

'Dogs begin MIAA play

Softball opens up conference play with 3-3 record

BY BRENDAN O'BRIEN
Staff Reporter

After competing on the road for the first month of the season, the softball team returned to Kirksville on Saturday and kicked off conference play against Washburn University.

The Bulldogs swept the doubleheader against Washburn but lost twice to Emporia State University on Sunday. The team then went back on the road and split with Missouri Western University on Tuesday to go to 10-16 overall and 3-3 in the conference. Junior Alex Weber said the record is misleading.

"I think we can beat anyone in the conference — ... we just have to play our best," Weber said. "We can't make errors, and we have to keep our heads up and go all out."

The week showcased the team's ability to compete in all different types of games. In the first game against Western, the Bulldogs found themselves in a pitcher's duel. Senior pitcher Richelle van Gennip gave up just four hits in six innings of work. One hit in the fourth, a home run by the Griffons' Shannon Pivovar, was the deciding factor as the 'Dogs had just three hits en route to a 1-0 loss.

Truman got its revenge in the nightcap. Sophomore Beth Schnurbusch pitched a complete game and allowed just one earned run for the Bulldogs. Schnurbusch received help from freshman catcher Christine Ulises and senior centerfielder Erica LaCombe. Both hit solo shots in the fifth inning. The 'Dogs took



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Freshman Laura Miller makes contact during Saturday's doubleheader sweep against Washburn University.

advantage of two errors in the seventh to bring their run total to five. The Griffons (12-14, 2-2 MIAA) rallied for a run in the latter half of the inning, but Schnurbusch closed out the 5-1 win to end the Bulldogs three-game skid.

Truman's pitchers struggled against Emporia on Sunday. The No. 20 Hornets tagged the Bulldogs for 18 runs and 26 hits on their way to 8-0 and 10-8 wins. Van Gennip had a rare bad outing as she gave up six earned runs in 2.2 innings to raise her ERA above 2. Sophomore pitcher Ashley Rotkovich entered in relief and gave up two runs in 2.1 innings.

Things were not much better at the plate. The Bulldogs struck out eight times and tallied just three hits. Two of these hits came off the bat of freshman right fielder Laura Miller. Miller, who was sidelined earlier in the month with a concussion, said she is happy to be finding a rhythm again.

"I was struggling at first, especially right after I got to play again, and it's helping me build confidence at the plate," Miller said. "Hopefully, I can keep it up."

The second game was tied 2-2 after three innings, but the Hornets scored at least one run in each of the next four innings and went

into the bottom of the seventh with a 10-3 lead.

Then, the Bulldogs came alive, bringing four runs across the plate before an out was recorded. Truman batted around and brought the tying run to the plate but lost 10-8. Miller said the loss revealed the team's true character.

"I think it shows that we have a lot of heart, and we're not afraid to go out there and give it our all," Miller said. "And even if we're facing something that seems impossible, we can go out there and give our same effort."

The Bulldogs showed a similar fight the day before against Washburn. After van Gennip pitched a 4-0 shutout in Game 1, the Lady Blues took a 3-2 lead entering the bottom of the seventh of Game 2. Rotkovich led things off with a one-out double and came around to score after a pair of singles by Weber and freshman Katie Pitts.

Miller then flied out to right field. With two outs and the score tied at three, freshman Kristin Grossman came to the plate and hit a groundball up the middle. Weber was running from second on contact and Brown, although unsure whether the ball would get through, decided to wave Weber home. Pitts slid into second just in time but Lady Blues' middle infielders argued the call. They looked up to see Weber sprinting for home and made a play too late to give Truman the 4-3 victory.

"We're hoping that we build on this battling mentality," Brown said.

The Bulldogs will be back at 2 p.m. Friday at the Truman Softball Park to compete against Northern Kentucky University in a non-conference doubleheader.

TRUMAN ATHLETICS News and Notes

Baseball: Crader ties Div. II record

Junior designated hitter Luke Crader tied a Div. II baseball record this weekend against Pittsburg State University. In the third game of the series, a 7-1 Bulldog win, Crader became the fifth player to be hit by a pitch four times in a single game. Crader had six career HBPs before his record-setting game. Crader is tied with freshman second baseman Jordan Howe for the team lead with five HBPs this season.

The record for HBPs in a game at the Div. I level is five, set by current Chicago White Sox outfielder Carlos Quentin. The record in the MLB is three.

Baseball: Lack of offense forces changes

The Bulldogs have had little offensive production from one of the outfield spots, and this has forced head coach Dan Davis to move some players around.

Junior Mike Reese started the season at second base but has moved to left field for the time being. Freshman Brett Budd has been in the outfield all season and leads the team with a .430 on-base percentage. Reese and Budd lead the team in batting average and hits.

Freshman Jordan Howe was at third base but moved to second, a position that he is more familiar with. Junior Drew Garwood moved across the diamond to third base, a position that he played often last year. Junior Bryce Bond currently is replacing Garwood at first base.

The Bulldogs have four players that have rotated in the outfield this season. Senior Keaton Jones, juniors Kenny Swanson and Kody Stricklin and sophomore Tyler Stefan all have more than 20 at-bats. The four have been great in the field with just four errors between them. However, they have combined for a .192 batting average and just two extra base hits through Tuesday.

"We're looking for that one guy," Davis said. "We're looking for a third outfielder to give us some consistency. Right now, it's going to be who I think is going to do well that day."

Women's golf: B team excels at Classic

The women's golf team got a strong showing from its B team during last weekend's Bulldog classic. The team finished third and trailed Truman's A team by just three strokes after the first round but struggled on the second day, shooting 388.

Lesseig said he was not surprised how well the B team competed, noting that out of the 14 golfers for Truman 13 have traveled to away events. Sophomore Jacqui Ball and freshman Laura Heien finished tied for 15th with two-day totals of 182. Heien shot an 83 in the first round and was one stroke off the lead.

Lesseig said the tournament was a chance for every golfer on the team to prove how well she can golf.

"We want them pushing the one's in the first pairings," Lesseig said.

Spring football opens with new coaching staff

BY LOGAN JACKSON
Staff Reporter

The Bulldog football team starts the spring season focusing on a turnaround after the team had its worst season since 2005.

Truman finished 2-9 last year and were 1-8 in the MIAA under former head coach Aaron Vlcko. Spring practice started Monday with the new coaching staff in place. The Bulldogs have four new coaches on staff and one returning coach.

Head coach Gregg Nesbitt returns to Truman for a third time. He played football for the Bulldogs from 1976-79 and was a linebackers coach and defensive coordinator from 1990-92. He said the players and the staff have a lot of work to do during the spring season.

"We're very excited to get started," Nesbitt said. "I think both the players and coaches are excited. As a new coaching staff, we don't know much about [the team], so it should be a very competitive spring. All positions are up for grabs."

Also new to the Bulldogs are Jay Davis, Kellen Nesbitt and Jed Paulson. Davis will take over the offensive coordinator's job, and Kellen Nesbitt will be the co-defensive coordinator.

Paulson will handle the offensive line and be the strength/conditioning coach.

Junior wide receiver Kendrick Blue said the team has a better focus this spring and is excited to be back on the field.

"We have a brand new attitude," Blue said. "We know what we have to do. We're working to accomplish our goals, no matter how long it takes. We have to know our assignments to do well."

Returning to the Bulldog staff for his fourth year is Thomas Kearney. He will move to the other side of the ball and be the wide receivers coach.

Sophomore defensive back Terrence Byrd said the new staff has done a good job with the team so far.

"The intensity and enthusiasm and excitement level has gone up with this new coaching staff," Byrd said. "They've been real with us since day one. I think we're having a lot more fun out there, too."

Before the spring practice season started, the Bulldogs were involved in running and weightlifting exercises. Monday, the team went through their first practice without pads. The team plans to start with upper pads tomorrow and should practice with full pads Saturday.

"We're getting a little rust out of there," Byrd said. "It takes a while just to get used to everything. But there's nothing like being on the field with your teammates and talking a little smack. We're having a great time."

The Bulldogs have several things to work out before the fall season starts up. Truman averaged 17.3 points a game last season and scored 190 points for the season. They had 1,463 rushing yards and averaged 3.3 yards per carry. Bulldog quarterbacks also threw for 1,595 yards, a 5.8 yards-per-throw average.

And the defense struggled to keep games close. The Bulldogs gave up 371 points, a 33.7 points-per-game average. They also gave up 2,511 rushing yards and 2,079 passing yards. The team yielded 48 touchdowns and 13 field goals.

Nesbitt said the focus is to get the most out of each player on the team.

"We want to identify our two-deep and rotational type players on both sides of the football," Nesbitt said. "We want to identify those youngsters who have an aptitude to play in our kicking game also."

Truman really struggled in the first half of games. The 'Dogs were outscored by 131 points in the first



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
New head coach Gregg Nesbitt calls out orders during spring practice yesterday. The 'Dogs had their first spring practice Monday night.

half and by 44 points in the second half of games.

The team does return several players that made an impact last year. Junior quarterback Phil Davis started seven games last season but had to sit out four games because of injury problems. He completed nearly 54 percent of his passes and threw for 1,035

yards and seven touchdowns. He also rushed for 229 yards.

On defense, the Bulldogs return Byrd and sophomore defensive back Michael Elliot. The two combined for 99 solo tackles and five interceptions. Freshman linebacker JaCobe Britt is also back for Truman. He was second on the team with 3.5 sacks last year.

WWW.TRUMANRENTALS.COM

Providing affordable
student housing
for more than 22 years.

Boardwalk • Waterworks • Park Place •
States Avenue • St. James Place • New York Avenue

Four Horizons Realty
703 N. Marion St.
Kirksville, MO 63501
660-665-RENT
www.4horizonsrealty.com

You can build
good credit
by using your
credit cards
just once a year.

However, be careful
not to charge
more than half
of your credit limit
at any given time.

SIFE
TRUMAN STATE
UNIVERSITY