strong to the basket, instead of fading away.

But after getting a few of her shots blocked in college, Mueller said she realized she needed a weapon to use against taller defenders. The fade-away jumper was the answer.

"I'm shorter, I'm smaller and believe it or not, I'm not really strong compared to the girls I play against," Mueller said. "Having those girls block you a couple times, that's all it takes to realize, 'All right, maybe instead of trying to go through them, I'm going to pretend like I'm going to go through you and then fade away.'"

Mueller dominated during her junior year largely because of her accurate fade-away shot. In what turned out to be her best season statistically, Mueller averaged 22 points and 9.7 rebounds per game in 2007-08.

But after her standout junior season, Mueller began this season with a target on her back. Mueller was the only returning starter from 2007-08, and Janssen said opponents naturally planned their defense with a focus on stopping Mueller.

"People are looking at this team and thinking, 'My gosh, Mueller is the only one back, just about. If we shut her butt down, they're not going to beat us,'" Janssen said. "So they ran two and three and bodies [at her], and that was the game plan every time. And when you're the game plan for the other team, it's kind of out of the question to duplicate what you did last year."

Mueller also clashed with first-year head coach Michael Smith early in the season. Mueller said Smith tried to change her offensive style of play. Mueller said she started the season trying to play Smith's style — but her production suffered.

"He made me second-guess what I was good at," Mueller said. "And I'd really never had a coach that had that ability to make me [second-guess]. They just kind of left what I was good at alone, even though it was unique. ... He just kind of made me wonder, 'Do I really know what to do?'"

But Mueller did know what to do, and by the end of the season, Mueller said she decided to block out all distractions and go back to playing the game her way.



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Senior forward Georgia Mueller works against three defenders during Saturday's game against UCM. Mueller often was double- or triple-teamed during her career.

The results spoke for themselves. Mueller scored at least 22 points in three of her final five games, and she resembled her 2007-08 form as this season came to a close.

"What I do, I know that it's not normal, in the sense that I do have a unique approach to the game," Mueller said. "It

might be unique, but it was effective. And the way I play, people don't necessarily like it, but it works, and it's my game, and it's how I play."

And when Mueller was on her game, there wasn't a player in the MIAA — or two players, for that matter — who could stop her.

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