Men finish 25-23 at Invitational

Nos. 3-5 lead tennis team to winning record

BY BLAKE TOPPMEYER
Editor in Chief

Backed by another steady effort from the middle of the lineup, the men's tennis team compiled a winning record at last weekend's Truman Invitational.

The Bulldogs finished with a 25-23 mark in the flighted, singles-only tournament in which matches consisted of one eight-game set. Only Northwest Missouri State University, which finished the tournament 37-6, had a better record than Truman in the four-team tournament that also featured Johnson County Community College (Kan.) and the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Similar to their season-opening tournament at Western Illinois University, the Bulldogs were sparked last weekend by solid production from their Nos. 3-5 singles players.

Senior No. 3 Kyle Schlotz, sophomore No. 4 Eric McCollough and junior No. 5 Colin Boswell combined to finish the weekend 11-7. Schlotz and Boswell finished third in their respective flights. Senior No. 7 Ben Rusk chipped in a 4-1 mark and placed second in his flight.

"I guess the big thing is, your No. 1 is worth one point and your No. 6 is worth one point," Boswell said. "It's all worth the same. So we have just as much responsibility as our No. 1 and 2 guys to come out and play well and help contribute to the team."

Head coach Pete Kendall said having consistent production from the middle of the lineup should help the Bulldogs in dual matches down the road.

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>
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> Tennis head coach

"If we're going to beat the teams that we should beat, you got to have those guys [in the middle of the lineup] winning, because it's always tough at the top," Kendall said.

The men's and women's teams were scheduled to play Quincy University at home in a dual match Tuesday. The match was cancelled because of wet weather and is rescheduled for Oct. 6.

Kendall said the competition was pretty good at last weekend's invitational, but only Northwest consistently provided an obstacle for Truman. The Bulldogs finished 4-13 in their matches against the Bearcats.

Truman will see Northwest again in the spring in an MIAA dual match. The Bulldogs are 3-19 against Northwest since 1992, when Kendall took over as Truman's coach. Truman most recently beat the Bearcats in 1999.

Despite Truman's record against Northwest last weekend, Boswell said there was some indication that the Bulldogs should be in a much better position to compete with the Bearcats this spring than they were last year, when Truman lost 9-0.

"I think we're all pretty close across the board," Boswell said. "I think the opportunity is definitely there, especially with having a lot of seniors.

"A few things would have to align. Obviously we got beat pretty bad last year, so we can't just say that we're going to win, but I think we definitely have a better chance this year."

Boswell had a chance to garner a win against Northwest's Giovanni Auricchio on Saturday. Boswell climbed to a 3-0 lead before losing 8-4.

"I thought I let off the gas pedal a little bit," Boswell said. "He probably started playing a little better, and I started making a few more errors. I started thinking a bit too much."

Schlotz was the only Bulldog to defeat one of Northwest's top six players, topping the Bearcats' Ryan Westerhof 9-8. Truman's other three wins against the Bearcats came in the 7/8 Flight.

Brian O'Shaughnessy /Index
Senior Steve Hipkiss prepares for a return during a tournament last year. The men compiled a 25-23 record during last weekend's Truman Invitational.

Schlotz now has a 7-3 singles record this season, which ties McCollough for the best singles record. Schlotz' only two losses last weekend were in close matches and Kendall said that "with a couple swings of the racket," Schlotz could have finished 6-0.

McCollough picked up possibly the biggest win of the tournament when he knocked off Johnson County's Nelson Ginape 8-4 in his opening match Friday. McCollough was the only player to beat Ginape, who won the 3/4 Flight.

The men will have their next match Tuesday when they face Westminster College (Mo.) for a road dual match.

Volleyball tops SBU 3-2

Win follows up 3-1 victory against Fort Hays on Saturday

BY JOE BELL
Staff Reporter

The volleyball team waited until the 11th hour to pull out a win against Southwest Baptist University on Tuesday night.

Truman won the close match 3-2.

The Bulldogs came out dominant in the first set, as they won 25-18. Truman allowed SBU right back into the match, however, as SBU won the next two sets 25-20 and 25-19.

Truman snatched the lead from SBU in the next two sets. A late run in the fifth set helped the Bulldogs quell SBU and win the set 15-13.

"I'm glad that we won again, but we definitely shouldn't have dropped any games," senior right side hitter Lauren Graybeal said. "It's all mental game again. We just let them in. When we play, we play so good and we kill them. Then, we are down, it seems like they just go on runs. That's what we need to stop."

The match featured solid performances from many of the Bulldogs' mainstays. Freshman middle blocker Megan Sharpe continued her early season excellence with a .417 hitting percentage and 12 kills. Graybeal and junior outside hitter Allison Barker recorded kill-dig double-doubles with 14-10 and 16-18, respectively.

Junior setter Ashley Petak also set a career-high with 56 assists.

The match also featured some inconsistency from the Bulldogs. Truman took a commanding lead at one point in the second set, only to see SBU overtake the 'Dogs and win by a significant margin. In the third set, the Bulldogs never led.

The Bulldogs' statistical performances tell part of the story as well. In the first set, the Bulldogs hit .371, and in the next two they hit .237 and .233. In the close fourth set, the 'Dogs hit only .143, and they improved to .450 in set five.

Assistant coach Megan Wargo felt said the match would serve as a good learning tool for the Bulldogs in their upcoming homestand.

"I think we've learned that we can't let teams get runs on us, and I think we've learned that our blocking needs to become a lot stronger than it was," Wargo said. "One thing we certainly learned is playing in a tough environment. SBU's fans did a great job of heckling and being involved, screaming at our kids. That's good, because it's going to make us stronger mentally."

Before Tuesday night, the Bulldogs played the first two matches of their three-match roadtrip with mixed results.

Coming off of their loss to perennial foe No. 3 Emporia State University on Sept. 16, the Bulldogs headed into another match against a ranked opponent, No. 6 Washburn University. The Bulldogs lost the close match 3-1.

Saturday, however, the Bulldogs snapped their losing skid with a victory against Fort Hays State University, 3-1.

"It's one of those things, we had our opportunities, and we didn't take advantage of them," head coach Ben Briney said. "And we gave them opportunities, and they took advantage of them. And against good teams like that, you can't do that or you're going to be in trouble. And to Washburn and Emporia's credit, they did what they needed to do and we didn't."

In their match against Fort Hays State, the Bulldogs performed well as a team. After falling in the first set 25-23, they took and kept commanding leads in the next three.

There were a variety of standout performances from individuals on the team. Junior libero Casey Bruno notched a team-high 17 digs, making this her eighth-straight match in which she has recorded at least 15 digs. Sharpe continued her dominance as well, mashing 18 kills on her way to a .518 hitting percentage. Her hitting percentage is now .370, highest among all regulars. Petak also recorded 46 assists and tied her personal best for digs with 16.

Truman's match against Washburn was not quite so rosy. Truman hit only .105, compared to Washburn's .267. Truman kept the match interesting by staying close with Washburn in all of the sets except the second. The only time the Bulldogs maintained a lead outside of the second set was during the fourth, when they held a small lead several times.

Truman kicks off a two-match home stand tomorrow at 7 p.m. against Missouri Southern State University. The Bulldogs face another tough opponent in No. 21 Pittsburgh State University on Saturday at 3 p.m.

TRUMAN ATHLETICS
News and Notes

Football: Masucci passes 200-point milestone

Senior kicker Mickey Masucci reached another milestone during Saturday's 41-31 loss to Fort Hays State University. Masucci surpassed the 200-point plateau with a 35-yard field goal with 15 seconds remaining in the first half. Masucci has led the Bulldogs in points during each of his three seasons.

Earlier this season, Masucci became Truman's career leader in field goals made. Masucci is 4-for-6 on field goals in 2009.

Men's Soccer: Russell misses two matches

The Bulldogs had to reshuffle the line up to compensate for the absence of senior defender Dan Russell, who head coach Duke Cochran said had a family obligation to attend to last weekend.

Cochran made the necessary adjustments for last weekend's games against No. 7 University of the Incarnate Word (Texas) and St. Edward's University (Texas). Senior Ben Green, normally a midfielder, dropped back to defense to balance the attack and junior Scott Biggerstaff started at midfield. Green played defender at times from Truman last season.

These changes, along with the many substitutions made throughout the course of the two matches, especially in the second half against Incarnate, helped balance the 'Dogs.

"The depth of our team is the strength of our team right now," Cochran said.

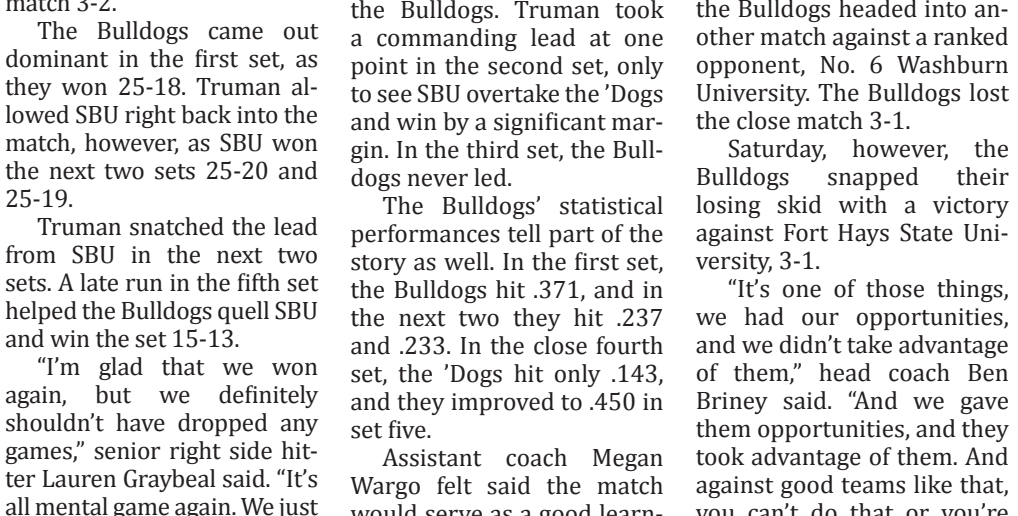
Volleyball: Petak sets career highs in sets

Junior volleyball setter Ashley Petak set a career-high with 46 sets against Fort Hays State University last Saturday.

On Tuesday against Southwest Baptist University, she broke her mark with 53 sets.

Petak has been the No. 1 setter for Truman since 2008, but she has never produced as much as the last two matches. The entire team had 121 assists the last two matches.

Petak leads the team with 416 sets this season and a 6.82 per set average.



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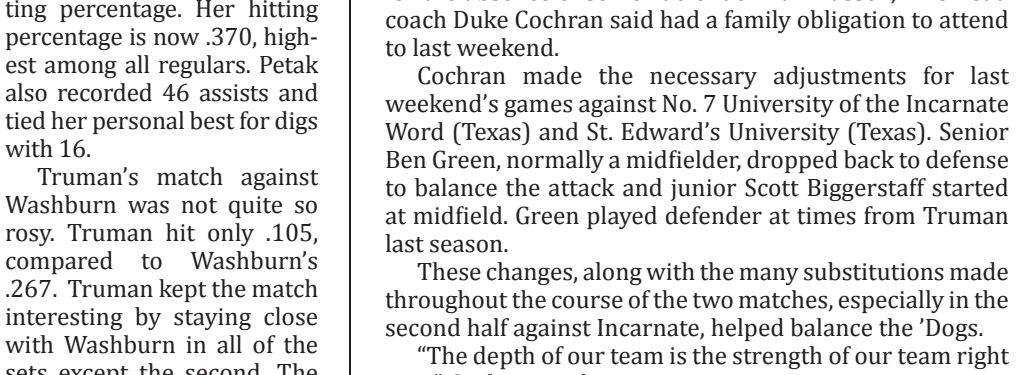

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