

Bulls victorious vs. Cowboys, fall to Sooners

BY ARRON HUSTEAD
Staff Reporter

It will take more than a snowstorm to derail the Bulls this season.

The men's rugby team traveled to Manhattan, Kan., last weekend and started off its season with a 1-1 record.

Despite numerous position changes and the introduction of several new players in the lineup, the Bulls got off to a quick start against Oklahoma State University and won their first match of the spring season, 25-7.

The team stayed overnight in Topeka, Kan., and made the trip to Manhattan in less than desirable weather.

"We awoke to just short of blizzard conditions," head coach Bill Sexton said. "It was very

cold, windy, and there was a couple of inches of snow on the ground. The field we were going to play on ... had about two inches of snow on it."

The game started later than anticipated because of the snow. The team stretched and tried to keep warm indoors as some of the snow melted off the field.

Sexton said the Bulls looked a little rusty early in the game. Senior vice captain Dustin Ralph and his brother, freshman Jason Ralph, each scored a try in the first half, helping the Bulls to a 15-0 halftime lead. Sophomore Aaron Loida recorded a conversion and scored on a penalty kick in the first half.

"It was very windy, and we actually had the wind in the first half," Sexton said. "Obviously, the wind made it difficult in the

second half, so we actually had to play a lot smarter, move the ball with two hands and actually started playing much better in the second half."

Dustin scored his second try in the second half and senior Michael Deckard added another try to extend the Bulls' lead.

"I'm very impressed with the way the guys played as the course of the game went on," Sexton said. "They have a very big forward pack, and we understood their size quite well."

In the second match of the weekend, the Bulls lost 38-14 to University of Oklahoma in slightly better conditions than the Oklahoma State game. Sexton said the Bulls played better against Oklahoma than against Oklahoma State, but Oklahoma has a much better team.

The Sooners got off to a quick start against the Bulls, taking a 12-0 lead in the early minutes of the first half.

The Bulls answered with a try by senior Dylan Rohr. He picked up a loose ball behind a ruck near the try zone and ran it in for the score.

"It was a pretty simple score," Rohr said. "It wasn't much on my part. It's everyone else driving down the field, and I just put the finishing touch I guess."

Rohr's try narrowed the gap to 12-7, but it wasn't long before the Sooners started to pull away.

"Oklahoma played very staunch defense [and] attacked very well," Sexton said. "They were very aggressive and managed to put in two more tries, both of them directly off of our mistakes."

Oklahoma led 24-7 at the half, and Truman was unable to catch up. The Bulls responded to Oklahoma's first try of the second half with one of their own by junior Phil Powell, but couldn't mount a comeback. The Sooners scored one more try but the Bulls did not score again.

Only 18 members of the team made the trip this weekend. The Bulls debuted several new starters and a few veteran players tested new positions.

Senior team captain Justin Lacy moved from flanker to inside center.

"It was interesting and different," Lacy said. "Everyone's adapting very well. To be a complete player, you have to be able to play anywhere. I think it's going very well, much better than we expected

this weekend for sure."

Lacy said the move means he will play a more active role in the offense whereas before, his primary concern was defense.

The win against Oklahoma State should bolster the team's confidence as it adapts to the new teammates and new positions, Lacy said.

"Some of the new guys came in this weekend and really stepped up," Lacy said. "Everyone got to play this weekend. They all showed a lot of potential. They all showed they have what it takes. It's just going to [take] a little bit more time and training to get them up to that next level."

The Bulls have another tough opponent on the horizon as they travel to take on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln tomorrow.



File Photo

Junior outfielder Keaton Jones, shown here in a game last season, had five RBIs last weekend and hit his second career home run. He is leading the team in most major hitting categories this season.

Move to No. 3 slot pays off for Jones

BY JACK NICHOLL
Assistant Sports Editor

For the first nine games this season, baseball head coach Dan Davis slotted either freshman shortstop Steven Rose or sophomore first baseman Matt Herrick third in the batting lineup.

But in the four-game series at Fort Hays State University last weekend, Davis shook things up. He moved Herrick and Rose to the No. 4 and No. 5 slots, where hitters see more fastballs, to make room for junior outfielder Keaton Jones in the No. 3 hole.

Jones, who usually hits leadoff or No. 2, responded with an 8-for-14 weekend with five RBIs and two runs scored. He also hit the "Dogs" first home run of the season. It was the first time in Jones' career he hit No. 3.

"His approach is always the same, and that's why he's such a good hitter," Davis said. "He is always confident in the box, he knows what he can do, and he just goes and does his thing."

Jones played his new role to perfection in his first at-bat in Saturday's game. After sophomores centerfielder Kenny Swanson and second baseman Luke Crader led off the game with singles, Jones sent a 1-0 fastball over the fence to give the "Dogs" an early lead.

"It was perfect," Davis said. "Couldn't ask for a better start to a game."

Both of Jones' career home runs have come at the Fort Hays ballpark, where strong winds tend to blow out toward the fences.

Overall for the weekend, Jones either drove in or scored on two-thirds of the team's runs. He hit a combined 7-for-8 in two of the games, and the team did not score in the two contests in which Jones' production was down.

"I think part of it was the pitching, and I think part of it was we couldn't really get a rhythm going throughout the lineup," Jones said of the two scoreless games.

Jones answered Davis' call in more ways than one. At the beginning of this season, Davis decided not to appoint two player captains, as he did during his first two years as Truman's head coach. Instead, Davis decided to let leaders emerge by themselves.

"I thought maybe instead of forcing somebody to be a leader, letting somebody step up and be a leader themselves," Davis said.

Enter Jones. He is leading the Bulldogs in batting average (.383), slugging percentage (.532), on-base percentage (.423) and RBIs (11). Also, he and Swanson are the only players to have played in every game this season.

Jones said that although he isn't a vocal leader, he leads by example and his dedication to the program. He has started all but four games in his three-year career.

"We have guys that step up and say stuff to the team when stuff needs to be said and then we have guys that — I think where I fit into the mold — [are] guys that try to go out and play hard every day and lead by example," Jones said.

Athlete of the Week

Keaton Jones

Sport: Baseball

Year: Junior

Position: Outfielder

Hometown: Iowa City, Iowa

Jones went 8-for-14 with five RBIs and two runs scored in the four-game series against Fort Hays State University last weekend. He also hit his second career home run, a three-run shot in the first inning of Saturday's game. Last weekend was the first time in Jones' career he batted third in the lineup. He is batting a team-leading .383 this season with 11 RBIs and eight runs scored.

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