

Volleyball looks for fast start

'Dogs return four seniors, National Freshman of the Year

BY TYLER KILLEN
Assistant Sports Editor

Expectations for the volleyball team are high again this season. The Bulldogs were 24-13 last year and finished the season ranked No. 25 in Div. II. Truman made it to the national tournament, but lost 3-0 in the first round to West Texas A&M University. The team goals remain the same this year.

"Our expectations are always the same," head coach Ben Briney said. "Win conference, win regionals and win nationals. There's no reason why they should change this year."

Like the goals, the team hasn't changed much either. The biggest departures from last year are 2009 seniors Lauren Graybeal and Erin Hattey. Currently the team has three right side hitters in Allyson Stellmach, Lauren Radix and Erin Burmester. Briney said these three can fill the void left by Graybeal and Hattey.

"I feel confident that the

three of them are going to step up and battle each other and go in there to try and replace those two seniors that graduated," Briney said.

Another benefit from returning so many players is that the players are already familiar with one another and the program, Briney said.

"I think we came in, especially the first day, and gelled automatically," said Megan Sharpe, the reigning AVCA National Freshman of the Year. "It was just get down to business. We didn't have to work on a lot of fundamentals or learning each other. We were all ready."

"Our expectations are always the same. Win conference, win regionals and win nationals."

Ben Briney
Head Coach

The Bulldogs do not have a captain, but the four seniors, setter Ashley Petak, outside hitter Allison Barker, libero Casey Bruno and right side hitter Jenna Novelli, help maintain the team chemistry.

"We don't really have a set captain or leader," Petak said. "But definitely the seniors usually take control and keep everyone as a team and in check."

The schedule is going to be tough on the Bulldogs again this year, especially the conference portion. The

MIAA had five teams finish in the top 25 last year, including Truman.

In the recent MIAA preseason coach's poll, the Bulldogs were ranked fifth. The Bulldogs are projected to finish behind the University of Central Missouri, Washburn University, Emporia State University and Pittsburg State University.

But the rankings have not affected the outlook for the players.

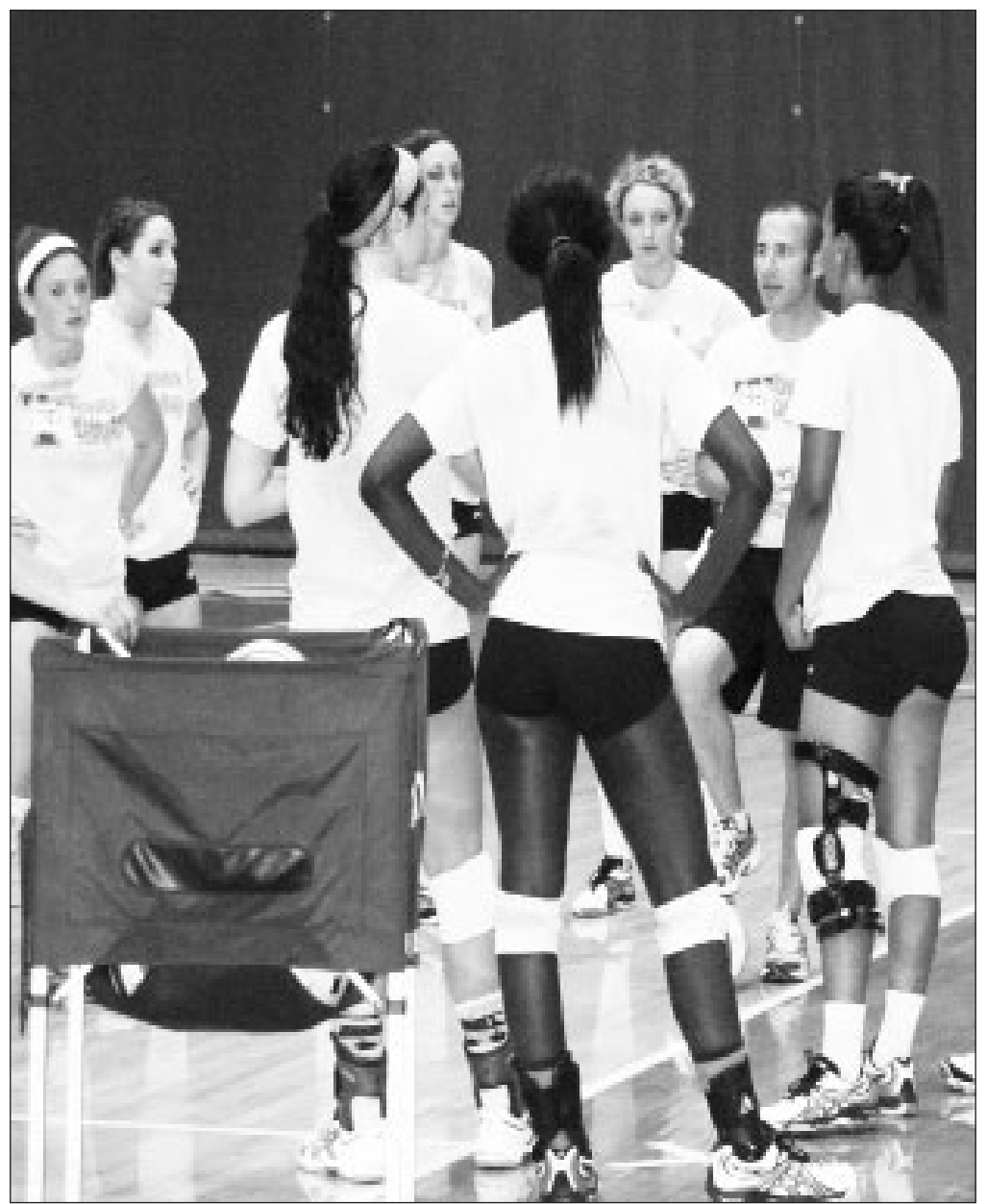
"We don't know what to expect from each team," Sharpe said. "We're just focusing on us right now."

Briney said that the team is continuing to work on increasing team speed. He said what the team lacks in power, it makes up for in speed.

"We have very fast outside hitters," Briney said. "We're not really going to jump over anybody necessarily, or just beat it through somebody. So, our advantage is our quickness."

The goal of speeding up the offense is to get the outside hitters in more one-on-one matchups. Those matchups lead to unprepared defenses and more potential kills.

Truman only has a couple of weeks remaining before they open the season in the University of Indianapolis Tournament on Sept. 3rd. Truman will play four matches in the tournament, including a couple of



Logan Jackson/Index

The volleyball team earned the No. 25 ranking in the AVCA preseason poll, but the Bulldogs will be tested early. Two of their first four matches are against postseason teams.

postseason teams from last year.

The first match will be against Nova Southeastern University, a team that finished 19-11 last season. The final match will be against host and Elite Eight team from last year, University of Indianapolis.

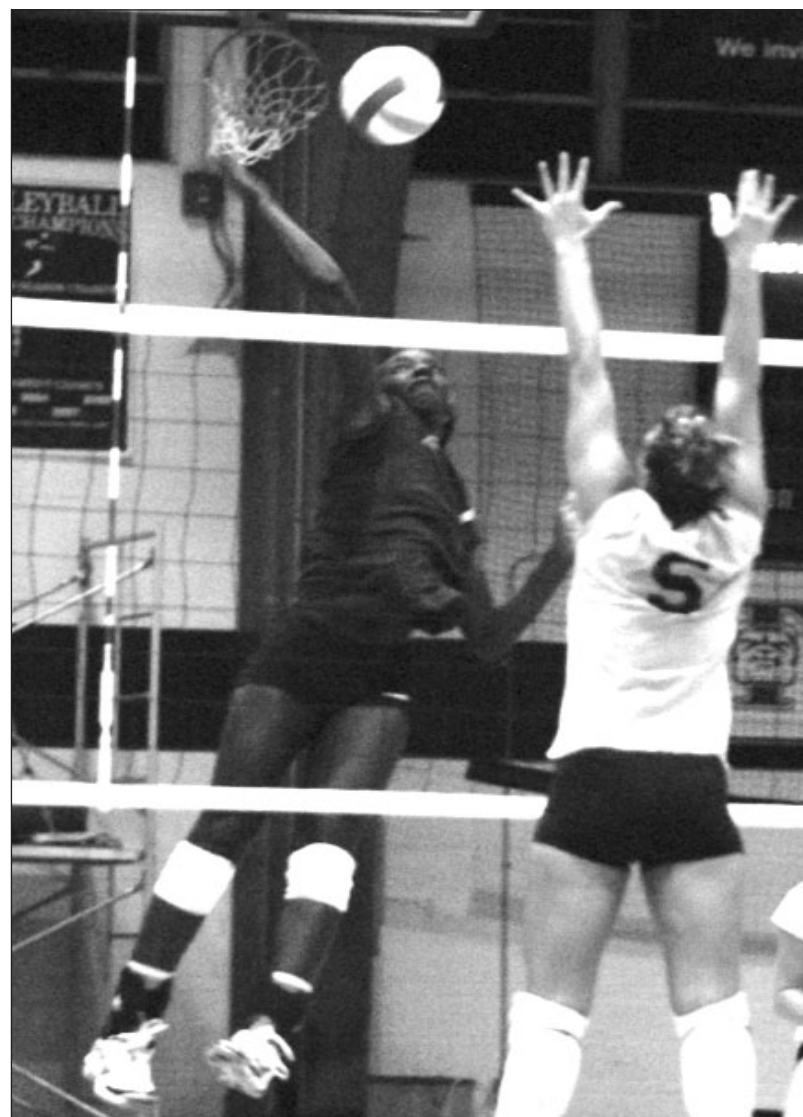
Though the ultimate goal is to make it back to the national tournament, the Bulldogs are not getting ahead of themselves.

"We take each game at a time, so right now we're focusing on Indiana," Petak said. "And we want to win all four of those matches right now."

Briney said this opening tournament will help prepare the Bulldogs for their tough schedule.

"It's a good way to start the year," Briney said. "It's going to be a good test for us. I think we'll go up there and have the opportunity to be successful."

'Dogs search for complement to Sharpe



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Sophomore middle blocker Megan Sharpe goes up for the kill last year against Emporia St. Sharpe was the AVCA Freshman of the Year.

Truman loses two key offensive players to graduation

BY JACK NICHOLL
Managing Editor

It's no secret who will anchor the offense for the volleyball team this season.

Sophomore middle blocker Megan Sharpe, the reigning 2009 MIAA and AVCA Freshman of the Year, had the second-highest all-time hitting percentage at Truman last year at .354. She hit at least .300 in 24 out of 27 matches and tallied double-digit kills in 22 matches.

"It's nice to have a go-to person," senior setter Ashley Petak said. "She's always up and ready to go, going to finish."

Since the Truman offense first runs through its middles, Sharpe's presence can open up lanes for the outside hitters once the defense starts double-teaming the middle blocker.

"When our middles are productive, it really opens it up for the pin players and it allows them to get a lot of one-on-ones and hopefully put balls away," head coach Ben Briney said.

However there is skepticism entering this season as to who will balance Sharpe's productivity, especially from the right side hitter position.

Two of Truman's top four offensive players in 2009 — Lau-

ren Graybeal (.209 hitting percentage) and Erin Hattey (.187) — were senior right side hitters. Sophomores Lauren Radix and Allyson Stellmach and junior Erin Burmester step into their role this season.

The three right side hitters this year combined for three starts in 2009. Senior Jenna Novelli, a starter two years ago, might bring more depth to the position if she returns from an ACL injury.

"It's not something you can stress about," Briney said. "There's nothing I can control. I can't control Jenna's knee. So the thing I have to focus on is getting them ready to go."

For the outside hitters, senior Allison Barker leads a deep position for the Bulldogs. Barker had 30 starts in 2009, and junior Molly Sinclair and sophomore Heather Hargadine each had at least 17.

In fact, the entire front line is the same as 2009, apart from Graybeal and Hattey. Junior transfer Katie Thomason will take a medical redshirt this season.

"We're not breaking in anyone new," Petak said. "We're not changing the offense, everybody knows what's going on. It's just getting more touches on the ball and getting ready for our first game now."

Already this season, Briney has implemented a faster offense and moved the back outside hitter to the middle.

The faster offense plays right into Sharpe's strengths as a quick

middle blocker.

"When I came in here, not only were they already faster than what I was used to in high school, but they were working on speeding it up," Sharpe said. "So I just think that made me better as a player, just getting faster, being up before any middle."

The faster tempo also plays better with the outsides, as the Bulldogs have done with the hard-hitters they have had in the past.

"We changed the tempo a little bit, trying to play to the strengths of our outside hitters," Briney said. "We're not big, we're not going to go over anybody. We're fast. And so we're hoping changing up the tempo a little bit and making it more conducive to a faster outside hitter will hopefully make them more successful this year."

The change in the back row is partly for defensive purposes. Six offensive players had at least 50 digs last season, and Briney said putting them in the middle gives the outsides a little more time to react and read kills better. The libero will be moved to the left-back.

Briney said moving an outside hitter to the middle-back also will benefit the offense.

"We're going to run a little bit more offense out of the back row — changing and putting them in middle-back will help that," he said. "And switching our liberos to left-back I think is going to strengthen our defense in the long run."

Welcome, Truman Students, from
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ant you all to think for yourself for a second...how many of you are affected by anxiety? How about depression? Compulsion? Or what about schizophrenia? While you may not have been affected by that last on, reports, such as sometimes one which is from Psychology Today show that these psychological problems are increasing. The trend is especially evident among college students. In fact, a study of 701 students surveyed at the Beeson college showed that 40 percent of students had at least one of these symptoms. Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil, and other antidepressants are common drugs used to treat mental issues. What is going on? Is something in our environment causing mental illnesses and how many of you are affected by anxiety? How about depression? Or what about schizophrenia? While you may not have been affected by that last on, reports, such as sometimes one which is from Psychology Today show that these psychological problems are increasing. This trend is especially evident among college students. In fact, a study of 701 students surveyed at the Beeson college showed significant depression symptoms and at least half of the students with the questionnaires having this major depression. Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil, and other antidepressants are common drugs used to treat mental issues. What is going on? Is something in our environment causing mental illnesses and how many of you are affected by anxiety? How about depression? Or what about schizophrenia? While you may not have been affected by that last on, reports, such as sometimes one which is from Psychology Today show that these psychological problems are increasing.

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