

SPORTS

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Out of the ashes

Truman Baseball Preview 2012

With a new lineup and rotation but familiar aspirations, the Bulldogs look to start fresh

BY SAM SHERMAN
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Despite having the two best pitchers in the conference, the Truman State baseball team finished last season with a 17-31 overall record. Head coach Dan Davis said the team's Achilles' heel — and a major reason for the team's losing record — was the Bulldogs' poor offensive play, though he said the team has addressed its offensive woes this offseason.

"I definitely think we're better than we were last year," Davis said. "I think our biggest improvement that we needed to get better at was our offense. We didn't score enough runs to win a lot of games last year."

The Bulldogs were led last season by the arms of senior Ryan Trimble and junior Jarrett Eiskina. The one-two of the Truman pitching staff ended up finishing with the top two ERAs in the MIAA. However, Davis said the team has decided to redshirt Trimble for undisclosed reasons, leaving Eiskina and senior Tyler Stefan at the helm of the Bulldog rotation.

Eiskina finished the season at 3-3 with a 2.38 ERA last year while Stefan was 2-7 with a 5.29 ERA. With Trimble's absence, Davis said the Bulldogs were forced to make significant rotation changes. After Eiskina and Stefan, the one and two spots for the Bulldog pitching staff, Truman is adding freshman Paul McMahon, freshman Bret Gerstner and junior Logan Siegler to the rotation. Siegler was a bullpen pitcher for the 'Dogs last year and had

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Jessie Poole/Index

Track sets personal bests

BY ROB JONES
Staff Reporter

Twelve track and field athletes broke personal records this past weekend at the Fighting Scot invitational meet in Monmouth, Ill.

Senior Michael Dial set a personal record in the 3000-meter race with a time of 8:58.97. The women's 1600-meter relay team (4x400) ran a unit best, Senior Joseph Walls broke his previous best in the mile, junior Ryan Peterson set a personal record in the 400-meter dash and Junior Rachel McCarroll threw for a conference leading throw at 53-05.75.

Head coach John Cochrane said he was satisfied with the team's showing.

"We had some things that were better, and we had some good performances by some people, and some average ones by some other people, but overall it was an improvement," Cochrane said. "[Senior] Derek Atwood threw a provisional mark, Ryan Peterson ran a good leg on the 4x4 to help us get second, [Freshman] B.J.

Smith placed fifth in the 60-meter hurdles, and [juniors] Karen and Cindy [Grauel] ran really well in the 3000."

The team went into Saturday's meet hoping to see improvements across the board and to get good performances.

"We didn't get all that we had liked, but we got some of them," Cochrane said.

Smith explained that his performance last weekend picked a lot of his confidence back up after two sluggish weekends prior to Saturday.

"I'd say I did pretty well, personally," Smith said. "I learned that sometimes you have off days and you have to come back from those and come back harder. The last two weekends weren't my best, so I had to go back to practice and work on a few things and it paid off."

Cochrane said the team is putting last weekend behind them and looking toward the future — namely the Missouri Collegiate Challenge meet this weekend, and the Mid-America championships Feb. 24-26. He said Saturday's

meet in Columbia will be used as a test-run meet.

"This weekend, we'll hopefully do okay," Cochrane said. "We're going to run some people in some events they don't normally run in. Joe Walls is going to run the 1000. Hopefully he has a shot of breaking the school record."

The Missouri Collegiate Challenge meet will be used for those athletes who did not perform well at the Fighting Scot Invitational to rebound and get back on track. Though the team's main focus is on the Mid-America Championships.

During preparation for the conference meet in Joplin, Mo., Cochrane said the athletes will be practicing at the intensity level of a meet.

"We need to get some things done the way we do things in the meet," Cochrane said. "We want to do things technically the way you do it in the meet. Running workouts [will be] race speed. 400 [meter runners] people hopefully [will be] doing 350's at 400 speed. Distance runners [will be] similar."

Truman closer to joining GLVC

BY KIRK SCHLUETER
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Truman State is moving forward with the admission process to the Great Lakes Valley Conference after the GLVC member schools voted to develop a timeline for Truman's potential entry. The University could begin GLVC play during 2013.

Athletic Director Jerry Wollmering said the next step of the process is the visit of a GLVC evaluation team to Truman's campus sometime this spring. He said he hoped the visit would take place during mid-March to early April, but that the date had not been finalized.

Wollmering said he expected the GLVC team to comprise five to seven people, including representatives from the conference office and from three or four GLVC member schools. He said he did not yet know what type of questions the team would be asking or to whom they would be talking.

Wollmering also expanded upon the rationale behind Truman's decision to express interest in joining the GLVC.

"One thing the GLVC gives us is the opportunity to play in the three biggest markets in Missouri," he said. "You have really three schools in St. Louis, two in the Kansas City area and one in Springfield. Then you add in [Missouri S&T], which probably of all the state schools in Missouri fits us the best in terms of academic profile. Obviously that seems to provide a pretty good fit in the state of Missouri."

The GLVC also has four schools in Illinois, with one, Quincy University, only 70 miles from Kirksville, which Wollmering said could be a geographic rival for Truman in all sports. He said the University has lacked a rival like this in the MIAA for awhile.

Wollmering said the relatively local geography of the GLVC could help sports teams reduce travel

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Editor shares sentimental sports experience

Can I tell you a story?

Fair warning — it's one of those sappy stories that crops up from time to time in sports. What it isn't is a story of miracles. Yet, too often, sports is reduced to the cold, stark reality of numbers on a page. For me though, sports always has been much more than a box score. It's something warm and welcoming, a thread that ties people together. This is one of those stories.

Being a St. Louis kid (from the Illinois side, thanks for asking), I've been a Cardinals fan for as long as I can remember, and I really have only one person to thank for that — my grandpa. He and several of his acquaintances had this scheme where they all chipped in, bought four season tickets, then divided the games for a particular season. So I found myself going to about 10 games a year with my grandpa.

It was from him that I learned practically everything I know about baseball — how to keep score, the importance of relief pitching, when you could leave your seat to get a ballpark hot dog and that the greatest moment in sports his-

tory was surely Jack Buck's "Go crazy, folks!" call of Ozzie Smith's home run in Game 5 of the 1985 NLCS.

We celebrated and suffered through nearly two decades of seasons together. By far the darkest moment was when the two of us watched through a TV screen as the Boston Red Sox ended their infamous curse on the hallowed ground of Busch Stadium. My grandpa took it well, though. He'd grown up in Chicago. He was used to dreaming about next year.

Two years later, during their first season in the new Busch Stadium, the Cardinals won the World Series, and he was the first person I called.

During 2010, the year I graduated from high school, he was diagnosed with cancer. It wasn't the first time.

Several years earlier, cancer had been detected in his bladder. It was removed, and we all breathed a sigh of relief at our escape and went back to our lives. This time, there would be no escape.

We didn't go to any games that summer. I was busy teaching tennis and he was going through chemotherapy that made visiting his doctor a challenge, never mind sitting through a three-hour baseball game. Yet even then, he watched every game he could from his couch in front of the TV and we talked about the Cardinals every time I saw him.

As the summer progressed, I thought how special it would be if, for the last baseball season he would ever see, the Cardinals made their first deep run in the playoffs in four years. I dreamed

about calling him from Truman's campus the night the Cardinals won the World Series. But they didn't even make the playoffs.

On Feb. 17, 2011, my third article as a sports reporter ran in the Index. To this day I haven't read it. My grandpa was 74 years old.

I didn't pay attention to baseball for a long time. I didn't go to any games last summer, either. It had lost some of its luster. Besides, every time I checked, the Cardinals were playing horribly and looked poised to miss the playoffs again.

And then. And then. I turned Game 6 off when the Rangers took a three-run lead and went to Pickler Memorial Library to do homework. I was watching on the computer with my best friend, a Rangers fan, when, in time-lapse fashion, David Freese became the greatest Cardinal postseason hero since Ozzie Smith.

The next night they won it all, and I ran down the halls in West Campus Suites, listening to all the folks going

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