

Bulldogs claim two top-four finishes at Invitational



Photo Submitted

Sophomore Josh Mantooth (right) and freshman Joey Walls finished 11th and 13th, respectively, at the Brissman-Lundeen Invitational.

BY LOGAN JACKSON
Staff Reporter

Consistency gave the women's cross country team another top-five finish last weekend.

Truman finished second at the Brissman-Lundeen Invitational on Saturday. The meet, which took place in Rock Island, Ill., featured 27 teams and more than 300 runners.

Senior Danna Kelly and freshman Michelle Gronemeyer led the Bulldogs, finishing fourth and ninth, respectively. Truman was the only school to have two runners place in the top 10. Freshman Anne Ratermann, in her first race of the year, finished third on the team and 28th overall. Freshman Dani Dell'Orco and sophomore Amanda Brown rounded out the top five for the 'Dogs.

Kelly, Gronemeyer, Brown and Dell'Orco have finished in the top five for Truman in all three meets this season. Their consistent running has allowed the 'Dogs to finish in the top five in each of their three meets.

Even with consistent running and a second-place finish, head coach John Cochrane said the team has several things to work on.

"We were a little further apart in the race," Cochrane said. "We still aren't quite where I would like to be. Not everybody runs great every meet. I was critical of them, to them, because there are things that we need to do better.

Everybody probably has trouble understanding how you can finish second and be critical, but we have things that we have to work out. We're still a work in progress."

Throughout the first three meets, freshmen have been consistent for the Bulldogs. Gronemeyer and Dell'Orco have finished in the top five for Truman in every meet. With the addition of Ratermann, who just returned from an injury, the women's team has three solid freshmen runners.

"They're coming along," Cochrane said. "They don't completely have the world by the throat yet. Michelle has some race-packing things we have to work on. Anne definitely has a lot to learn. Dani is getting better. They've helped a great deal. If they weren't there, we would be having an interesting season."

The men's team also had a good weekend finishing fourth out of 28 teams.

Sophomore Josh Mantooth and freshman Joey Walls led the charge for Truman, finishing 11th and 13th, respectively. Junior Zach Chapman and sophomores Adam Kell and Bob Gorman were the other Bulldog top-five finishers.

Consistency also played a part for the men's team. Gorman, Walls and Kell have finished in the top five in all three meets for the 'Dogs. Chapman and Mantooth have finished in the top

five in two of the three meets. All three runners placed in the top 40 during the weekend.

Gorman, who finished first on the team the first two meets, slid to fifth on the team this week. Mantooth said his slide was not anything to worry about.

"He was sick all week," Mantooth said. "He practiced only one day last week. There's nothing, no injury, anything like that. Basically, he got unlucky and got sick. We'll have him back up there for sure next meet. That was a small factor, but he'll be back."

Walls has also been running well during the first half of the season. He has finished in the top three for Truman in all three meets. Although he is a freshman, he has been able to keep pace with the more experienced Bulldog runners. Men's coach Tim Schwegler said his adjustment to collegiate running has been rather easy.

"He's running better now than when I watched him in high school," Schwegler said. "He's kind of learning from the older guys. I think he feels good about how he's finishing races. He made comments to me that he's finishing races much better than he ever did in high school. He's made the transition relatively easy. Part of that is because the older guys are helping him out."

The next meet for the cross country teams will be the Border States Invitational Oct. 11 in Edwardsville, Ill.

WOLFF | High school ACL tear opens door for Truman soccer career

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Truman every season since. Last season, Wolff was a third-team All-Region and first-team All-MIAA selection.

Wolff's success on the field at Truman Soccer Park was just a continuation of a life-long pursuit. She has played soccer in some form since age three and said she can't imagine what life would be like without it.

"I started when I was about three years old," Wolff said. "I just played on rec teams. Even when I was in kindergarten, I was the only girl on an all-boys team. So I started off being competitive from a pretty young age. It was just something that I really love to do, so I just stuck with it and really couldn't see myself not playing."

Wolff went on to play soccer at Incarnate Word Academy in the St. Louis area. A spot on the varsity squad was open during her freshman year, and she tried out and made the team. The team won the state championship, her junior year and took second place her senior year.

After graduating high school, Wolff came to Truman, where she has been a starting defender in all but seven games in her four years as a Bulldog.

During her freshman year at Truman, she started 19 out of the team's 20 games. She earned second-team All-MIAA honors. She was named the team's Rookie of the Year. She was successful her sophomore year and was again named second-team All-MIAA. Then came last season's first-team All-MIAA and third-team All-Region selections.

Wolff has played mainly defense throughout her career and said she does not mind the lack of attention defenders sometimes get.

"It really doesn't bother me," Wolff said. "I've just always had a defensive mind. Not getting stats or anything has never really fazed me because I feel like it's more important for the team to do well than for

a person to do well. As long as the team's doing great, that's all that matters to me."

Cannon said Wolff has a number of physical and mental qualities that allow her to be a quality player for the Bulldogs.

"One thing people will notice pretty quickly is her speed," Cannon said. "She's one of the fastest kids on our team, if not the fastest. A great work rate, very good defender as far as she's a good tackler and anticipates plays well. One of her strengths, and she's improved on it over the years, is her ability to get forward. ... Her communication is great. ... She's pretty much an ideal defender."

It is not just her on-the-field attributes that make her a great player. Cannon said her leadership qualities also play an important role.

"Her work ethic is great," he said. "A positive attitude, always encouraging. On and off the field, practice, games, she's always getting her teammates going. She does by word and deed, by example. Off the field, she's just very easy to talk to."

Junior defender Kelsey Richter

said Wolff is a great influence on the team.

"She is always a positive person," Richter said. "In practice she's always smiling and [gives] positive feedback and encouragement to everyone on the team. ... She's been starting for four years, and she's really grown into a great leader for our team."

Wolff has had a hand in many successful defensive units at Truman, and the Bulldogs are 45-20-7 in the four years Wolff has been here. And after the Bulldogs have jumped to a 8-1 start this season behind their strong defense, Wolff said she hopes to be able to help take the Bulldogs back to the NCAA Tournament this year.

"I'm just really going to miss it next year," Wolff said. "I just hope to make the best out of what we have left of the season now and take it as far as we can go. ... I think we have a good chance [at making it to the tournament]. We have a really good team this year, and as long as we just keep working well together and staying on the same page, I think we can have a lot of success."

DEFEAT | Bulldogs score three time in second half to beat Missouri Southern 3-1

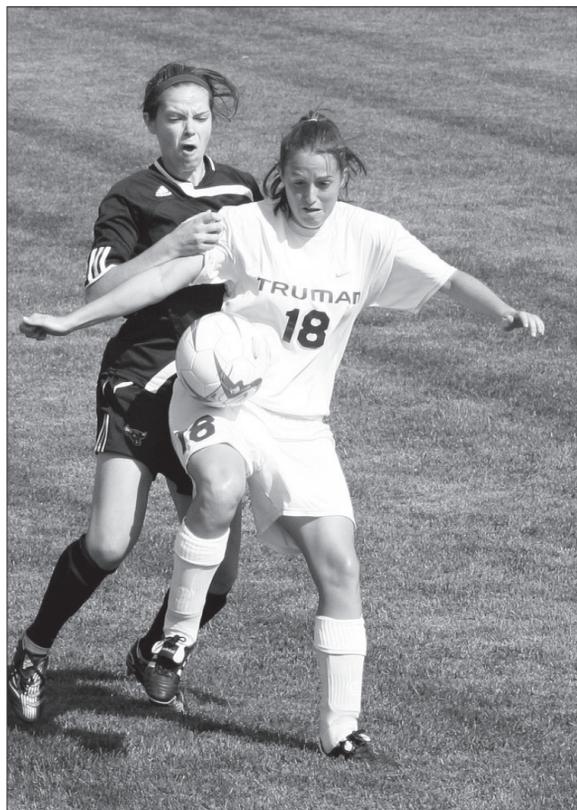


Photo Submitted

Junior forward Isabel Gaeta battles for possession against UNO on Sunday. The Bulldogs will get a second shot at the Mavericks at home on Oct. 20.

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old, so it's always a big rivalry for me. ... We'll be out to get UNO the next time we play them."

On Thursday, the Bulldogs claimed their eighth win of the season against the Lions.

The first half of the game was a defensive showdown with very little shooting done by either team and even less scoring.

A shot from junior forward Riley Mahn marked Truman's only offense until junior forward Isabel Gaeta notched her second goal of the season in the 29th minute.

The Truman lead stood at 1-0 until the 48th minute when MSSU came back to score a free-kick goal from 15 yards out.

"It was a really nice goal," head coach Mike Cannon said. "That's probably the best goal we've seen so far this year from an opponent."

The tie remained only for a few minutes before junior midfielder Katie Reuck connected for her team-leading fifth goal of the season.

From then on, the game was Truman's. The Bulldogs widened their lead to 3-1 during the 73rd minute when junior forward Jessica Wiegert scored her fourth goal of the season.

The Bulldogs head for St. Joseph, Mo., for a game today against Missouri Western State University.

The Bulldogs come home to face conference opponent Southwest Baptist University at noon Saturday.

COLUMN | Redshirt freshman Harnish Ayora to make Bulldog debut at running back on Saturday

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This year, however, there is reason for hope. Against Fort Hays State University on Saturday, the Bulldogs ran for a season-high 107 yards and 3.1 yards per carry. It's modest progress, but the numbers came against a Tigers defense that entered the game ranked as the MIAA's best run defense.

And despite the running backs not compiling good rushing statistics, there is talent in the backfield. Redshirt freshman starting running back Donald Harvey has averaged just 2.5 yards per carry and netted 107 yards on the ground. Still, he has great speed and game-changing ability which was shown against Fort Hays when he caught a swing pass and sprinted 68 yards for a touchdown. Finding more ways to utilize Harvey — be it in the run game or the pass attack — will be important against UNO and Pitt State.

Truman also will feature a new look in the backfield this weekend when Harnish Ayora makes his Bulldog debut. Currier said he considered redshirting the true freshman, but he thinks that Ayora can help correct the 'Dogs running woes.

Ayora ran for more than 3,000 yards in his three seasons as starting running back at Casa Grande Union High School (Ariz.). An honorable mention All-State selection in 2007, Ayora should bring a physical style of running to the backfield.

"He's not scared to hit somebody," junior right tackle Kevin Bigler said. "He'll lower his helmet, and he'll knock somebody over."

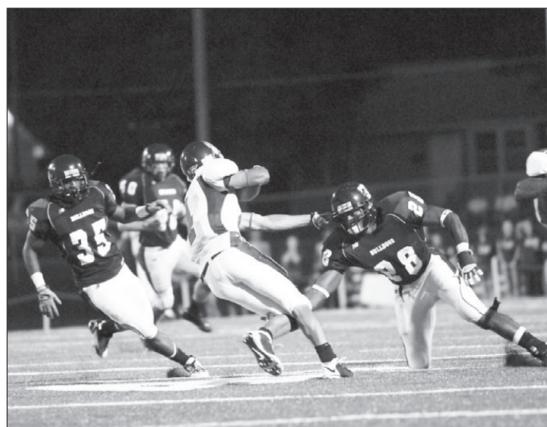
Still, it won't matter who is in the backfield unless more holes are being opened up by the offensive line. Bigler said the problems for the O-Line aren't unsolvable, and it's just a matter of everyone needing to do their job at the same time.

"Most of the time, it's just maybe one guy missing an assignment," he said. "That's the difference between one to two yards compared to 10 or 15."

Players like Bigler, a junior college transfer, give hope for the O-Line. Four of the starters on the front five did not start last season. Thus, the unit is largely inexperienced — except for senior honorable mention All-MIAA left tackle Jon Franz — and it's possible the group might simply need some time to get familiar with each other and game situations.

Regardless of what the problems have been for the O-Line thus far, this team needs to start running the football better. Otherwise, the statistics will catch up with the Bulldogs, and the team won't be able to continue to hide its poor rushing attack.

"To beat good teams, you have to be able to run the ball — there's no doubt about it," Currier said.



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Once Truman got a comfortable lead Saturday, Hays was forced out of their running game. The Bulldogs had three fourth quarter INTs. Here, the Bulldogs make a tackle in a game against Northwest Missouri.

WIN | Team rushes for more than 100 yards for first time this season against top-ranked run defense

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Hammers, who led the team with two sacks, said practicing against the starting offensive line the week before helped the defensive line. They usually practice against the scout team.

"Throughout the week we really focused on getting off the ball, working moves and getting after the quarterback," Hammers said. "That was one of our big mottos: 'Get after the quarterback.'"

Overall, three different players had interceptions and 17 players recorded at least one tackle, with Sternberg leading the way with nine. Hammers forced two of the three Hays' fumbles.

On the other side of the ball, the Bulldogs' running game had increased success, which allowed Truman to control the time of the possession to help keep their defense off the field.

They gained 107 yards rushing on 34 attempts — the first time they have rushed for more than 100 yards this season. It was more impressive considering FHSU is first in the MIAA this season in rushing defense and Truman is last in rushing offense.

"We felt it was going to be difficult to run the ball against them, which we did better even though we may have faced some teams earlier that may not have been as good against the run," Currier said.

Ticich was the leading rusher with 59 yards on 11 attempts, and he was also 21 of 40 passing for 265 yards and two touchdowns. With the yardage, Ticich moved into second place all-time at Truman in total offensive yards.

Senior tight end Ryan King led all receivers with 74 yards.

After the first touchdown, Truman padded its lead with a 28-yard field goal by junior Mickey Masucci and an eight-yard Ticich pass to senior running back Phil Kenney midway through the second quarter. Freshman defensive back Terrence Byrd had the final score with a 27-yard interception return with 44 seconds left in the game.

Next up for the Bulldogs is their homecoming game against No. 16 University of Nebraska-Omaha (3-1, 2-1 MIAA), who lost to No. 7 Northwest Missouri State University 42-0 last weekend.