

'Dogs drop match to rival

Volleyball loses to Central after going 4-0 in tourney

BY TYLER KILLEN
Assistant Sports Editor

The No. 10 Truman volleyball team went 4-1 during the week. The Bulldogs were swept by No. 8 Central Missouri State University after going 4-0 in the Washburn Lady Blues Fall Classic.

Head coach Ben Briney said the team was really focused on blocking and serving going into the Central match.

In the first set, Truman (16-3, 5-2 MIAA) struggled with their blocking, managing only one team block. The poor blocking also allowed Central to hit 400 and win the set 25-15.

"There were runs in the game when we kind of went off of our blocking aspects," Briney said. "We missed some assignments. So, parts were good and parts were bad."

Truman started slow in the second set, falling behind 6-0. Although the Bulldogs had a few rallies, the Jennies led throughout the match and won 25-16.

In the third set, the Bulldogs once again faced an early deficit, trailing 11-4. Truman could not mount a comeback and lost 25-17 to finish the sweep.

"We didn't do a very good job of passing," Briney said. "Central was keeping us out

of system. Whenever you become one-dimensional, it kind of hurts your hitting."

Central had a hitting percentage of .322 for the match and held the Bulldogs to a .073 hitting percentage. Truman had one more block than the Jennies with eight. However, the last time the Bulldogs had a lead in the match was at 6-5 in the first set.

"We weren't on the same page," senior outside hitter Allison Barker said. "We don't know the answer. We just played bad. We have to come back from it starting in practice [Thursday]."

Truman played four games in the Washburn Lady Blues Fall Classic during the weekend and came away with four wins. The Bulldogs began play Friday against Angelo State University. The teams split the first two sets. The third set was tied 7-7, but Truman went on a three-point run and went on to win the set 25-19.

The Bulldogs had control throughout the fourth set and led late 21-18. But the Rams scored eight of the next 12 points to come back and win 26-24.

In the final set, Truman lost the first four points but won the next four. The Bulldogs trailed most of the set. However, back-to-back kills by sophomore middle blocker Megan Sharpe and outside hitter Heather Hargadine gave Truman a 15-12 win.

"Our girls did an incred-

ible job of continuing to fight and letting it go and forgetting about it and moving on," Briney said. "So I was very proud of them for that."

The win against Angelo State was against former Truman head coach Qi Wang, who is now an assistant for the Rams. Wang led the Bulldogs to four NCAA tournament appearances as head coach.

The Bulldogs played Tarleton State University in the second tournament match. Truman swept the Texans 3-0 to record their seventh sweep of the season. The Bulldogs had a .385 hitting percentage compared to Tarleton State's .044. Sharpe led Truman with 10 kills and hit .667.

Truman faced St. Edward's University on Saturday. The Bulldogs won the first set 25-20 but dropped the next two. A rally in the fourth set led Truman to a 25-22 win.

The fifth set had seven ties and four lead changes. The Bulldogs scored the final four points to win 15-10 and take the match 3-2.

"The teams we played came in literally fighting for their national tournament lives," Briney said. "So we knew they were going to give us a tough battle. They did a good job of taking advantage when we let off a little bit."

The 'Dogs played Abilene Christian University in their final match of the tournament. The Wildcats had just beaten No. 11 Emporia State Univer-

sity earlier that day. The first four sets for Truman were exact opposites from the St. Edward's match. The Bulldogs dropped the first, won the next two, then lost the fourth.

The Bulldogs once again faced a decisive fifth set. And again, Truman rallied to win the fifth set 15-9. Barker led Truman with 16 kills, while three other Bulldogs had double-digit kills.

The weekend sweep helped the Bulldogs pull ahead of teams in the Lone Star Conference, one of three conferences in Truman's region.

Briney said the seniors are doing a good job of leading the team on the court.

"I think [Barker] and all the seniors have stepped up and realized that this is it," Briney said. "We're going to do something this year. We have the talent. You look at [Barker]. You look at Casey Bruno, [who] has just been incredibly consistent with passing. Ashley [Petak] is setting better than she probably has the last three years."

Truman will host the University of Nebraska-Omaha at 4 p.m. Saturday. Junior setter Kylie Easlon said the team will be ready to go for the game.

"We're going to come out firing," Easlon said. "This was not our team [against Central]. We're going for blood [Saturday]. We're going to show everyone what we're really made of."



Logan Jackson/Index
Senior outside hitter Allison Barker goes up for a kill against SBU. Barker had 62 kills and 54 digs last week.

'Dogs trio contributes to right-side



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Junior right-side hitter Erin Burmester gets a kill this season against SBU. Entering play Wednesday, Burmester had 32 kills and 12 digs.

Stellmach, Burmester and Radix give stability to shared position

BY TYLER KILLEN
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Last year the Bulldog volleyball team graduated Lauren Graybeal and Erin Hattey. Both were All-MIAA right-side hitters.

Head coach Ben Briney said he was going to rotate sophomore Allyson Stellmach, junior Erin Burmester and sophomore Lauren Radix to fill the void.

Last season, the three combined to play just 18 sets. Stellmach did not play at all her freshman year.

"It's going great," Briney said. "The three of them have really stepped up and filled that hole we had from two graduating seniors that played the right side very well."

Last year, Graybeal and Hattey totaled 576 kills, 180 digs and 142 blocks. Entering play Wednesday, the combination of Stellmach, Burmester and Radix has tallied a total of 181 kills, 62 digs and 69 blocks. Senior setter Ashley Petak said the trio has done a good job stepping into the right-side hitting role.

"They've definitely stepped up and realized that they're needed this year," Petak said. "They're not just backups, they're starters."

Though they all split time at the same position, they each play it very differently.

Stellmach has played the most often of the three, starting 17 matches and playing in 66 sets. She has 77 kills on a .278 hitting percentage. Petak said Stellmach uses her speed to make plays.

"Stellmach can run a lot of

slides and a lot of different hits," Petak said. "So, it's nice having her in there."

Briney said Stellmach provides a steady presence at the position. Even though she is not on the court all the time, Stellmach said she is working on bringing reliability to her game.

"I really try hard to be consistent," Stellmach said. "I want to be a level player that will bring energy to the court."

Burmester has played in 33 sets this season. In that time, she has recorded 32 kills and nine blocks for the Bulldogs. Briney said Burmester stepped up when Radix got hurt and Stellmach needed a break.

Petak said Burmester is a sparkplug for the team, and that she will do whatever is required of her.

"[Burmester] just works her butt off," Petak said. "So, whatever anyone needs, she's in there ready to do it."

Petak said Radix focuses on the defensive side of the position. She is averaging 0.64 blocks per set, which is third on the team for players with regular playing time. Radix leads the trio in digs, with 26.

Radix missed time due to injuries earlier in the season. She has played in 39 sets for Truman this season. Despite the time missed, she still has 72 kills and a .169 hitting percentage.

"Lauren is really focused on blocking and reaching and hitting the ball," Petak said. "So it's nice

having our big block up there."

Briney said he never considered moving any of them to a different position. He is satisfied with the job they have done collectively at right side hitter and thinks that together they make the position much stronger.

The trio is on pace to finish with similar statistics as the Graybeal-Hattey duo from last season.

"I'm very proud of them," Briney said. "They've come in, and they said 'We're going to own this position.' If one of them is not doing well or one of them is hurt, the other one has stepped in. So it's been great."

The success of Stellmach, Burmester and Radix has not changed Briney's rotation. He said he will continue to play whoever gets hot during the game.

A permanent fixture at the right-side hitter position would be nice, but Briney said he enjoys the flexibility of having three players that can step in and succeed.

"The great thing about having three players ready to go at that position is you can go with whoever is hot," Briney said. "You can go with whoever is playing the best."

Stellmach said Briney has done a good job managing the three of them, along with the position itself. She said they are willing to accept whatever assignment he gives them.

"He's pretty good about rotating us, and everyone's willing to step up and play," Stellmach said.

"It's going great. The three of them have really stepped up and filled that hole we had from two graduating seniors that played the right side very well."

Ben Briney
Head coach

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