

Bulldogs lose 65-59 at Western

Truman also falls to Northwest on last-second shot

BY BRENT FOSTER
Assistant Sports Editor

It was more of the same for the women's basketball team last night. The Bulldogs built a 13-point lead early in the second half, only to see it slip away in a 65-59 loss at Missouri Western State University, their sixth-straight loss.

It marked the fifth time this season the Bulldogs (6-10, 1-8 MIAA) have lost when leading in the second half.

Freshman forward Jennifer Conway made a layup with 16:20 left that gave Truman a 42-29 lead. But Western turned it around from there with a 10-0 run during the next three minutes to cut the lead to 42-39.

The Dogs built the lead back up to 10 with just more than seven minutes left, but the their offense disappeared. The Bulldogs scored just three points in the final 7:06 and went 1-for-9 from the floor with three turnovers in the final seven minutes.

Before the game head coach Michael Smith said that during the recent slide,

it seemed like every game they played an opposing player had a career game. That was the case against Western.

Sophomore Kristin Bush finished with a career-high 14 points on 5-of-8 shooting. Prior to Wednesday, Bush averaged 4 points per game.

Despite the offensive drought, Smith said the new spread offense worked well in the first half. He said one reason it didn't work as well in the second half was

because Western switched to a zone defense, which confused the Bulldogs.

Truman finished with just 10 turnovers. They also had a 13-5 edge on the offensive glass and used that advantage to out-score Western 13-3 on second chance points. But the Bulldogs shot just

38 percent for the game, compared to 44 percent for Western.

The Griffons hit four of their final five field goals and went 10-for-12 from the free throw line during the final 1:54. They finished 17-for-21 from the line for the game.

Truman also struggled from long distance. The Dogs went 4-for-17 from beyond the arc.

Sophomore forward Bri



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Junior guard Amy Galeley leads the MIAA in assists with 4.7 and ranks fourth in assist-to-turnover ratio. Galeley had four assists in last night's loss to Missouri Western.

Daniels led Truman with 13 points. Senior guard and leading scorer Laura Joya finished with six points on

3-of-10 shooting. Freshman guard Becka McHenry added 10 points and four rebounds.

The Bulldogs have had trouble holding onto leads all season. That trend continued Saturday against Northwest Missouri State University.

The Bulldogs built a nine-point lead with just more than six minutes left, but on par with the way the season has gone, Bearcat guard Shelly Martin hit a three-pointer as time expired to give Northwest a 68-65 victory and send Truman to its fifth consecutive loss.

"It feels like it's come to the point where I have to basically hold their hand through everything," head coach Michael Smith said. "With a basketball player, you shouldn't have to do that. Not at the college level you shouldn't."

Despite the late collapse, Truman had the ball with a chance to take the final shot. The Bulldogs called a timeout with 23 seconds left to set their final possession. After the timeout, junior guard Amy Galeley penetrated the defense but missed the shot with eight seconds left. Smith said the team got confused when Northwest switched from a zone defense to man-to-man. He said some players ran their man-to-man offense and some of the players ran their zone offense even after he discussed what to do if Northwest switched defenses.

"When they switched up the defense, it kind of threw us in a loop, but we had a chance to win so we're still kind of bummed

about it," Galeley said.

The Bulldogs helped Northwest's cause down the stretch by hitting just three of their final 11 shots. Truman committed 19 turnovers that Northwest converted into 19 points.

Senior guard Julie Guinn said the defense did not make consistent stops, which contributed to Northwest's 19 points off turnovers.

"Defense shouldn't have been lacking as much as it was," Guinn said. "We could have been a little bit more aggressive."

Truman has had second-half leads in four of its nine losses. Smith cited players not knowing how to win as a reason for problems in close games.

"It's just the mentality," Smith said. "When you're not used to being in that situation, you don't have an idea. I don't make excuses. We just can't handle it. Mentally, we just can't overcome that."

Sophomore guard Bri Daniels led Truman with 14 points. Senior guard Laura Joya chipped in with 13 points off the bench. Truman outrebounded Northwest 39-29. It was the first time this season the Bulldogs have lost when outrebounding their opponent.

Northwest was without leading scorer Gentry Diets, who was at a funeral.

The Bulldogs return to the court at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday at Pershing Arena against the University of Central Missouri.

'Dogs struggle in MIAA, switch offense

Team drops six in a row, revamps offense for remainder of season

BY BRENT FOSTER
Assistant Sports Editor

The women's basketball team left for Winter Break on Dec. 19 with a 6-4 record and momentum following a road victory against Maryville University.

But since the victory against Maryville, the Bulldogs have lost six straight — all conference — highlighted by a slew of illnesses, injuries and travel issues because of weather. Head coach Michael Smith has also shaken up the starting line-up and implemented a new offense.

Smith said the problems started when Truman resumed practice Dec. 26. Four Bulldogs were late because of plane delays. Freshman forward Megan Sharpe missed more than a week of practice and two games because of illness. Senior forward Malorie Kiecker played limited minutes in the first three games after break, and missed the last two games as she continues to rehab from a knee injury. Junior forward Kristen Nissen did not join the team until right before the Dec. 29 game against No. 9 Emporia State University because she was snowed in.

Amid all the problems Truman lost to Emporia 75-55 in its first game back from break.

"After Emporia we talked about

it after we left the locker room, we said, 'That's it, we're not thinking about Emporia anymore,' Smith said. "We've got three games at home. All three games I thought we could win. I really did, but boy, we just laid an egg."

But Smith also said some of Truman's struggles have been the result of a higher level of competition during conference play. Since its victory against Maryville, Truman has played all MIAA games.

The recent skid has coincided with a drop in offensive production. During its first 10 games Truman averaged more than 64 points per game. During the last five games Truman averaged 59 points. Turnovers have also been on the rise recently. Truman averaged just less than 14.8 turnovers per game in the first 10 games, but has averaged 19.6 a game during the recent losing streak. Truman ranks 10th in the MIAA in points per game and turnover margin.

In an attempt to improve, Smith shook up the starting lineup. Beginning with the Jan. 6 home loss to University of Nebraska-Omaha, he brought senior guard and leading scorer Laura Joya off the bench. He did the same during Saturday's three-point loss at Northwest Mis-

souri State University. She scored 12 points against UNO and 13 against Northwest.

The changes continued after Truman's Jan. 6 58-44 home loss to UNO. Smith decided to scrap the motion style offense in favor of a spread offense that uses more set plays. The new offense, which debuted Saturday against Northwest, relies on set plays and screens, as opposed to the motion offense, which forces players to read the defenses.

"With our motion we'd been having some problems with spacing," junior point guard Amy Galeley said. "With this new set we have a lot of spacing and still a lot

of one-on-one opportunities at the same time. It's nice because teams we are going to be facing in conference haven't seen this offense, so it's kind of nice teams haven't scouted it."

The new spread offense calls for running different sets depending on whether the defense is in man-to-man or zone, meaning the players on the floor must recognize the type of defense. Smith said Truman had trouble recognizing when Northwest switched defenses during Saturday's three-point loss. This led to confusion on the Dogs

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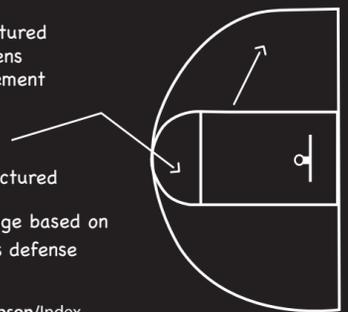
Michael Smith
Head Coach

Offensive Switch

Head coach Michael Smith decided to change the offense from a motion offense to a spread offense prior to the Northwest game Saturday.

Motion: -Less structured
-More screens
-More movement

Spread: -More structured
-Set plays
-Plays change based on opposition's defense



Designed by Sarah Thompson/Index

final possession, when Smith said some players set up the offense like they were against a zone and others played like they were facing man-to-man. The Bulldogs never recovered and could not get a good shot off.

Senior guard Julie Guinn said the offense uses more set plays that come from the bench.

"It's way more structured," Guinn said. "There's certain stuff for certain types of defenses we'll see. It's all run through [Coach Smith]. We don't necessarily make things for ourselves as much."

One of the teams' goals before the season was to make the MIAA Tournament in Kansas City, but the recent downturn has put that goal in jeopardy. Truman has to finish in the top eight to make the tournament. The Bulldogs currently are in 11th and two games out of eighth place.

"Like I said last year, it's going to take a couple of years," Smith said. "I thought we'd be ahead. We started out on a positive. I was pleased with that first semester performance, 6-4. That's where I'd thought we'd be."

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