

'Dogs offense sees improvement

Manley, Miller, Pitts see improvement in batting average, power numbers

BY WILL EVANS
Staff Reporter

This season, the softball team has posted a 14-12 record in the first 26 games, compared to a 10-16 record at this point last season.

This improvement has been accompanied by offensive improvements. The Bulldogs have posted more power numbers this season with 14 triples and 44 doubles, compared to only three triples and 41 doubles for the entire 2010 season.

The Bulldogs had 175 RBIs and 25 home runs at the end of last season's 55 games. At this point in the season after 26 games, the Bulldogs have 126 RBIs and 14 homeruns.

"We are doing a lot better with the extra base hits, just hitting the ball hard and putting it in play," head coach Erin Brown said. "We have focused a lot on hitting it up the middle like right center, left center. If we can get those gap shots if it is an outside pitch, and we hit it

to right center, usually that is a double. ... Things like that have usually helped us this season."

Brown said the approach coaching-wise is the same this year offensively as in the past seasons, but that the team has more experience. This has made the team more consistent at the plate and has contributed to the increased quality of offensive play.

Brown said the team's approach always has been to focus on getting that one pitch they like and taking advantage of it, and that this year the team is more comfortable and better at utilizing that strategy. This can be seen statistically, as the batting average of several players has im-

proved significantly this season compared to last.

Junior third baseman Mary Manley posted a .226 average with 20 RBIs last year. This season, Manley has been significantly better, posting a .398 average and already 25 RBIs this season.

Sophomore outfielder Laura Miller has posted a better batting average this season with a .398 average compared to her average of .314 last season. Junior Katie Pitts, another outfielder, has improved her batting average from a .243 last season to a .327 this season.

Manley said the usual strengths of the team, which are putting the ball in play and taking advantage of scoring opportunities, have continued. She said the hitters are calmer at the plate which has helped their success this season.

"Everyone is just more relaxed this year," Manley said. "[I] am just more relaxed this year, as well as focused on taking my at bats and moving runners and playing like I have nothing to lose."

Although age and experience have contributed to the team's increased offensive proficiency, freshman outfielder

Kelsey Bollman has made a big impact in her first year on the team. Manley said Bollman is one of the reasons for the huge increase in the team's power numbers this season, as Bollman leads the team with a .427 batting average and 19 extra-base hits, including four home runs. She is second in runs scored with 18, second in RBIs with 20 and third in hits with 32.

Although they did not compete this past weekend due to bad weather, the Bulldogs play 2 p.m. Friday at Southwest Baptist. They play 1 p.m. Saturday at the University of Central Missouri. Their next home game is 2 p.m. April 5 against University of Missouri-St. Louis.

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Erin Brown
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Joyce Wong/Index
Junior third baseman Mary Manley watches a pitch go by earlier this season against Pittsburg State University. Manley is hitting .398 and leads the team in hits and RBIs.

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