

# Seniors end career 118-35

**Season deemed a success by team despite first round playoff-exit**

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The Truman volleyball team entered this season with high expectations and despite a first-round loss in the NCAA regional tournament, head coach Ben Briney said the season was a success.

"It was a great season," Briney said. "I was very proud of the girls. We said at the very beginning of the season, we don't define our season with one win or one loss. You can't do that, you have to look at the whole picture. And it was a very, very successful season."

The Bulldogs' season ended with a loss to Abilene Christian University (Tex.) in the Div. II South Central Regional Tournament. Truman dropped the first two sets of the match but rallied to win the next two sets. Senior outside hitter Allison Barker said the Bulldogs' 7-2 record in fifth sets gave them confidence against Abilene.

"It was definitely exciting," Barker said. "We're always pretty confident about fifth games. And we jumped out with an early lead, but we just slowed down from there."

Truman had an 8-7 lead at the turn. However, Abilene rallied to score eight of the next 10 points to win the set 15-10. Briney said the loss hurt the team.

"You can't let one loss ruin what we accomplished as a team," Briney said. "It hurts and it's going to hurt. And the reason it hurts is because they care so much. I'd be worried if it didn't hurt, because then you've got a bunch of kids that don't care. And that wasn't the case with us. It hurt all of us."

The Bulldogs finished the season 25-8 overall and 14-6 in the MIAA. Truman went 24-13 last season, so the team improved in season wins. But both teams lost in the first round of the regional tournament.

Seniors libero Casey Bruno, setter Ashley Petak and Barker finished 118-35 as a class. Petak said the loss to Abilene did not sadden her nearly as much as knowing that she had played her last competitive volleyball game.

"It was tough," Petak said. "I



Senior outside hitter Allison Barker drills a ball between two Central Missouri players earlier this season. Barker had 335 kills this season. File Photo

watched the ball drop right in front of me after Megan [Sharpe] got blocked. And I knew that I was never going to suit up again. It was just tough."

Barker said the final game hit her hard as well because she knew her time with the team had ended.

"It wasn't the fact that we had lost," Barker said. "I wasn't ready for it to be done. There was definitely a lot of tears and emotion. I love all of those girls so much and the team atmosphere. I just wasn't

ready to let it go." Barker finished the season leading the team in kills with 335 and finished her career with 676. Petak led the team in assists with 724 on the season. She had 3,461 assists during her career. Bruno led the team in digs with 565. She had 1,247 in her Bulldog career.

Sophomore middle blocker Megan Sharpe was second on the team in total kills with 309. Sharpe led the team in blocks with 115 and she averaged 0.94

blocks per set. Sophomore middle blocker Emily Briseno had 102 digs for second on the team.

The team atmosphere is a big part of Truman volleyball, Briney said. He said team chemistry was a major part of the Bulldogs' success this season.

"This team was a very close-knit team," Briney said. "That was the thing that hurt more than anything else, was that this team is breaking up. Next year we're not going to have the same team."

Despite losing the production from Barker, Petak and Bruno, Briney said he expects to have another successful season next year. The team will return a good nucleus of players, including Sharpe, Briseno,

junior outside hitter Molly Sinclair, sophomore outside hitter Heather Hargadine and sophomore right-side hitters Allyson Stellmach and Lauren Radix.

The Bulldogs will also bring in five recruits, including a two-time state champion setter. Although he is looking forward to next year, Briney said this season was special.

"This last year was the first year that every day I looked forward to practice," Briney said. "Out of the entire season, there wasn't a day where I was like, 'Oh, I've got to go to practice.' And it hadn't been like that since I've been at Truman. That's something special when a team is like that."

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Ben Briney  
head coach

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