

Men nab fourth at Springfield

Bulldogs post low round of the tournament

BY BRENT FOSTER
Assistant Sports Editor

Sometimes it's not about how you start, but how you finish.

The men's golf team battled through cold temperatures, rain, wet course conditions and wind during the opening round of the Illinois-Springfield Invite on Sunday. The conditions hampered Bulldog golfers enough that only junior Chris Kovach broke 80.

But after the shaky start and poor weather conditions, the Bulldogs found their stroke Monday with a tournament-low round of 310 to take fourth place out of 12 teams in their first tournament of the spring. Truman shaved 18 strokes off its first round score, tied for the highest improvement of any team in the field.

It was the team's highest finish since a fourth-place finish at last season's MIAA Championships.

Rockhurst University won the tournament and was eight strokes ahead of the Bulldogs. Truman was the only MIAA school at the invite.

Sophomore Nik Bentzinger bounced back from an 83 in the first round to turn in the low

round of the tournament with a 1-over-par 72 on Day 2. He finished fifth overall and first for Truman. Kovach finished tied for seventh place with rounds of 77 and 80. Junior Vincent Kurth finished tied for 16th with rounds of 82 and 79.

It was Bentzinger's highest finish since he took third at the Bulldog classic in September.

Co-head coach Tyler Madsen said he was glad to see Bentzinger perform well at a non-conference meet. He said one of the goals this spring was for Bentzinger to do better during the non-conference meets in the spring than he did in the fall. During the fall, he finished tied for third and 14th at the two conference meets but finished 57th and 41st at the non-conference meets.

"The non-conference events was where we wanted to challenge him to pick it up a little bit," Madsen said.

Madsen said he was happy with how the team performed because the team has had limited practice because of weather and course conditions, and many of the teams at this tournament had either competed at tournaments before or had taken trips south to play.

"Coming into the first tournament of the year, you never know what to expect," Madsen said.

"We really only had a week of practice. ... I'm very happy with this tournament for the team."

Madsen said he'd like to see the team improve on its putting before its next tournament, noting the Bulldogs were just four shots out of second place. Bentzinger agreed with Madsen. He said he made a few long putts early but missed several short putts throughout the tournament that cost him precious strokes.

Others competing for Truman included freshman Alex Kay, who finished 45th with rounds of 86, 87, and junior Andy Herrington, tied for 50th with rounds of 85, 79. Truman's 628 total was the lowest since the Bulldog Classic in April, which is completed at the Kirksville Country Club, Truman's home course.

Kurth said the team improved so much from the first to second day because it stayed focused after the rough first day.

"We let the weather get to us a little bit the first day, but the second day we put that behind us and played our game like we can," Kurth said.

The off-and-on rain and 20 mph wind affected the entire field. Eight schools improved their scores in the second round, and no player finished any round under par.

"We did OK the first day and held it together," Kurth said. "I thought the second day, especially with the weather, we really played to our potential and did better than our expectations and showed people what we were capable of."

Bentzinger said poor weather con-



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Sophomore Nick Bentzinger looks on after putting during the Bulldog Classic last fall. Bentzinger finished fifth at the Illinois Springfield Invite.

ditions, especially the wind, forced him to adjust his swing accordingly.

"You have to club up if the wind's in your face and club down if it's behind your back," Bentzinger said.

Madsen said he was especially

pleased because there were quality Div. II teams there.

The Bulldogs hit the course again Monday and Tuesday at the Western Illinois Invite in Macomb, Ill., where the Bulldogs will face several Div. I schools.

Lawson leads team in first tourney

Team uses Invite to prepare for Bulldog Classic

BY BRENT FOSTER
Assistant Sports Editor

The women's golf team officially began its spring season Sunday, but it didn't go as expected.

The team traveled to Springfield, Ill., Sunday and Monday expecting to compete in the Illinois-Springfield Invite but was the only full team at the tournament. Judsen University (Ill.) was the only other school present and had three golfers participate.

Head coach Sam Lesseig said he knew before going that one team was not going to be there but did not know the entire field would not show up. He said he expected the host UIS to at least have a team to play but they did not.

"It was a letdown I think mentally," Lesseig said. "It

was really kind of a farce. But it is what it is."

Despite not playing against competition, the weekend was not a total loss for the Bulldogs. The 'Dogs got to leave Kirksville and play a different course. The golfers also worked on individual areas of there game without worrying about competition, something they don't always get a chance to do during the season.

"We were looking for some competition, and when we found out there wasn't going to be any, it kind of took the pressure off a little bit," senior Erin Semple said. "Especially since the weather was bad. We looked at it as a warm up-round."

Senior Krystal Limsiaco said she wished the invite was more competitive but that there were positives to the situation.

"It would have been nice to have a lot more competition out there, and it would have definitely helped us a



Blake Toppmeyer/Index
Junior Jen Lawson prepares to chip during the Bulldog Classic last spring. Lawson has won her last two tournaments.

lot more in the long run for the season and what not, but it was also good practice for us," Limsiaco said.

Junior Jen Lawson had the low score for Truman with two rounds of 82. She defeated Limsiaco by one

stroke. Sophomore Jessica Schepker finished third.

It was Lawson's second straight individual title. She took first at the Avilla (Kan.) Invitational in October, the final tournament of the fall season.

"Everybody had stretches of holes that they played very well," Lesseig said. "They also had stretches of holes that they'd like to forget. But that usually happens. What we need to do is just be a lot more consistent overall."

The weather played a factor in the team's performance Sunday. With rain, wet course conditions and a 20 mph wind, it was tough for golfers to get comfortable.

Lesseig said he hopes weather conditions don't force players to have to adjust their swing but said it happens sometimes, especially when hitting into the wind. He said one hole was downwind, and the next hole was into the wind, making it tricky for golfers to adjust on the first day.

"You really, really have to concentrate on hitting it solid," Lesseig said. "If you hit it solid, the wind will affect it, but not nearly as much if you catch it just a little off the toe or off the heel."

Despite the lack of competition at Springfield, the invite gave golfers a chance to see what areas they need to work on. He said he really wants to see the golfers work on their short game this week, noting that some players had more than 40 putts per round.

"That's way too many putts," Lesseig said. "You're upset usually if you're at 36, which is two putts a green. You've got to hit a lot of greens."

The Bulldogs have just three competitive tournaments before the MIAA Championships. The Bulldogs return to action Saturday and Sunday in the Truman Bulldog Classic at the Kirksville Country Club. Lesseig said that even though there was no competition this week, he doesn't think it will affect the team at this weekend's classic. He said playing at home will help because the team is used to the course and how it plays.

"It gets to be more intense when you're playing other people, but you've still got to play the course," Lesseig said. "The other people are just there. It's always just you against the course."



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