

Wrestling qualifies zero for nationals

BY BRENT FOSTER
Assistant Sports Editor

The wrestling team was close but came up short in its quest to reach the national tournament Sunday at the NCAA Super Regional II in Warrensburg, Mo.

It was the second straight season the Bulldogs did not qualify a wrestler for nationals, following six straight seasons of at least one national qualifier.

The Bulldogs' region is one of the toughest in the country. The University of Nebraska-Omaha is ranked No. 1 in Div. II and eight out of the last nine team-champions have come from schools that are now in the Bulldogs' region.

Four Bulldogs placed at the tournament, including fifth place finishes by seniors Dean Schultz and Bryan Isbell. No wrestler finished in the top four, which would mean an automatic berth in the national tournament.

Head coach Dave Schutter said Schultz and Isbell would have made it to nationals if a wrestler ahead of them in their weight class was injured, but he said that happens "about once every 10 years."

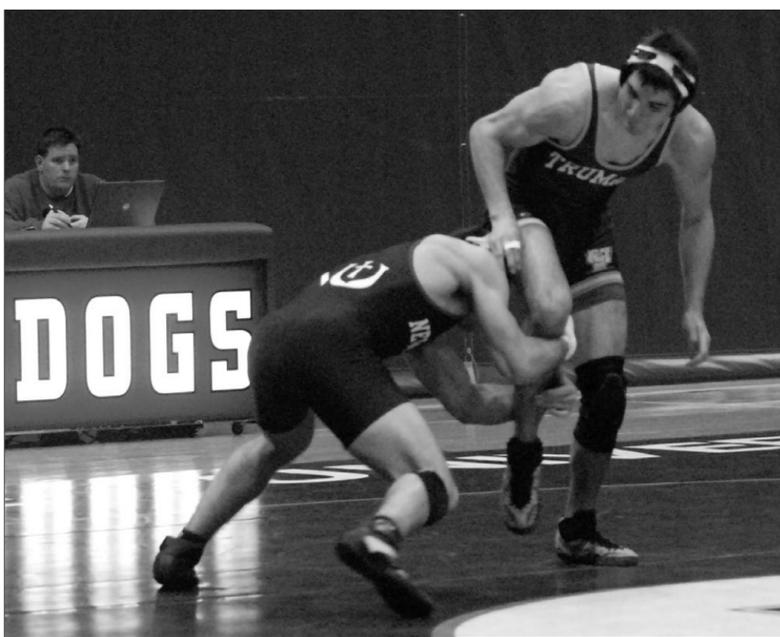
Wrestling in his final career tournament, Schultz appeared to provide Truman its best chance at a national qualifier, but he lost twice in matches that would have guaranteed him a top-four finish.

After winning his first match, Schultz lost to the No. 1 wrestler at 175, Aaron Denson of UNO.

Schultz had to win the semifinals of wrestlebacks to ensure a national berth, but he lost by fall to Cody Rowell of the University of Central Oklahoma.

Schultz, who is still recovering from a knee injury, said he thought he had the match in hand, but he became fatigued as the match wore on and was unable to maintain the momentum.

Schultz said that despite his tough losses, he was glad to finish his career on a strong note. He won his fifth place match 9-0.



Senior Bryan Isbell tries to avoid a takedown against Newman College during a home meet earlier this season. Isbell placed fifth at the regional meet Sunday in Warrensburg. Jack Nicholl/Index

"It's important to go out wrestling," Schultz said.

Sophomore Colton Schmitz returned from a knee injury that had sidelined him since January. He was one of three Bulldogs who won their first match. He lost his next two matches and did not place.

Senior Bryan Isbell was Truman's biggest surprise. Entering the tournament he was 2-15, but he finished fifth at 165.

"Record doesn't mean anything because it's all about preparation for regionals," Schutter said.

Schutter said Isbell was in position to win his opening match against Matthew Gille of Wisconsin-Parkside University, but a questionable call by the referee with 10 seconds left in the match kept Isbell from winning.

Schutter said Isbell had the match in hand, but was thrown to the edge of the out of bounds line. The referee awarded

Gille with a takedown and two points, giving him the 4-3 decision. Schutter questioned the call but was warned by the official. Gille qualified for nationals with a third-place finish.

"If [Isbell] wins that match, he's probably going to nationals," Schutter said. "It wasn't a takedown."

Schutter said that during Isbell's wrestleback semifinal match, another questionable call by the same referee kept him from the third place match. Schutter said Isbell and his opponent, Tommie Graszl of Ashland University (Ohio) were rolling around on the mat, and the official said Graszl pinned Isbell, keeping him out of the top four.

Redshirt freshman Zach Hayes came within one match of qualifying for nationals at 197, but settled for sixth place. Hayes lost his first match, but battled back to reach the semifinals of wrestlebacks before

losing 5-2 to John Trembl of Wisconsin-Parkside.

Senior heavyweight Loyde Braidlow wrestled in his final career tournament, placing sixth. He won his first match but lost his next two.

Schutter said that of all the seniors, Braidlow would be the toughest to replace because of his consistency throughout his career. Braidlow ended his career with a 91-67 record.

"It's hard to find good-quality heavyweights," Schutter said. "You go into a dual and you know he's the last guy and you've got a good shot at winning that match. ... It's going to be huge to lose Loyde."

Schutter said the team would miss the leadership from Braidlow, Schultz and Isbell.

"The sun goes down every night and comes up every morning," Schutter said. "If I'm still here coaching next year we're going to gear back up and get back and keep doing it."

TRUMAN ATHLETICS News and Notes

Baseball: Weather forces changes

The baseball team will be on the road until at least March 16. The series this weekend against Upper Iowa University has been moved to Emporia, Kan., because of field conditions. The Bulldogs play doubleheaders Sunday and Monday against the Peacocks. Truman travels Tuesday to Springfield, Mo. to play a double header against Drury University.

Winter weather also forced the Bulldogs to move their first home MIAA series to Topeka, Kan. Truman will play four MIAA games against Washburn University from March 12 to 14.

Men's swimming: McCall misses A cut

Senior Andrew McCall was the only representative from the men's swim team at the Feb. 19-20 Last Chance Meet.

McCall came up 0.7 seconds short of an A-cut time in his final collegiate race. Assistant coach Tim Sandfort said it was too much time to shave off in such a short span.

"He indicated that he was satisfied, but he wasn't really happy about it," Sandfort said. "He's been struggling with some issues in his lower back and doing a double-taper is difficult for any athlete to do."

McCall maintained his conference time with a 21.32 in the 50-yard freestyle, but the A-cut time of 20.69 remained out of reach and he was denied the national bid he had earned on sprint relay teams each of the past two seasons. Gole said McCall has nothing to be ashamed of as the end of his Truman career.

"He played a vital part of those relays and they wouldn't have gone if he wasn't on there so it's just kind of a bummer that we didn't have three other guys around him on relays [this year]," head coach Mark Gole said. "He swam incredibly well this year."

Men's Track: Distance medley succeeds

The men's distance medley relay placed fourth at the MIAA Track and Field Indoor Championships. Sophomore distance runners Brandon Gutteridge, Joey Walls, Ryan Peterson and senior Zach Chapman finished their relay with a combined time of 10:26.89 to beat their season best by more than five seconds. This was the highest placing for the men's team.

The distance medley relay consists of four different running events that include the mile run, the 400-meter run, the 800-meter run and the 1,200-meter run. This was the second time the men had run the relay this season.

"The DMR did a really good job," senior thrower Alex Van Delft said. "Our conference is tough, and I think everyone did a really good job they did the best they could. I think if everyone didn't do the best they've done they were right around it — it's just our conference is just that tough. We didn't have very many points to show how good of an effort we had."

The men's team competes in their first outdoor meet of the year March 26 at the Washington University Mini-Meet in St. Louis.

Simek preps for national swim meet

BY BRENDAN O'BRIEN
Staff Reporter

While all his teammates enjoy a two-week break from the daily grind of practice, freshman swimmer Jerod Simek continues to get ready for nationals.

Simek is the lone qualifier on the men's side. He earned three A cuts at the conference meet Feb. 10 to 13 and will swim four events at the national meet March 10 to 13, in Canton, Ohio.

As Simek prepares to race on the biggest stage of his life, he said the greatest stress is behind him.

"I think the biggest weight a swimmer carries with him all season long is getting that A cut, and [Simek] got three of them and a school record to boot," head coach Mark Gole said. "I'm more excited than anything. This kid's been work-

ing hard all year long. He had a phenomenal Iowa meet, kept working hard, had an even better conference meet and he's continued to work hard."

Gole said Simek's conference meet was one of the top individual performances he has seen at Truman. He will race in the 400-yard IM, in which he currently is rated 10th. He also will race in the 500, 1,000, and 1,650 freestyle. He has a top-20 national ranking in each event.

The top 16 finishers in each race will score points for their teams. At this point, Simek said he is confident in his 400-yard IM but expects to swim his best mile.

"I was actually surprised to see myself up so high in the [400] IM but, with seeing myself that high, I've kind of shifted a little bit to try to focus on that race," Simek said. "I'll swim the 1000 [free] on the first day

and the 400 IM on the second day, so I can have one race behind me because usually my first race is a little jittery and I just want to get it over with. After each other race, I tend to loosen up, so I think I'll do really well in our mile at the end of the meet."

Simek said it can be a struggle to get up in the morning and go to practice, knowing teammates are able to sleep in.

"I keep in mind that, OK, you can't let yourself get discouraged by it because you reached your goal and you made it to nationals, which is what you wanted to do," Simek said. "So, I kind of just keep everything in perspective."

Other swimmers might struggle to block out these distractions, but assistant coach Tim Sandfort said he is not worried about that with Simek.

"Jerod's a self-sufficient ath-

lete," Sandfort said. "He trains hard whether he's by himself or whether he's got a bunch of other people in the pool and he really helps push other people. ... I don't think it's really impacted his training in a negative way at all. He's there to take care of business."

One qualifier is the fewest the 'Dogs have had since they failed to qualify a single swimmer in 1994-95. With senior Andrew McCall, the only returner to the normally strong relays, it was a rebuilding year for the 'Dogs.

Although Simek is the sole Bulldog to make the trip to Canton on the men's side, the women's team will be taking 14.

Jerod's brother Andrew, a swimmer at Missouri University of Science and Technology, also qualified for nationals in the 200-yard breaststroke. Unlike their meeting in early

February, their parents will not have to take sides.

"Our parents can be there to cheer for both of us, so it'll be nice, and I'll be cheering my heart out for him, and I know he'll probably be doing the same for me," Simek said.

Simek will have a full plate at nationals as his four events are the longest, and training has been brutal at times. After rigorous training sessions last week, Simek said he could not move.

Simek said he will shoot for the top eight in the 400-yard IM and possibly another distance race, but that he will be sure to soak in the whole experience.

"It's almost been surreal at times, but I'm really excited going into it, and I think I can do really well," Simek said. "Hopefully [I] can get best times in at least two of my events if not all of them."

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