

Volleyball extends win streak to six

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

The volleyball team continued its recent recipe for success with solid defense and timely offense.

The No. 9 Bulldogs held their opponent under a .200 hitting percentage for the sixth consecutive match and came up with key points when they counted en route to a 3-2 victory at the University of Nebraska-Omaha Saturday night. Truman is now 27-7 this season and 14-4 in the MIAA. The team is on a six-match winning streak.

The Bulldogs got help off the bench in the victory. Junior right side hitter Lauren Graybeal

had 12 kills and hit .357 for the match, and freshman middle blocker Johanna Ruff finished with four kills and hit .500.

"We definitely won by role players stepping up that day," head coach Jason Skoch said.

The teams split the first two sets before Truman came out firing in set three. After hitting just .122 and .211 in sets one and two, Truman hit a blistering .519 with just one error to take set three 25-14.

"When we connect better with our setters, obviously it goes better," Graybeal said. "We probably played with no fear that set. [We] went out with intensity, being aggressive."

The Bulldogs appeared to

be on their way to a victory in set four with the momentum on their side. But facing match point down 24-23, Omaha tied the set via an attack error by senior middle blocker Allie Cherven. UNO took advantage of the mistake by finishing off the set with back-to-back kills.

Skoch said the team works on game situations similar to what happened in set four all the time in practice, but it did not work in the 'Dogs' favor this time.

"We do this in practice everyday," Skoch said. "...We do a lot of pressure-type situations in practice and for the most part we usually do well in those."

Both teams battled back and forth in the decisive fifth set

that saw eight ties and four lead changes. With the score tied at nine the Bulldogs took advantage of two Omaha attack errors sandwiched around a kill by senior right side hitter Melissa Keck to take a 12-9 lead. After a UNO timeout, the Mavericks closed the gap to 12-11 with two straight kills from Ellen Thommes. The Bulldogs won the match by scoring three of the final four points on a kill by Keck and two by Cherven.

The Bulldogs outthrew the Mavericks .379 to .333 in the fifth set and forced 30 UNO errors on the night. Truman finished with 20 errors.

Senior outside hitter Eli Medina also recorded 12 kills and

hit .270. Cherven finished with 10 kills. It was the 12th time this season Cherven has reached double figures in kills.

The Bulldogs outdug the Mavericks 87-82 and outblocked UNO 12-6. Senior libero Whitney Boehler led the Bulldogs with 25 digs. Cherven had 4.5 total blocks to lead the 'Dogs.

Truman has outdug its opponent in each of its last nine matches and outblocked its opponents in the last four matches.

The Bulldogs host Northwest Missouri State University at 7 p.m. Friday.

Saturday night the Bulldogs will honor six seniors prior to the 7 p.m. match against Missouri Western State University.

Cherven, Keck, Medina, senior middle blocker Lisa Weber, senior outside hitter Dana Hanselmann and Boehler will take the Pershing Arena floor for the final time.

The last four seasons in which Truman is 131-24 have been some of the most successful in Bulldog history. Later this month the Bulldogs will compete in their ninth-consecutive NCAA Tournament.

Weber said it will be difficult for her to step onto the Pershing Arena floor for the final time.

"It'll be kind of weird, but we'll definitely take it to heart and play our hardest because it'll be our last game [at home] forever," Weber said.

Athlete of the Week

Jason Stokes

Sport: Swimming

Year: Senior

Position: Sprint Freestyle

Hometown: Blue Springs, Mo.

Sprint freestyler Jason Stokes swam the first leg of the 200-yard freestyle relay in 20.77 seconds, which set a new Pershing Natatorium record in the 50-yard freestyle. The time also gave Stokes an A cut and it was 0.13 seconds off of his time at nationals last season.

Stokes sets pool record in 50 free

BY JOCELYN NEBEL
Staff Reporter

When senior freestyler Jason Stokes suggested to head coach Mark Gole that the team wear their championship suits at the dual meet Saturday afternoon, he did not expect a new pool record to be the reward.

"We were just joking to Mark actually, about going for [an A cut time] this weekend, getting it at our home pool," Stokes said. "We were so close at Indianapolis last weekend, so we actually threw it out as a joke."

Stokes completed his leg of the 200-yard freestyle relay in 20.77 seconds. This time set a new pool record in the 50-yard freestyle for Pershing Natatorium. It's 0.13 seconds off Stokes' national time from last year.

This time also gave Stokes an A cut in the 50-yard freestyle for the NCAA Nationals. He made the cut by 0.02 seconds. Stokes will return to nationals for the fourth straight year.

Gole said it was surprising to see Stokes get an A cut so early in the season.

"It was a little unexpected," Gole said. "He's one of the most talented swimmers I've had the privilege of coaching."

Stokes broke the 50-yard freestyle pool record without having shaved or fully tapered from practices. Gole said shaving normally is reserved for bigger meets and championships.

Stokes' lead leg was only the beginning of great times for the men's 200-yard freestyle relay. Junior teammates Andrew and Peter McCall and freshman

Eric Kaestner helped Stokes set a new pool record for the relay at 1:24.25.

"It felt great to know that we can go faster without being completely rested having the benefit of the shave and taper," Stokes said.

The men are seeking an A cut for the 200-yard freestyle relay down the road, which would qualify all the relay members for nationals. Their time Saturday was 0.56 seconds off the A cut.

Gole said Stokes' presence on the relay team builds confidence in his teammates.

"When you know that you're going to have somebody that's going to get you out to that lead, that puts you in a situation where you're more likely to actually get the job done yourself," Gole said.

Stokes and Gole said this year's 200-yard freestyle relay team is different from last year because the quartet is younger. The relay gained Kaestner this year from Katy, Texas.

"[Kaestner's] extremely talented," Gole said. "I really enjoy the fact that he has Stokes right now for him to be a freshman and Stokes to be a senior."

Gole said Stokes' improvement during the past few years has helped him become a leader for his teammates. Gole said Stokes had some trouble adjusting his freshman year because he was training more than he ever had. Gole said it takes about two years for a swimmer to adjust to a harder regimen and that when Stokes emerged, he improved greatly.

"He's a gamer," Gole said. "Whenever we needed him to step up in an event he would do it in a second."



Photo Submitted by Tim Barcus
Senior Jason Stokes gets ready to dive into the water at the national meet last spring. Stokes set a new Pershing Natatorium record last Saturday in the 50-yard freestyle while untapered and he was 0.13 seconds off of his time at the 2008 nationals.

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