

Dependahl takes charge

Sophomore roller hockey forward on pace for record season

BY JACK NICHOLL
Sports Editor

There was never any question about playing hockey for Cody Dependahl. He started playing when he was 6 and never looked back.

Dependahl, now a sophomore forward on Truman's roller hockey team, wasn't pressured by anyone but himself to start playing. From the start, it was always his choice.

"I remember being a little kid, and your parents are like, 'What do you want to play?'" he said. "And it's like, 'I want to play hockey!'"

Dependahl played on various select traveling teams growing up and earned a spot on Christian Brother College's varsity team his freshman year of high school. CBC competed in four championship games and won three state titles in Dependahl's tenure. The team was so unstoppable that it won one title game 11-0.

Two years ago, Dependahl made the switch to a Truman roller hockey team that has made the NCAA tournament three years running. His skills stood out from the beginning.

"The first day of tryouts he came out, and it was just like, 'Wow, this is going to be really easy,' and he just fit right in," said junior Zach Rohne, who plays on Truman's top line with Dependahl.

Like many Truman players, Dependahl had to make adjustments from playing on the ice. The biggest problem was learning how to stop — ice hockey is more of a stop-and-go style while roller hockey is a quick turn.

"It took me into second semester last year before I could stop and start," Dependahl said. "It's like, I've been playing my whole life, and it's taken me five months to learn how to stop and start."

He also had to adjust to the slower, possession-style of roller hockey where there are five players on the floor instead of six.

Still, Rohne said Dependahl has incorporated some ice hockey aspects into Truman's strategy, which has helped the team "against a lot of better teams because we are able to trap them more."

"We're sort of a fast-paced team," Rohne said. "We're not going to sit around and wait. We're aggressive with our fore-check."

If Dependahl struggled with the transition at all last year, the statistics don't show it. He was third on the team in scoring and second in assists, totaling 53 regular-season points. In six playoff games, he had 12 goals and eight assists.

"Whenever he gets the puck, he's just so patient and calm, and it doesn't even look like he's trying, and then all of a sudden the puck is on your stick, you're right by the net, you have an easy tap in goal," Rohne said. "Or, he will just shoot it from anywhere, and it just goes in. His vision is what makes it so much easier for everyone else. You just skate around until you get open, he'll put it right on your tape every time."

Dependahl has been even better in the first half of this

season. After the team lost scoring threats Drew Vandas and Tim Dougherty to graduation and Rohne to an injury, Dependahl answered the call as the main scoring threat. Through 11 games, he has 50 points and has scored 49 percent of the team's goals. Only one other Div. II player — Jason Walker from Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville — has more goals this season.

Since the roller hockey team began keeping stats in the 2004-05 season, four Bulldogs have recorded at least 50 regular-season points and none more than 53. Dependahl is on pace for 82 points.

"You'll see teams between the first and second period ... put a person whose job is just to follow Cody around," said assistant coach Dane Moody, who has been involved with the team since 2004.

Dependahl credits the statistics to more scoring opportunities this year because of a smaller team in which the scoring is not as spread out.

"Especially in the first half, I think he took it upon himself that he knew he was going to have to be a big part of the offense for our team if we were going to stay in any games at all, and clearly he's done that," Rohne said. "I could see him easily putting up another 50 points this semester."

Dependahl's effects go beyond the offense. He helps with Truman's penalty kill and has logged just six penalty minutes this season.

Moody compares Dependahl to the Pittsburgh Penguins' Sidney Crosby and Ilya Kovalchuk, the Atlanta Thrashers' goal-scoring threat. Moody said Kovalchuk plays effortlessly, like Dependahl.

"It's definitely infuriating for someone like me — when I go out there I don't look like that," he said. "I work my butt off, and I score goals too, but it's not fluid. It just looks effortless, and you know he's trying hard, but it's fantastic hockey to watch."

Rohne compares Dependahl to Pavel Datsyuk, an all-around player for the Detroit Red Wings.

"Cody's one-on-one moves are better than anyone else on the team and rival anyone else in the league," Rohne said. "He can do that, he can pass, he can shoot,"

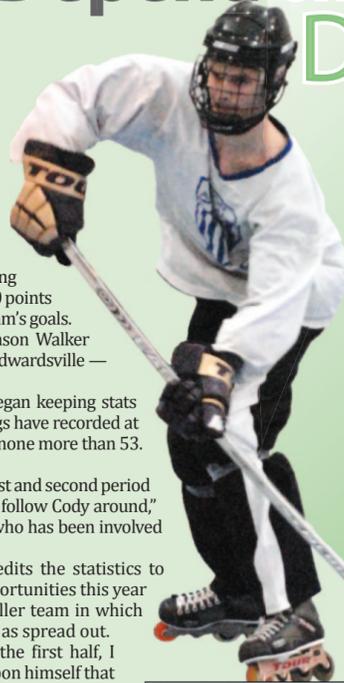
Dependahl's hockey skills have been honed ever since he told his parents he wanted to play at age 6. As of now, they have accumulated in three state titles and made him into one of the best players in Div. II inline hockey.

"Individually, this has got to be the most dominant performance by any individual player in Truman State inline history," Moody said.

Dependahl on Dependahl

Year	2008-09	2009-10
Games played	19	11
Goals	27	34
Assists	26	16
Points	53	50

12 goals and six assists in six playoff games last year



"Whenever he gets the puck he's just so patient and calm, and it doesn't even look like he's trying."

Zach Rohne
Junior



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Cody Dependahl leads the Bulldogs and is second in Div. II with 50 points this season.

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