

'Dogs defeat No. 7 ESU 3-1

Sharpe hits 17 kills as volleyball moves to 19-8 this season

JOE BELL
Staff Reporter

The volleyball team took another step on the road to the postseason last night.

No. 19 Truman sunk No. 7 Emporia State University, 3-1. The Bulldogs came out and set the tone for the match with a first-set win, 25-17. The second set was a little tighter, but the Bulldogs won with a 26-24 victory. Emporia snatched the third set from the 'Dogs, but Truman narrowly won the fourth set, 25-23, to claim the victory.

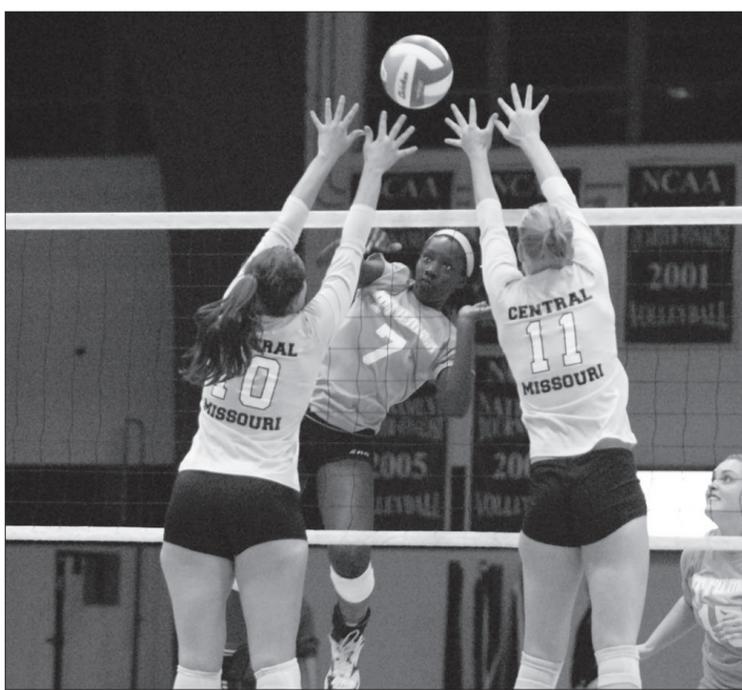
The Bulldogs also avenged an early-season loss to Emporia on Sept. 16. In their last meeting, the Bulldogs lost 3-1, and were out-hit .246-.159. This time the Bulldogs reversed that. The Bulldogs hit .202 for the night, compared to ESU's .122. They also edged the Hornets in both kills and errors, 55-22 to 53-31.

The real story of the night was the Bulldogs' defensive improvements since they last played Emporia. Truman had 82 digs, compared to the 56 they had previously. Truman also improved its blocks by seven.

"We really tried to focus on our blocking match-ups," assistant coach Megan Wargo said. "We actually flip-flopped our line-up a little bit to match-up against their better hitters. In game three, [Emporia's] coach took out two of their top hitters because they weren't producing. So, I felt blocking-wise, we did a fantastic job tonight of stopping them."

The match had bigger implications than just another match for the Bulldogs. The Bulldog's win closely follows the heels of their victory against No. 15 University of Nebraska-Omaha on Oct. 10. If Truman can defeat No. 9 Washburn tomorrow, they will almost certainly see a rise not only in their national spot, but also within the region.

After a tumultuous off-season in which many key players were lost, the Bulldogs have managed not only



Freshman middle blocker Megan Sharpe, shown earlier this season, hit .517 with 17 kills against No. 7 Emporia State University last night. The 'Dogs have won four straight matches.

Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

to stay competitive in the tough MIAA conference, but to become one of the region's top teams. In the most recent NCAA poll, the Bulldogs ranked as the No. 6 team in the South Central region. The top eight teams make the playoffs.

The Bulldogs will have to walk the wire the rest of the season to ensure a postseason berth. All of the top six teams in the South Central region come out of the MIAA, and it is unlikely that more than seven teams from the MIAA will go to the postseason, head coach Ben Briney said. The rest of the Bulldogs' regular season has them playing against two more ranked teams, one of which currently ranks in the top

10. The Bulldogs have lost four of the five matches they have played against top-10 teams thus far.

Also, up to this point in the season, the Bulldogs have lost three matches against unranked teams, and have had a number of matches that ended very close.

"I felt blocking-wise, we did a fantastic job tonight of stopping them."

Megan Wargo
Assistant coach

"Now that we're halfway through the season, it's even more important that we're playing together as a team," senior right side hitter Lauren Graybeal said. "From here on out, we need to win every game if we want to get into regionals."

Things seem to be clicking for Truman at the right time. The Bulldogs put away two unranked teams last weekend when they played against Northwestern Mis-

souri State University and Missouri Western State University. Truman lost only one game in the process. The Bulldogs also upset No. 15 UNO 3-2 on Oct. 10. UNO is one of the two ranked teams that Truman will play later in the regular season.

"We're starting to come in and focus longer in practice," Briney said. "It's really helped out and it's starting to show off in matches. ... Also, a lot of it is getting used to playing with each other. We're at that point in the season where the girls are starting to get to know each other on the court well and knowing where each other are going to be. That's really helped a lot, too."

The Bulldogs begin an important three-match homestand against one of the top-three MIAA teams, Washburn University, tomorrow at 7 p.m. The Bulldogs face off against Fort Hays State University at 6 p.m. on Saturday.

TRUMAN ATHLETICS News and Notes

Swimming: Teams open season against Iowa

The men's and women's swimming teams competed against the University of Iowa on Oct. 9 at Pershing Arena. The Bulldogs lost 167-87 on the women's side and 182-76 on the men's side.

Junior Julia Jones and juniors Anna Grinter, Emily Buss and Claire Myers picked up B cuts for the Bulldogs.

Truman next competes Oct. 23 and 24 in a quadrangular meet at the University of Indianapolis.

Men's soccer: Team needs postseason help

Every game is crucial in the end-of-the-season stretch for the men's soccer team. Although Truman has a 11-2-1 record and is No. 17 in the nation, they must be in the top two in the South Central Region to ensure a spot in the playoffs.

"There's going to be a team with two losses that doesn't go, and that's ridiculous, so, I don't really know what to say about that other than talking to the NCAA, the men's soccer championship committee," head coach Duke Cochran said. "I don't know, I think we just need to concentrate on having a great year and let the chips fall where they may."

After falling to third in Tuesday's regional rankings, the 'Dogs need second-seeded Midwestern State University (Texas) to falter in at least one of its final four games. Cochran knows, however, that what MSU (10-1-2) does is out of the Bulldogs' hands, so he wants to focus on what Truman can control.

"Let's have a great season, let the rest play out, and I think that's what we have to be," Cochran said. "You know, let's just win every game we can, let's get ranked as high as we can, show we're one of the best teams, but we can't worry about that stuff that's out of our control."

A playoff appearance would be Truman's first since 2005, when the team was knocked out of the regional championship match by Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville in an overtime shootout.

Women's soccer: Players move up record books

Senior midfielder Kristin Haluszczak moved into the Truman record books Monday. Haluszczak played in her 80th match, which puts her in a tie for ninth place all-time in total games played. The record is 85, and the Bulldogs have five regular season games left on their schedule, not including possible postseason play.

Sophomore goalie Jayne Grisham also put herself in the record books. Grisham played her 21st match to put her in a tie for ninth all-time for goalies. She also moved into ninth place in keeper minutes.

Freshman forward Olivia Hayes netted her 11th goal of the season Monday. It is the most goals by a Bulldog player since 2004, when Sara Murray kicked in 15.

Women's soccer: Wiegert return imminent

Senior forward Jessica Wiegert, who has been out since the first match of the season with a torn ACL, is set to return soon.

Senior midfielder and captain Katie Hinrichs said to practice this weekend. Hinrichs could not confirm when Wiegert will return to action in matches.

During the match last Monday against Northwest Missouri State University, Wiegert was doing running drills.

The women's soccer team has five more regular season matches before potentially competing in the first round of the playoffs Nov. 13.

Roller hockey attempts to overcome losses

Commentary



JOE BELL

The Truman roller hockey team has been fantastic the last three seasons. A solid group of talented players under the tutelage of the Canadian coach made it to the national tournament three years running.

Unfortunately for the Bulldogs, dynasties cannot survive forever. During the off-season, the Bull-

dogs have had not only a major roster turnover, but a team turnover as well. Former head coach Joe Nedelec, who played a major role in the success of the teams he coached, departed during the off-season. The 'Dogs also lost seven of the 11 starters who comprised their Div. II team, including vital members of the offense, defense, bench and goalie.

Truman has fielded two teams, a Div. II team and a B Div. team, for a long time. But this year, the Bulldogs had to worry about whether they were going to be able to field a Div. II team, let alone a B team. Truman promoted the remaining members of its B team to fill the holes on the Div. II team, and with the addition of one freshman in the off-season, it has brought its numbers back up to 11. But, Truman still has only seven or eight skaters available at any one time. Junior Zach Rohne is unable to

play this semester because of an off-season shoulder surgery, and senior Truman Patterson will be graduating in December.

What this all amounts to is that Truman is no longer the king of the Great Plains region. After losing most of its players and the coaching talents of Nedelec, the success the team practically was assured from the start of its past seasons is gone.

"Years past, we've always thought of, we're here to win this division, hands down," Rohne said. "No one in this league should beat us, no one in this league should touch us. But this year, we're definitely going to have to work harder than we've worked any time before. And I think a lot more games are going to be more competitive than in years past."

"We have the skill to win our division and go to nationals. It's just going to take a lot, a lot of work."

The Bulldogs do have some bright spots they can look forward to. The team will have the knowledge and experience of the returning players who know the division well and know how to play against each team. The Bulldogs also are confident that their new goalie, senior Joel Hentrich, will be an asset in the net. Chances are he is not going to play to at same level that former goalie John Pecher did, but the Bulldogs expect Hentrich will be able to face down the best Div. II has to offer.

Truman also will have some experience on their bench during games. When the team plays its matches in St. Peters, Mo., Truman alumnus and former Bulldog hockey player Dane Moody will coach for the team. While practicing at home, the Bulldogs will have an A.T. Still University alumnus to help them through their practices, but they are still looking for a Tru-

man faculty coach. An advantage the Bulldogs have is that they all practiced with Nedelec, and the B team also has played with him. The Bulldogs should be able to use their old workouts and drills to the same effect as before.

The Bulldogs have a tough road ahead of them. The Bulldogs, and the rest of Div. II, may dodge a bullet this season and not have to play teams from Div. I, but the Great Plains region always has been tough. The Bulldogs still have a lot of talented players returning, and Nedelec always maintained that many of the B team's players would have been Div. II starters anywhere else. The Bulldogs have their sights set on a top-three finish and a return to the national tournament this season, and I think they could pull it off. It is going to be a rough season for the Bulldogs, but losing is something they will never accept.

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