

BERTH | Bulldogs earn sixth seed in South Central regional, finish the regular season with 1-0 win

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The Bulldogs lost to Midwestern in the first game of the season, 3-2. The game was tied at two going into the second half before MSU took the lead in the 52nd minute. Truman led two different times during the game.

"We definitely have a good chance of beating Midwestern," sophomore forward Olivia Hayes said. "We've played them already this year, and I think if we keep building off what we've done, we can definitely make it to the next round."

If the Bulldogs win their first round matchup, they will face No. 2 Central Missouri for the third time this season at 1 p.m. Sunday.

Central is 2-0 against the Bulldogs this season and 18-0 overall. They easily took home first in the MIAA after going 16-0 in conference play.

The Bulldogs' second loss to UCM came last Thursday when the Mules beat Truman 2-0.

Truman recorded only four shots during the shutout, with only one shot on goal. Central won the first match, 1-0.

"We've seen Central [Missouri] twice already, so we know what we have to do," Hayes said. "I'd say it's a pretty good outlook right now."

Truman faced a struggling Missouri Western (2-10-6, 2-8-6 MIAA) on Saturday and didn't get off to a good start.

"We started off a little slow, but that's been the story of the season," Twellman said. "The second half was amazing. We worked as a team to possess and pressure the ball, which got us a lot of opportunities. They were a pretty dirty team, but they weren't very good on the ball when we pressured them."

Twellman scored the only goal of the game in the 59th minute. She got the ball from Hayes 10 yards from the goal and scored to give the Bulldogs an important win.

"Losing two games [in a row] would've been bad," Cannon said. "We were treating it like we already had the win, but it was an important win."



Logan Jackson/Index

Sophomore midfielder Kelsey Twellman heads a ball to an open teammate earlier this season.

LARKIN | Senior midfielder leads Div. II in assists, also has four goals and 24 points this season

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Postseason play

Finishing 12-2-2 during the regular season, the 'Dogs secured their playoff berth, but they have a tough road ahead in the NCAA Div. II tournament if they want to come out on top. The 'Dogs take on the undefeated, No. 1-ranked Midwestern University (Texas) in Wichita Falls, Texas at 7 tonight. Cochran said he expects a brilliant game in the first round and now that it's tournament time, anything can happen.

Assistant coach Joe Nick said the senior leadership has been a huge testament to the offense this season. Nick said he has seen outstanding performances from players like senior midfielder Dan Meagher, who scored the first goal in the team's final two matches.

"The offense is doing a great job of doing what they need to do, and it's all been senior-led," Nick said. "In fact, I don't think anybody else but a senior scored over the past weekend."

Senior midfielders Meagher and Bobby Larkin, senior forward Matt Kimball and senior defender Ben Friesen all put points on the board for Truman during the final two games of the season. Nick said this group of seniors has been together for four or five years now and that they've come to know each other very well.

Larkin's touch

One senior whose performance has been noticed by many is midfielder Bobby Larkin. Larkin went from the team's leading scorer in 2009 to the leader of all divisions of the NCAA in assists this season with 16. Nick said that while the statistics suggest Larkin's role is to get the ball to other guys on the team, he doesn't think that was his inten-



File Photo

Senior midfielder Bobby Larkin looks to score earlier this season.

tion going into this year.

"Bobby's creativity on the field puts him in the position to do what he does," Nick said. "Instead of trying to force an issue or force a play, Bobby creates and sees the openings and sees the chances that people could have. Wherever we need it, Bobby has the talent and ability to put the ball there."

Student assistant Dan Russell said Larkin's play has been spectacular this season and that he hopes it will continue in the tournament. Russell said Larkin is dangerous any time he gets the ball.

"Larkin is able to get the ball by people and provide great service to other players to get the ball in on goal," Russell said. "A lot of the time you just hear about the goal scorers. But it's great for someone to get credit for setting up the goals because a lot of times that's

much harder to do."

While his coaches and teammates praise him, Larkin remains modest. In an interview Larkin said he has worked hard to keep everybody on the same page as far as connecting on the field and getting everyone involved. Making sure everyone is playing to the best of their abilities has been his job this year, Larkin said.

"And I think I've done a pretty decent job, looking at the results," Larkin said. "I'm going to try not to change anything for the postseason and keep it going."

Larkin said Midwestern University (Texas) obviously is going to be a good team, but that he thinks the 'Dogs match up against them pretty evenly. Looking at this season's results, both teams have had similar results against mutual opponents.

"I definitely don't think we're an

underdog really, even though they don't have a loss," Larkin said. "I think with us losing earlier in the year, it kind of gave us a boost and some focus. I don't think [Midwestern] has that. I think they just kind of expect to win."

Other keys to success

Larkin said there has been a positive attitude among the team. People have been working together and the team has a great time no matter what they're doing, he said. Larkin said this transfers onto the field.

"We've been playing really well together," Larkin said. "I mean, we pretty much know what everyone is going to do before they do it. The quality of play has been there and I'm really glad that I've gotten to play with these guys and do what we did."

Kimball said he thinks something happened after the 'Dogs defeated Fort Lewis (Colo.) 2-1 at home Sept. 10. Kimball said the team started to believe in itself and realized that it could go all the way to the championship. Kimball said the team gets along well and strives to play better for each other.

"I think it has to do with our hard work and our focus on playing as a team and not worrying about things like who their best player is," Kimball said. "You know we're not intimidated. We show up to play and we know we can. We believe in ourselves."

Cochran said there is a balance among the team this year and that he thinks this has to do with this senior class chemistry on the field.

"To create takes much longer than to destroy, and they've been creating together for a number of years," Cochran said. "It's tournament time, anybody that's in can win. We're ready and it should be fun."

PLAYOFFS | Men make first tournament appearance since 2005

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they weren't, I'd be lying just because it is a big game, and we know it's a big game. But we know the type of team we are. We know what our strengths are, and we know how to play. As long as we do that, there is really nothing that can stop us."

This marks the program's ninth playoff appearance of all time. The farthest Truman has ever advanced in the national tournament was in 1997, when they reached the final four. In 2003, the 'Dogs made it to the national quarter finals.

"Some of the student body aren't really aware of the winning traditions of the soccer programs, both the men's and the women's side," Nick said. "If there is one thing I'd like to get out, it's that we usually win, and we usually win every year. Do we have down years? Sure, everyone does, but our tradition is one of winning."

Sophomore goalie Tyler Knierim faced 192 shots this year and posted six shutouts. He ended the season with a .817 save percentage in more than 1,400 minutes played. The Bulldogs' roster also includes four players who have racked up at least four or more goals this year. Senior forward Matt Kimball leads the team in scoring, after finding the back of the net on 11 separate occasions.

"The main strength we have is the amount of players we have who are capable of playing at this level and at a high level," Narrow said. "Sure, we do have people that score more goals than others or get more assists, but our team as a whole is just very strong. At any moment any number of players could step up and score the game winner."

Senior defender Ben Friesen said that closing the season with wins against Saint Mary's University and Texas A&M University at the Newman University Classic in Wichita, Kan., was vital heading into postseason play. In those two games, the Bulldogs outscored their opponents 7-1.

"[Winning the final two games] was important," Friesen said. "One, for the momentum to keep it up going into the tournament. Two, to control our destiny. If we won those two it was pretty much guaranteed that we go to the [national] tournament. But if we lost, it was kind of in the hands of Incarnate Word from Texas."

This is the second time in his six-year career with Truman that head coach Duke Cochran has taken the 'Dogs to postseason play. The first time was during his first year at the helm in 2005. The Truman State alumnus is 55-29-9 during his time as head coach with the Bulldogs and has an .640 winning percentage. Cochran said that making the tournament is not just about this team.

"I would like not just the country but our University to know we've bled purple for years, for decades," Cochran said. "We've represented this University in a way that all Bulldogs do. I don't take anything away from any program here. We bleed purple, and when we pull on that jersey, we fight for this University with every ounce of energy that we have, and we want to make a name not for ourselves, for Truman, for Truman Bulldogs. So come and watch it, because we do put on a show."

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