

Braidlow paces wrestling team at Central Open

Freshman Colton Schmitz to miss rest of season with knee injury

BY CORY WEEKES
Staff Reporter

Last week, wrestling head coach Dave Schutter said that if the Bulldogs were to have a good shot competing at regionals in late February, he would need his team to be healthy. As if having only three upper-classmen on the roster wasn't enough, the team has battled injuries all year.

Now, once again, the injury bug has struck the team as freshman Colton Schmitz is out for the season with a torn meniscus. Schmitz leads the team with 17 wins and placed in almost every competition.

"His loss can be manageable," Schutter said. "As long as we keep working hard and getting guys

back from injuries, we can compete at a high level."

Last weekend the team, minus Schmitz, competed in the Central College Open in Pella, Iowa. Once again it was senior Loyde Braidlow who took charge and placed second, losing in the third overtime by a second of ride time. No other Bulldog managed to get past the quarter-finals.

"Loyde could have easily won the tournament," Schutter said. "He is wrestling solid now and is starting to shine."

Braidlow, who started the season off slowly, has placed highly in his last two competitions, and said it is all coming together for him now.

"Throughout the year it's always been one thing good, one thing bad," Braidlow said. "This week I did well in all three phases."

The "three phases" Braidlow talked about are the neutral, ground, and stand-up games. And what might

have been true in his early competitions where he always seemed to be lacking one of the three is now fixed, Braidlow said.

"In the past where I would make a mistake I am now following through and making it all the way through tournaments," he said.

Although Braidlow continues to have success, other wrestlers are starting to wrestle hard, Schutter said.

"It was [Andy] Bader's first tournament back," Schutter said. "It's always nice to have Andy in the rotation because he can be a difference-maker when healthy. Sophomore Alex Maus also wrestled really well, and it's guys like Moss who will need to step up."

If the right wrestlers step into their roles, the team will be able to compete, Braidlow said.

"We are a good team," Braidlow said. "It's tough to compete when you have holes, but it's a long season, and really, it doesn't matter what we do

now, but what we are doing come February and March."

This weekend, the 'Dogs will compete in the Central Missouri Duals, where they will face Chadron State College (Neb.), University of Findley (Ohio), Southwest Minnesota State University and the University of Mary (N.D.). None are overly-tough to wrestle but injuries and holes might prove to be serious disadvantages for Truman.

"Everyone has an injury lull in the wrestling season," Braidlow said. "It's about how you react that counts. Personally I'm feeling good about this week. As a team, if we have healthy guys we have a great shot, but if we aren't healthy it could be a rough day."

This is the sort of long day Schutter hopes to avoid this weekend.

"As a team we need to work through this adversity," Schutter said. "Not everything goes your way in a

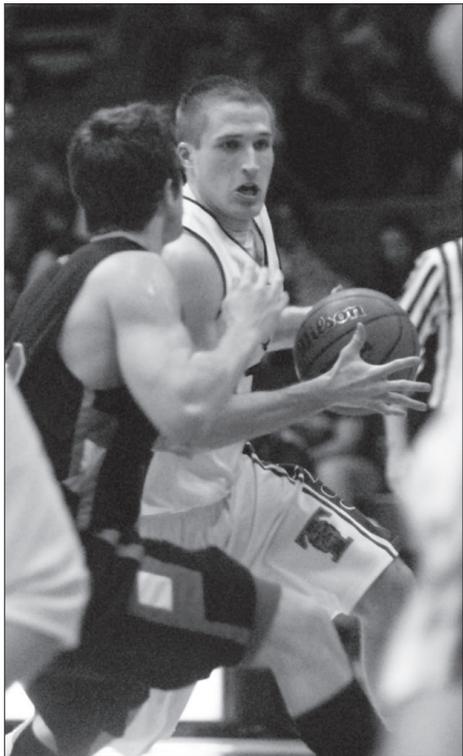
wrestling season, and we have to stay positive and keep working hard."

As for Schmitz, he said he is confident that if his team works hard they will be competitive.

"It sucks being injured, but I know they will be fine," Schmitz said.

Even through injuries and adversity, the goal of the team stays the same — put four wrestlers into Nationals. And because the goals are the same, Braidlow said, the team's approach will remain the same.

"We have the potential to reach our goals," Braidlow said. "We just have to stay healthy through February. Wrestling is a simple sport — we aren't changing our approach. We just have to work hard and keep grinding. We are still digging our way out of this injury hole, but every good tournament we have between here and February is another step in the right direction."



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Senior guard Alex Henderson attempts to get by a UCM defender during last night's loss to the Mules.

STREAK | Watts and Luellen combine to score 24 points in first half for Mules

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and took control of the game late in the second half.

The Mules currently are one of two MIAA teams ranked in the top 10. Central used swarming defense and a good inside-out game to keep the Bulldogs from making a big run.

Mules senior forward Sanijay Watts was too much for the Bulldogs as the MIAA's leading rebounder and second leading scorer had his way inside. Truman threw three different defenders at Watts, but no one could guard the 6-foot-4 forward. Watts scored 22 points and grabbed four rebounds. Before the game, Schrader said the Bulldogs were going to make Watts beat them.

"Normally, we like to make someone else beat us," Schrader said. "We're going to try to guard [Watts] one-on-one with

a bigger guy and stay home on everyone else. We're going to make him beat us."

Watts, along with senior forward Tremaine Luellen, combined for 24 points and six rebounds in the first half. They shot nearly 69 percent from the field.

Truman had a week off before the game, and the team wasn't sure if that would help or hurt them. Before the game, junior forward Mark Misiewicz said both options could have helped the Bulldogs.

"We kind of wish that we would have played someone," Misiewicz said. "You also kind of enjoy the rest. We definitely liked the rest, but another game could have been beneficial."

The Bulldogs' next game is at 3 p.m. Saturday at Pershing Arena against Missouri Southern State University.

VESKO | Filchev has seen rise in playing time and production this season

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the beginning. I've never seen attention like that from another coach."

Schrader, who has played and coached in Spain, is very familiar with the European game. He said Filchev showed several attributes that would allow him to play well in the MIAA.

"I saw decent hands," Schrader said. "One of his best attributes is catching the ball. He has a soft touch around the basket. His stroke was sound. In terms of basketball jargon, he wasn't a stiff."

Filchev's freshman season started off slowly, and he only appeared in five non-conference games before breaking his foot. He received a medical redshirt after breaking his foot a second time right before conference play. Filchev said the experience wasn't a great one, but he was able to learn a lot from the sidelines.

"When I came here, I actually gained the freshman 50 [pounds], not 15 but 50," Filchev said. "I changed my whole style of playing. I became more physical and more of a post. Before, I was more of

a four [forward], but now I'm definitely stuck in the five [center]."

Last year, Filchev started to show glimpses of what he could bring to the Bulldogs. He played in 25 games and started 13. Although he averaged just less than 13 minutes per game, he led the team in field goal percentage and blocks. His 5.6 points per game average was also fifth on the team.

"The first thing I noticed here was the defensive game that most colleges practice," Filchev said.

"Europe is a lot more offense-oriented, probably because of the shot clock. It's 24 seconds in Europe [35 seconds in college], so you have to be focused. The time for attack is less so you really have to concentrate."

Vesko Filchev
Sophomore

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This year, Filchev has started to come into his own. Going into last night's game, Filchev was fourth in the MIAA in blocks and eighth in rebounds. He has led the Bulldogs in scoring five games and rebounds in eight games. He has recorded four double-doubles and had a career-high 21 points

Getting Your Fil (Chev)

Quick facts about Vesko Filchev

Played on the Bulgarian Junior National ball team, and competed against some current NBA players

Medical redshirted the 2007-08 season

Started 13 games last season and led the Bulldogs in shooting percentage

Averaging 11.1 pts/game with 23 blocks this season

Design by Cameron Ballentine/Index

against the University of Missouri-St. Louis. He also has stayed on the floor longer, averaging nearly 24 minutes per game.

Filchev and junior guard Alex Henderson are tied for the lead in points, with 178 each. He also has 21 blocks, which is five more than the rest of the Bulldogs combined. Filchev said he has started to adjust to the American game with increased playing time.

"The MIAA is probably one of the best levels [of basketball] that I've played," Filchev said. "It's probably the best conference in Div. II. I think I'm adapting. I get a lot of help from my teammates. [Junior forward] Ethan Freeman, [junior forward] Mark Misiewicz, whatever

four players are on the court help me. They usually take my man for a second until I can get there. I really appreciate that, and I've never seen that back in Europe."

Misiewicz probably knows Filchev better than anyone. The two are roommates and Misiewicz said he helped Filchev learn certain sayings, phrases and slang. He also said the Bulldogs' future looks bright as Filchev continues to improve.

"I definitely think he's just getting started," Misiewicz said. "He still has things to improve on. By his senior year, if he gets his conditioning in tip-top shape and increases his foot speed, he could be a force."

TRACK | Senior Derek Atwood takes fourth place in the shot put

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try to move up the second half of the race," Dial said.

Another top competitor for the men's team was junior thrower Derek Atwood. Atwood placed fourth in the men's shot put with a toss of 15.21 meters. Senior thrower Alex Van Delft and freshman thrower Matt Smith also placed in the top-10 in this event with throws

of 14.77 meters and 14.56 meters, respectively.

Despite these top performances, head coach John Cochrane said the men's team still has to improve significantly for the conference meet. Cochrane said both the men's and women's teams have suffered from injuries and top performers graduating or leaving the team.

"We're thin on the men's

side," Cochrane said. "We have some good people, but not a lot of them."

Dial said the men's team will focus on strength and endurance training and slowly incorporate speed training into its weekly regimen. He said the team was in good shape, but they need to get into racing shape to compete with the top conference teams.

"What we end up, we

end up," Cochrane said. "We can't change that, but we're trying to get better and we're trying to improve."

The men's track team will compete at the Cyclone Open at Iowa State University in Ames this Friday and Saturday. They will compete against a variety of teams, including Div. I teams like Iowa State University, conference teams and Div. III teams.

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