



Jessie Poole/Index

Senior tennis player Dagmar Velez hits the ball on the tennis courts Monday afternoon. Velez said she hopes she will be remembered for her love of the game after she leaves Truman during May.

VELEZ | Senior tennis player Dagmar Velez is playing in the No. 2 spot for the team

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spot on the roster. Three years later, Velez has 59 career singles victories and is the team's number two behind senior Ellen Russell.

What sets Velez apart is her work ethic. Velez said her love for the game is her primary motivation to keep improving and to practice and prepare every day. Kendall describes Velez as a baseline player with heavy topspin and an aggressive approach to each shot that results in either big winners or costly errors during a match. Russell, Velez's doubles partner, said she has seen vast improvement in Velez's shot selection and aggressiveness throughout the years.

"Dagmar is very teachable and is always willing to make necessary adjustments to her game in order to win or to capitalize even during a specific point or rally," Russell said.

Velez said her biggest adjustment throughout the years has been her mental discipline. Velez said she has been extremely driven during her career to learn on-court patience and discernment of when to rip a forehand winner or to simply set up for the next shot. Earlier during her career she would lose her cool after missing a single shot.

She would often go to practice and hit shots as hard as she could without placing the ball accurately. Sometimes, she said, it would cost her the entire match.

"If I felt I was having a bad day I would hit the ball out of bounds every point," Velez said, "Now I concentrate on working hard for each point and setting up high percentage shots."

Since then Velez said she has transformed her hitting into a more precise release of that aggression. She calls her game her anger management tool.

Kendall said Velez had to overcome struggles at the net against taller opponents as well. Velez is less-than-average height by tennis standards, but Kendall said she hasn't let her undersized frame prevent her from achieving success at the college level.

In her final season at Truman, Velez made another change to her game to improve. She, along with Russell, began hitting with members of the mens tennis team after practice each day to better her skills. Russell said the experience has improved their aggressiveness and hitting during match play.

Against Rockhurst University last Wednesday, Velez won in three sets against Karsyn Betts 6-4, 1-6, 7-5 in

what Velez deemed one of the best matches she has played. Velez said she was amazed at her control of points throughout the match and how well she hit all day.

"Wow, it is awesome to think that I am at this kind of level now with my game," she said.

Russell said Velez's match was another example of the kind of player and teammate Velez is. She said while Velez keeps the team relaxed and brings humor to the team, her determination really affects the rest of the team.

"She's a fighter," Russell said. "She is always battling, and she hangs tough with whoever she is playing."

Freshman Kim Birenbaum said Velez is a prime example for younger players off the court in her love for the game and her winning attitude. Junior teammate Maggi Schutte said Velez is a prime motivator for her during matches.

"If I'm struggling with my shot she is the first person to pick me up and tell me I can do it," Schutte said. "She is a great teammate and everyone respects her input."

Velez's passion and example have defined her career at Truman and will ultimately be remembered when she graduates during May. Next, Velez is looking forward to graduate school and entering the workforce. Wherever she ends up one thing is certain: She will continue to beat the odds, all while wearing a smile.

"When I leave I want to be remembered for my love of this game," Velez said.

After the career she has had, it's hard to see how anyone could remember her for anything else.

Four-year career Velez's college tennis record	
'08-'09	20-13
'09-'10	31-12
'10-'11	29-17
'11-'12	12-19
92-61 as of Wednesday	

SOFTBALL | 'Dogs sweep Northeastern State University before dropping both games to the No. 6 University of Central Oklahoma Bronchos and senior pitcher Rachael Stevenson

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body. And coming up to the end of our season, we need that."

With five players batting .400 or better, the Bronchos are an offensive powerhouse, outscoring their opponents 278-117 this season. UCO had 23 hits against Bulldog pitching during the weekend, five of which were for extra bases and two were homeruns from senior Nathalie Timmermans that accounted for seven of Central's 12 runs for their game one victory. The second homerun was a walk-off, grand slam during the bottom of the seventh that led to the 12-8 final.

"It's rough when you fight to get eight runs on the board and that lead is taken away from you in one at-bat," Schade said. "Those kind of things are bittersweet because, yeah, we lost, but I've never seen us fight so much for something. That game will be the one I remember because fought tooth and nail for [a win]. But they're ranked sixth in the nation, and that's why."

UCO pitcher senior Rachael Stevenson picked up her 15th and 16th wins after she came in as relief for the Bronchos during game one. They were down 5-3 and then shutout the Truman of-

fense during game two to drop her ERA to 3.08 for the season.

The 'Dogs tried to focus on factors they could control while competing against the nationally ranked team.

"We were just focusing on the process," head coach Erin Brown said. "Playing good defense, playing smart defense and swinging at strikes. When we got opportunities, we scored some runs and capitalized on some errors that they had. We just simplified [the game] as much as we could."

Aside from the seven errors during the weekend, both Brown and Schade said

the team played well defensively. Playing better throughout the last couple of weeks has given the 'Dogs a confidence boost heading into a stretch of conference games that ultimately will determine the Bulldogs' postseason fate.

"Now that we've proven that we can hold the sixth ranked team and score just as many runs as they scored on us, we should be able to compete with everyone else as long as we compete on our level," freshman Andrea Klipsch said.

Truman's next game will be against the University of Central Missouri at 2:00 p.m. April 6 at home.

BUDGET | Athletic department might face \$102,000 budget cut

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partment is not going to cut additional sports and will move wrestling practice from the Greenwood School to the Pershing small gym. He said that should save the athletic department about \$30,000 because of the building's heating costs during wrestling practice.

University Budget Director Dave Rector said the final logistics of what each department will be cutting are past due, but Wollmering asked for a deadline extension.

The cuts come during the middle of the process that could lead to Truman joining the Great Lakes Valley Conference as early as Fall 2013, but University President Troy Paino said the budget problems were not a major factor in the decision to pursue a GLVC bid.

"The decision about the GLVC was really made with regard to a more long-term strategy and the role of athletics at Truman," Paino said. "Does budget play a role in that? Yes, certainly we have to try and restrain spending as much as possible as we look out to the future."

Travel costs were \$401,032 of the \$4,643,473 in athletic expenses last year, and the move to the GLVC would lower travel costs because of a closer distance to schools in the

conference in comparison to the MIAA schools.

The most costly part of the athletic budget is student aid, which Wollmering said will be difficult to cut because Truman already is at the lower end of athletic scholarships rewarded to student-athletes in the MIAA.

The budget cuts announcement also coincides with the retirement of long-time tennis head coach Pete Kendall who, after the end of the spring season, will have been at Truman for 20 years. Wollmering said Kendall's retirement plays a role in the athletic budget because the department has not taken any significant steps in hiring a new coach. Thus it is unknown how much the new coach will be paid.

Paino said with the 7.8 percent cuts, academics is first on Truman's agenda when deciding how to best spend the money the University will have next year, but he said athletics play a large role on campus.

"Truman has built its reputation on academic excellence and a commitment to academic excellence, and I think that's where our priority has been," he said. "But, I'm a firm believer that athletics can complement that focus on academic excellence. ... I think those two things can go hand-in-hand."

SOCCER | Women face off against Rockhurst University and William Jewell College in spring exhibition matches

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alright. We played better Sunday against Rockhurst, but there were some good things. It wasn't until we fell behind [Saturday] that we actually started playing better. Sunday we got ahead and we played a little better that day. It's spring so there's some good stuff but it's a little inconsistent trying some kids at different positions."

Another thing the Bulldogs look to emphasize during the spring is team unity. With the seniors graduating, the dynamic of the team has changed from last year. Team activities have been a part of the unity building the Bulldogs are looking for this year.

"A lot of what our coach has done this season is motivational stuff," junior Olivia Hayes said. "It's really important to build the team. We're trying to get away from the distinction of freshman, sophomore, junior and senior players."

Team building can take

many different forms, and the emphasis on removing the distinction of the classes on and off the field may help with building leaders. It will allow players to voice their opinions during the game and communicate with other players during the season, Hayes said.

"Spring is a chance for us to get our chemistry down," junior Kelsey Twellman said. "I feel like spring we work on what

we need to work on, so we are not really focused on winning, we're focused on improving. Coach subs players in and out a lot during the spring, which allows us to improve our chemistry during the spring."

With a winning season every year these Bulldogs have been on campus, the importance of the spring practices is not lost on the upcoming program leadership. As the Bulldogs move forward to the 2012 fall season the quality of work done in the spring practices will show on the field.



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