

Offense to feature more movement

BY BLAKE TOPPMEYER
Sports Editor

Georgia Mueller possessed the ball in the low post, battling a taller defender during Wednesday's women's basketball practice.

Then, Mueller swiftly pivoted into the lane and lofted up a left-handed hook shot that swished through the net.

The move was a classic display of how Mueller has had so much success in her Bulldog career. The Bulldogs' 5-foot-11 senior forward often shields taller defenders with her body to score points in the post.

It's moves like the one Mueller displayed during Wednesday's practice that the Bulldogs will be counting on to help carry the offense this season.

"Georgia's got to touch the ball," head coach Michael Smith said. "... She's got to get a minimum of 15 shots a game and expect to get double-teamed and triple-teamed."

Mueller is coming off a 2007-08 campaign in which she led the MIAA in points per game (22/game) and field goal percentage (56 percent) and finished second in rebounds per game (9.7/game).

She was named First Team All-MIAA for the second consecutive season and enters this season with a chance to pass alumna Carol Jarrard as the all-time leader in points scored.

This year, Mueller could bear an even heavier offensive burden as Truman lost four starters from



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Georgia Mueller drives to basket during practice this week.

the team that finished 16-13 in 2007-08. The four seniors from last year's team accounted for more than 44 percent of the Bulldogs' offensive production, while Mueller contributed another 30 percent.

Smith said his offense will be

similar in structure to the four-out, one-in look that former head coach John Sloop featured last season, in which Mueller is the only player in the low post.

Smith, who favors a motion-style offense, said he wants to create more movement around

CHASING JARRARD

POINT LEADERBOARD

1. CAROL JARRARD: 2,006
2. FELICIA SUTTON: 1,578
3. AMY EAGAN: 1,527
4. ANGIE GUM: 1,467
5. JENNIFER PERKINS: 1,461
6. GEORGIA MUELLER: 1,457

the perimeter than the team featured last season. He said the offense will be patient and will stress using ball reversals and making the extra pass to get the defense moving.

"The basic [offensive] structure is similar, ... but other than that, there's a lot more movement, a lot more cutting, a lot more screens," Mueller said. "Even in the post, I'm flashing high, and not as much being set on the block. I think it's just going to make us, overall, harder to guard and make the defense work to guard us at least."

Last season, Mueller often had to work in the post against double- and triple-teams. But Smith said double-teams on Mueller can be limited by other Bulldogs not standing around on the perimeter, and moving to set screens to help teammates get open.

Opponents sometimes got burned double-teaming Mueller last season because a couple of

last year's seniors shot well from the three-point line. Alumna Candace McGee drained 69 three pointers last season and she combined with Katie Fowler to shoot 34 percent from beyond the arc. But both graduated after last season, leaving Truman's cupboard of three-point threats bare.

"We have to develop some shooters," Smith said.

Junior guard Laura Joya could be the team's best three-point option to help relieve the double-team burden on Mueller. Joya sank 14 of 26 three-point attempts coming off the bench last season.

One of the difficulties facing Mueller this season is that the cast surrounding her is largely not accustomed to playing with her. With the four seniors from last year's team garnering so many minutes, Mueller did not receive many passes from the teammates who will join her on the floor this season.

As a result, Smith said it's

been challenging to get the ball into the post to Mueller during the preseason and that Mueller is adjusting to reading her new teammates, as they also adjust to playing with her.

"She's really patient, and we're just trying to get the ball to her," said junior Julie Guinn, who steps in as the starting point guard this season, after serving as the team's sixth-man a year ago. "We're just trying to make some of our teammates see where the opening is and when the opening is going to be there."

Smith indicated a change in this year's offense when he said his team will not look to push the ball much in transition. Last year, led by then-senior guard Julia Montebello, the Bulldogs frequently played an up-tempo offense and tried to score on fast breaks. This led to Truman ranking third in the MIAA in points per game. But the up-tempo style also resulted in turnovers, and Truman averaged 18.5 turnovers a game, which placed the Bulldogs eighth in the conference.

With most of the ball handlers from last year's team now graduated, Smith said the Bulldogs won't be able to push the ball much this year. In its three preseason games, Truman averaged 26 turnovers a game.

"That's probably the big difference [from Sloop's offense], is the change in tempo," Guinn said. "I think it's beneficial because you have to play toward your personnel, and I think our personnel needs slower tempo right now."

Transfers to bolster roster

BY JACK NICHOLL
Assistant Sports Editor

The basketball team will welcome three players to the team this season, but none of them are freshmen.

Sophomore forwards Brian Nwelu and Andrew James and sophomore guard Brandon Griffin all bring experience beyond high school to the team.

Their 12 teammates all have at least one year of experience under head coach Jack Schrader, who said he does not know exactly how much playing time everyone will see.

"It's a little too early to figure out where and how [the transfers] will fit in, but they do bring a better degree of athleticism to the court [than in the past]," Schrader said.

The biggest advantage is that Nwelu and Griffin played together throughout high school in Texas. Nwelu then went to Grayson County Community College (Texas) and Griffin went to Seminole State Community College before they came to Truman.

Nwelu said he had the option of returning to junior college, trying to go to a Div. I school or transferring to a Div. II school. At a junior college, it would have taken him five years to graduate instead of four.

In January, Nwelu sent Schrader a videotape and explained his situation.

"[He] immediately caught my eye because he's one of those undersized post players who have been successful for us," Schrader said. "[He] had searched us out because he was really looking for an academic school."

Schrader said it seems like the defense Nwelu and Griffin played in high school is similar to the style here, which has helped them catch on quickly.

He said neither of them were stat stuffers in high school, and they averaged about 10 points per game.

"Seems like defensively there are a lot of parallels in high school to how they play here," Schrader said. "They might have extended the defense a little bit more in high school, but they are very solid fundamentally [and] defensively. They don't fly around, get out of position. So it hasn't taken them long to get on track defensively."

Nwelu said the competitive atmosphere at the junior college level has helped him with the hard practices at Truman, but the offense is different than what he is used to. He said his high school offense ran a motion, the JuCo offense was a stretch offense and Truman's has some qualities of both.

In the exhibition loss to Drake on Nov. 1, Nwelu was 1-for-3 shooting with two offensive rebounds in the 10 minutes he played, and Griffin had five points and an assist in 15 minutes.

"I think they bring in skills that work well with what we have," sophomore center David Scott said. "Brandon is a good rebounder for a guard, he's quick off the dribble, he finishes strong in the hole. Brian's very athletic. He's good rebounder, he can shoot, he also has dribble penetration skills."

James went to Missouri University of Science and Technology before coming to Truman. Schrader said he was looking at James when he was in high school, but with three early Bulldog commitments from other players, James ended up at S&T.

After a year at S&T James decided Truman would be a better fit academically for him.

Senior guard Banks Estridge



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Brandon Griffin transferred from a junior college in Texas. He and transfer Brian Nwelu went to the same high

school said it's nice to have James, who is 6'7," be able to match up with Scott and freshman center Vesko Filchev, who are the two tallest players on the team.

Estridge said James has a similar playing style to Ryan Robinson, who was a senior last season.

"Andrew was hurt there for the first week, and he got right in there and knew exactly what was going on," Estridge said. "So that says a lot about his visual skills."

The three transfers should help fill the gap left by forward Nick Certa. Certa led the team in scoring and he is the only starter not returning from last season's squad.

"We're still looking to the future right now," sophomore forward Ethan Freeman said. "We're trying not to dwell on anyone who has left us, but we take what we have right now and we work with it, and so far right now we've been doing a pretty good job of it."

TRUMAN ATHLETICS News and Notes

Basketball: Women tenth in preseason poll

The women's basketball team received 25 points in the MIAA preseason coaches poll, which gave them a 10th place ranking.

Washburn University was first in the poll with seven first-places votes. Emporia State University was second with the other four first-place votes.

Basketball: Men plan slate of promotions

The men's basketball team has three promotional contests scheduled for home games this season to generate more excitement during halftime and media timeouts.

The competitions include the Charity Stripe Contest, the proceeds of which go to charity, and the Bombs Away and Media Mania contests, which Truman students can enter free-of-charge and have the chance to win money.

"The idea is just to get people involved," head coach Jack Schrader said.

The Charity Stripe Contest is a tournament-style free-throw competition open to community or student groups or clubs. There are three players on each team. To enter the competition, teams donate \$50. At each home game, two teams of shooters will square off against each other, and the team that makes the most free throws advances to the next round. At the end of the tournament, the winning team gets to donate all the entry fee money to a charity of its choice.

Bombs Away is restricted to student groups, and there is no entry fee. Similar to the Charity Stripe Contest, teams consist of three members, and the competition is tournament-style. In Bombs Away, however, a member from each team shoots three-pointers during the three media timeouts in the second half, and the team that makes the most shots advances to the next round. The winning team gets \$1,000 for its organization, and the second-place team wins \$500.

"My idea when I came up with it was to get some of the fraternities [and other groups] out and if three people are out there shooting, then 20 to 30 are in the bleachers cheering them on," assistant coach Tim Diedrick said.

For Media Mania, a student is chosen randomly to shoot a three-pointer during each media timeout in the first half. If the student makes the shot, he or she wins \$100.

Basketball: Smith's wife delivers baby

Women's basketball head coach Michael Smith became the father of two Friday when his wife Melanie delivered the family's second son.

Devin Michael Smith was born in Columbia on Friday and weighed 6 pounds, 12 ounces at birth. The Smith family also has another son, Cooper.

Coach Smith was back on the sidelines for the Bulldogs' exhibition game Sunday in Peoria, Ill., against Div. I Bradley University. The women open their regular season on the road Saturday against Cameron University (Okla.).

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Tuesday, November 18th
MC 210 7:00 p.m.

If you have any questions, contact Dr. Sawani at msawani@truman.edu