



File Photo

With the loss yesterday, the volleyball team is 1-4 against ranked squads this season, a vast difference from its 13-4 record in 2007. The team is now No. 11 in the country.

Volleyball falls to Hornets 3-1

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

The Bulldogs did something Wednesday they have not done since 2005: Lose two matches in a row.

The No. 11 'Dogs lost the first set in extra points and never recovered as they fell to No. 14 Emporia State University 3-1 in the MIAA opener for both teams.

Truman (9-4) could not stop junior outside hitter Arica Shepard and sophomore right side hitter Brittney Miller. The duo combined for 32 kills and sophomore setter Ting Liu added 52 assists for the Hornets, who improved to 11-1 on the season.

Truman battled back from an early deficit in set one and led the Hornets 25-24, but Emporia came back with three straight points to win set one.

The Bulldogs appeared to swing the momentum back in their favor with a 25-18 victory in set two, but Emporia bounced back in the final two sets to win the match.

With Truman's loss in tournament play Saturday, Wednesday's loss marks the first losing streak for the Bulldogs since they lost three consecutive conference matches in Oct. 2005.

Senior right side hitter Melissa Keck paced the Bulldogs with 16 kills and a .333 hitting percentage. Senior middle blocker Allie Cherven had 10 kills. Senior outside hitter Dana Hanselmann also registered 10 kills for the 'Dogs.

The Bulldogs finished with 22 attack errors compared to 15 for the Hornets.

The Bulldogs were unable to come up with key points

when they needed them this weekend and went 2-2 at the Concordia-St. Paul Classic in Minnesota with losses to two ranked opponents.

The Bulldogs were swept by the defending national champion No. 2 Concordia University-St. Paul, although they only lost the first two sets by a combined four points. Keck led the Bulldog attack with 11 kills, and senior Eli Medina chipped in with 10.

"Concordia is the best team I've seen in three years," head coach Jason Skoch said. "They were awesome. We still had opportunities, but they showed why they win."

The 'Dogs were competitive in the first two sets and had opportunities to win both of them. Truman fell behind by six midway through the first set but battled back and cut the lead to 24-22 on a kill by Cherven. Concordia scored on the next play to win the set.

"We learned we need to play as a team," Hanselmann said. "We didn't have all six players playing at the same time. That's going to be crucial to our success overall."

Before the loss to Concordia, the Bulldogs had a hard-fought five-set victory against Central Washington University.

The match went back and forth with Truman and Central Washington alternating wins the first four sets. The Bulldogs put away Central for good with a 15-7 win in the fifth set.

The Bulldogs received career days from a trio of seniors. Senior libero Whitney Boehler had a career-high 36 digs, surpassing her previous high of 32 and tying a school record for digs in a match. Senior middle blocker Lisa Webber set a career high with 12 blocks, 12

kills and a .550 hitting percentage. Keck also had a career-high eight blocks and finished with 12 kills.

On Saturday the Bulldogs suffered their second loss of the weekend to a ranked team when they lost to No. 13 Southwest Minnesota State University 3-1. Senior outside hitter Eli Medina, Keck and junior right side hitter Lauren Graybeal each finished with at least 12 kills, but Truman was unable to slow down Mustang middle blocker Kasey Loeslie, who finished with a match-high 20 kills.

Truman won the first set 25-22 by hitting .585 but fell into early holes in each of the next three sets and never could recover.

"It's weird that our biggest problem is ourselves, playing as a team and having chemistry," Boehler said. "I've never had that happen before. We are all kind of lost talking to each other about what we can do to fix this. ... We just need to be more open with each other. We have to talk more and communicate more on and off the court."

The Bulldogs picked up their second victory of the classic Saturday with a sweep of the University of Alaska-Anchorage. The defense was the story of this match, as Truman held Anchorage to a .084 hitting percentage. Junior outside hitter Jenna Novelli led the attack with 12 kills as 13 Bulldogs saw playing time.

Truman returns to the court at 7 p.m. Friday against No. 2 Washburn University. The game will be played at the Kirksville Primary School because of continued work on the floor at Pershing Arena.

Key match set for Friday against rival Washburn

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

The schedule never seems to get easier for the No. 11 Bulldogs.

Just two days after opening the MIAA on the road with a loss against No. 14 Emporia State University, the volleyball team comes home for the first time this season to take on No. 3 Washburn University at the Kirksville Primary School.

The No. 3 Lady Blues come into the game 12-0 but have one glaring difference from Truman: They have not played a ranked team this season. The Bulldogs have played five top-25 teams with a 1-4 record against them.

"We've played a tougher schedule than anyone else," head coach Jason Skoch said. "It's not like these other teams are going to come in and relax, but our girls know what it's like to push and get pushed back even harder. I can guarantee we've been tested more than anyone else. Not to say the other teams haven't, but we've learned a lot more in the last few weeks than the other teams have. I'm very confident about that."

Truman and Washburn were picked first and second in the pre-season MIAA coaches poll. Senior outside hitter Dana Hanselmann said she knows how important the first few matches of the conference season will

be as far as setting the tone for the rest of the season.

"Whoever comes out winning these first few will be first in the conference," Hanselmann said. "We are taking it each day at a time and each practice at a time."

Truman, who has not lost a home opener since 1996, is 9-4 this season with all three losses coming against ranked opponents. The 'Dogs 1-4 record against ranked teams early on is a far cry from the 13-4 record they posted against ranked teams last season.

Despite the early season struggles against ranked opponents, senior libero Whitney Boehler said she would rather play matches against ranked teams because of the added importance the matches bring.

"When we play non-ranked teams it's more of a struggle to stay mentally strong," Boehler said. "Against ranked teams the adrenaline and motivation is all there, it's easy because we are playing a great team. ... I prefer to play the ranked teams because it gets me pumped."

The Lady Blues have been nearly perfect against their opponents so far this season. They have lost only two sets all season and have never trailed based on sets.

Washburn is off to the 12-0 start despite losing All-American Tessa Jones to graduation. The University

of Kansas transfer stamped her name all over the Washburn record book in her three seasons. She holds the school single-season record for kills in a season and kills per set.

Without Jones on the court, Washburn is led by four seniors. All-American outside hitter Monica Miesner has been the key to the Lady Blues success early on. In 12 matches this season Miesner leads the Lady Blues with 125 kills and a .311 hitting percentage.

Senior right side hitter Melissa Keck could be the key for the Bulldogs against Washburn. In two matches against the Lady Blues last season, Keck totaled 37 kills.

Miesner and the Lady Blues have been a thorn in Truman's side during their last two visits to Kirksville. In last season's regular season meeting, the Bulldog's jumped out to an early 2-0 lead, only to watch it disappear in an eventual 3-2 loss. Miesner came away with 16 kills in that match.

Though the loss was tough for players to take at the time, it might have been a blessing in disguise. After the loss the 'Dogs rattled off 10 straight victories on their way to the MIAA championship.

The second loss, however, was not a blessing. Washburn upset the Bulldogs 3-1 in the NCAA regional final at Pershing Arena last November. Once again Miesner marked tough to

Match Breakdown

| | Washburn | Truman |
|-----------------------------|----------|--------|
| National rank | 3 | 11 |
| Record | 12-0 | 9-4 |
| Record vs. ranked opponents | 0-0 | 1-4 |
| Preseason MIAA rank | Second | First |
| Preseason national rank | Second | Third |
| Hitting pct. | .281 | .259 |
| Blocks/set | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| Kills/set | 14.2 | 13.6 |

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stop, coming up with 16 kills. The loss marked the second straight season the Bulldogs have been eliminated in the regionals of the NCAA Tournament.

Skoch said the key for the match will be focusing on the game and not other games down the road.

"We're going to take it one game at a time," Skoch said. "And that's

not a cliché. ... We lost a little focus last year by thinking too much about the big picture. The last thing I said today was it's a whole new season, conference is now, and we are still No. 1 in our conference. ... If we focus one game at a time taking care of ourselves, these other teams are going to beat each other up."

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