

Farewells | Graduating seniors say final farewells to teammates



Hanna Bilinski/Index

Senior softball players are honored by their coaches and teammates during a ceremony held prior to the team's final series last Sunday at home.

Continued from Page 15
runners on base in every inning except for the second, 11 being stranded in all.

In game two, junior Meredith Kusky said the 'Dogs looked like an entirely different team, putting up nine runs on 15 hits and leaving only six runners stranded. That offensive turnaround paired with freshman Kelsea Dorsey's one-hitter against the Cougars allowed for some excitement before the team found out their season was officially finished, Schade said.

"Senior day was bittersweet," Schade said. "You work so hard, and you push yourself and your team and we wanted it so bad. We all gave sweat blood and tears for [this team]. But now we're done."

Brown said this group of

seniors was one of the closest-knit that she has ever coached. She said they are not only good players but, more importantly, good people.

"The main thing with my seniors this year is that they are an amazing group of young women that we have been able to watch mature and develop," Brown said. "[They were] always trying to get better and working hard on their game."

Brown said she is sad to see one of the best senior classes she's coached go but she also

expressed excitement for the future because of four returning seniors, experienced underclassmen, junior college transfers and what she said was a very good freshman class.

Kusky said it is important for the team to begin to focus on next year.

"We just need a clean slate," Kusky said. "We need to have confidence in ourselves. We always need to stay positive and we have to give [all that we have] all of the time. Every minute counts."

Softball Senior Lineup

Mary Manley	1B
Katie Pitts	OF
Ashley Rotkvich	P
Bridget Schade	OF

Simek | Junior swimmer Jerod Simek named Index athlete of the year following record-setting season

SCHOOL RECORDS SET BY SIMEK	500 m freestyle	4 : 32.05
	1000 m freestyle	9 : 14.75
	1650 m freestyle	15 : 40.66
PLACED 10TH IN NATIONALS		

Continued from Page 15
"They told me he was an outstanding guy though."

Simek returned to the NCAA national meet for the third consecutive year during 2012 and was seeded in the top 10 for both 1000 free and 1650 free. Simek didn't disappoint, finishing 10th in the 1000 and 1650.

Senior Zach Litzau, who swam with Simek prior to them both coming to Truman, said Simek had lofty goals entering the national meet.

"Jerod was capable of getting 'A' cut times and scoring at nationals," Litzau said. "Although he went lifetime bests and reset his own school records, I think he wanted to place higher in his events."

At the Phoenix Fall Classic during November, hosted by the University of Chicago, Simek broke two of his own school records, in the 1650 and the 500. Both times earned him a NCAA "B" cut. Simek said it's getting harder each year to qualify for the national meet.

"Making it to that meet now is an accomplishment in itself," Simek said. "It was nice to make it there and I had a faster time this year. I enjoyed it a lot more being at that meet this year."

Having coached Simek for the past year, Pretre said he is one of the best swimmers he has ever coached. Pretre added that Simek would have been one of the best freestylers at the last school for which he coached, Division I East Carolina University.

"Clutch," Pretre said. "That's one word to describe him. Even when he's not practicing that well and he has a

big race on Saturday, the kid steps up. He just loves to race. There's not many people I've coached that are real competitive as he is, he just has the drive."

With the coaching change that took place in late spring last year, Simek didn't have much time to work with the new coaching staff. Simek said he works primarily with assistant coach Kerry Smith, whose coaching style resembles Gole's. Simek said that made the transition between staffs easier.

Simek was the only male swimmer to make it to the national meet and Litzau said that he is one person the rest of the team looks to.

Simek said when he found himself falling behind, he looked to his teammates to give him a confidence boost.

"If I'm right there with someone and I see a teammate cheering me on, I will probably find some new level to get past the person I'm racing," Simek said. "Knowing that you're not just swimming for yourself but the team makes a huge difference."

Litzau said that the team looks to Jerod just as much, if not more than he looks to them.

"Jerod is a constant source of pride and motivation for the team," Litzau said. "He knows what it takes to compete at the highest collegiate level and demonstrates that work ethic every day."

Litzau said he thinks Simek will try to achieve an Olympic Trials cut and carry that into his senior year. He said Simek could become one of the best swimmers in the country.

Myers | Senior Devon Myers sets all-time hits record and helps bring home wins

Continued from Page 15
the team had lost motivation. However, the next day, as the Bulldogs trailed by three runs heading into the bottom of the 9th, they rallied to score four runs in the inning.

The comeback was capped off by freshman Paul Trenhaile's walk-off sacrifice fly to score senior Weston Lewis. Junior Jordan Howe said it was exciting to celebrate on their home field after the come-from-behind win.

"It was by far the most fun I've had on a baseball field since I came to Truman," Howe said. "It was cool that we were the last team on the field and we were able to run out to celebrate."

Davis said he was proud of his players and the level at which they played.

"To see their reaction when they had success was just amazing," Davis said. "This will go down as one of the all-time greatest comebacks in my 16-year coaching career."

Truman won the first game of Saturday's doubleheader after losing the first game of the series 5-0 Friday night.

Davis said he's happy with the way the 'Dogs are playing and hopes it will continue as the 'Dogs host Pittsburg State this weekend, with double headers scheduled Saturday and Sunday.

"The mindset has to be that we're going to play our own game on the field and we're not going to play the name on the jersey," Davis said. "If the better team always won, then why bother playing the game?"

Fall '12 | 'Dogs begin preparing for upcoming school years' sports seasons

Continued from Page 15
new coaches, senior-heavy rosters and a freshman class that is jam-packed with talent and potential.

Throughout the past decade, it has become custom for the sports editor to use his final column of the year as an opportunity to relive the year of ups and downs in Truman athletics. As far as the 2011-2012 year goes, yet again the downs seem to outnumber the ups, with only womens basketball, womens soccer and volleyball finishing with records above .500 and the mens and womens swimming programs making a splash on the national scene. But, in my

opinion, that is not how the Bulldog athletic department should be evaluated. The focus should be on the future — namely the seasons that will be played during the 2012-2013 school year.

Things are looking up on the gridiron for the 'Dogs next season as well.

With talent being funneled into Truman athletics, I see only one constant throughout most of its programs, and that constant is change.

Change for the better, and change in a direction that will hopefully yield more winning seasons throughout the future for the 'Dogs.

Smith | Michael Smith, head womens basketball coach, named Index coach of the year

COACH OF THE YEAR MICHAEL SMITH	2011-2012	17-10	(11-9 MIAA)
	2010-2011	12-15	(10-12 MIAA)
	2009-2010	11-16	(6-14 MIAA)
	2008-2009	8-19	(5-15 MIAA)

Continued from Page 15
"After that first year, I kind of took a step back and [thought], 'Oh wow, maybe this isn't going to happen as quick as I thought it was going to,'" he said. "But we kept plugging away... just getting the right type of kids."

Smith just finished his fourth season as the Bulldogs' head coach, a season in which the team shrugged off their "weak link of the MIAA" reputation and finished with 17 wins, a conference tournament berth and an undefeated non-conference record for the first time in school history.

Senior guard Brie Daniels said Smith brought motivation to the once struggling program. Since he arrived on campus, he's been building it back from the ground up to turn the Bulldogs into a true MIAA contender.

"He never was satisfied with any of our performances," Daniels said. "He was always pushing us to be better. ... He always expected the best out of us and pushed us in whatever way he needed to, to make sure we played our best every game."

This season, the 'Dogs made waves early, reeling off six straight wins to skyrocket them to the top of the conference rankings. Following a mid-season slump in which the team lost four straight conference games, the Bulldogs finished strong and earned their second straight conference tournament bid.

On par with Smith's original timeline, the Bulldogs made a statement in the MIAA by picking up key wins against strong conference opponents including a 68-66 win against No. 15 Washburn

before falling to Emporia State University on a last-second shot during the first round of the MIAA tournament.

Smith said while the first-round loss was a disappointing one, still the Bulldogs took big steps this season toward the long-term goals he has for the program, but there is a long way to go.

"We're not there yet, we're getting there," Smith said. "When we're cutting down a net, then you know we're there."

He said he has worked hard to build more than a good basketball team because the development of his players as successful individuals after their time as a Bulldog is more important to him. He said building a sense of trust among teammates, giving them confidence in themselves and making sure they leave with a strong work ethic and a high level of self-accountability lies at the top of his agenda at the helm of the womens basketball program.

The women don't begin their next season until November, but Smith already has his goal in mind. So far, he has tried to follow the timeline he made during 2008 with success.

Throughout his third season, he wanted a conference tournament berth and come March, the Bulldogs were dancing. During his fourth season, he wanted 15 wins and the Bulldogs finished with 17.

Smith said next season will be the ultimate test of his timeline as he pursues his major goal for the team: landing a spot in the NCAA tournament for the first time since 1999.

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