

'Dogs clinch MIAA tournament berth

BY JONNY BROWN
Staff Reporter

With a 79-52 victory Wednesday night over the visiting Northwest Missouri Bearcats, the Truman womens basketball team clinched their spot in the MIAA conference tournament. Senior guard Brie Daniels led the 'Dogs with a double-double, 16 points and 10 rebounds. The Bulldogs took a 13-point lead into the locker room at halftime, but head coach Michael Smith said his players were playing nervous because they knew a win would clinch a spot.

"I felt like they were pressing a bit in the first half," Smith said. "I was pretty hard on them at halftime and they deserve a lot of credit for sticking with it."

The Bulldogs lost by one point to the Bearcats back in January, giving up the winning point with 4.7 seconds left on the clock.

The team had eight players or more score points and get valuable minutes. Smith said the bench will be as important as the starters toward the end of the season.

"We're going to need these kids, and we were able to get them good minutes," Smith said.

The Bulldogs shot 53 percent from behind the arc, behind freshman Allie Norton's four three pointers, along with 34 defensive rebounds. Smith said the energy from the whole team was crucial to this win.

"When your bench is excited, you know the kids you rely on night in and night out will be excited too," Smith said.

The Bulldogs closed out their non-conference schedule on Saturday evening with a 77-55 victory at McKendree (Ill.). With this win, the Dogs went a perfect 6-0 against non-MIAA teams. Junior guard Becka McHenry had her third straight game of 20 points or more, with 18 of her 20 coming in the first half. Smith said the Bearcats couldn't figure out a way to stop her.

"We came out from the opening tip and Becka really sparked us," Smith said. "They didn't really have an answer for her and she kept us where we wanted to be."



Jessie Poole/Index

Junior guard Becka McHenry brings the ball down the floor in a game earlier this season. McHenry led the team in assists in their 79-52 rout of Northwest Missouri State University on Wednesday night.

McHenry's lay-up three seconds into the game gave the Bulldogs a lead they never gave up. The closest McKendree got was within five points midway during the first half. Smith said having a healthy lead throughout the game helped the 'Dogs get their whole bench minutes.

"Our main starters have been playing over 30 minutes a game, so they were able to get a pretty good break," Smith said. "Any time you can get your bench in to get that experience, it's nothing but positive."

McHenry, who added six rebounds and two assists to her 20 points, said that non-

conference games give the team more room to relax and the 'Dogs benefit from being close as a team.

"There is maybe not as much pressure as conference games," McHenry said. "We had the advantage of having better team chemistry than some of the other teams we played."

McHenry is now averaging 14.4 points a game, and Smith said it all comes from belief in her abilities. When the 'Dogs lost junior Nicole Gloor to a shoulder injury, McHenry picked up her game, he said.

"I think she's finally realized she's capable of doing that and has taken up more of a

role," Smith said. "I think she's taken it upon herself since Nicole got hurt and it's done nothing to hurt our team."

With only three games left until the season ends, the Bulldogs play two more straight home games. Senior forward Megan Sharpe, who had 10 points and 8 rebounds in Saturday's win, said that having this home stand will be an advantage.

"It's huge that we get to play on our home floor in front of our fans," Sharpe said. "These last four are huge as to whether we get into the tournament and what seed we get."



Lindsey Gillam/Index

Sophomore Isaac Gardner puts up a shot Wednesday night against Northwest Missouri State University. Gardner finished with 14 points against the Bearcats.

Men lose during overtime

BY TYLER SIGRIST
Staff Reporter

Truman mens basketball pushed No. 14 ranked Northwest Missouri State University into double overtime Wednesday night before finally falling by a final score of 94-87.

"We played well," head coach Matt Woodley said. "I thought we played hard. I thought we played well enough to win. We just didn't make enough plays down the stretch."

During the Bulldogs' first two possessions, they got threes from juniors E.J. Hicks and Tom Norton, with a third coming on the fourth trip down the floor from sophomore Isaac Gardner, giving the 'Dogs an early 9-4 lead with 16 minutes left during the first half.

The Bearcats repeatedly struggled from beyond the arc, shooting only 25 percent from three during the opening half. Despite their lack of success from long range, NWMSU managed to stay just behind but within range of the 'Dogs during the first 10 minutes.

The momentum shifted more in the Bulldogs' favor with nine minutes to go when, in a leaping effort, freshman Tyler Anderson saved the ball just before it was sure to land out of bounds. Senior Vesko Filchev caught the ball as he came down the lane with a full head of steam and put it home with a two-handed jam that extended the 'Dogs lead

back to six points.

With 5:25 to go during the first, Norton, who missed the last game and is ailing from a sports hernia, stepped up and fired from well behind the arc and sank a three, giving Truman a 27-19 lead. It was only the first of many as he continued to go 8-12 from deep, finishing with 34 points.

"[Tom] played unbelievable," Woodley said. "He just had an unbelievable, gummy performance. One of the best ones I've ever been around. I couldn't be more proud of him."

During the final minutes before halftime, junior DeShaun Cooper, who scored 22 points for the night, led the Bearcat charge as Northwest went on an 8-0 run that pulled them back into the ball game, tying it at 27. The Bulldogs were able to get another bucket and give themselves a two-point cushion heading into the break.

The second half started back and forth and remained so until the end. Norton was fouled with nine seconds to go and put Truman up two, but Cooper, the MIAA's leading free throw shooter, drove to the basket and was fouled. He made both his shots from the charity stripe and sent the game into overtime.

"We just wanted to come out and compete as a team," Norton said. "We knew we were going to have to play hard. I got some open looks, my teammates set me up and I knocked some

shots down."

The Bearcats had control the whole overtime. Although Truman stayed within one shot for the majority of the extra period, Northwest never allowed the 'Dogs within three, until Norton hit a three from well behind the line with three seconds left and tied the game at 79, pushing the game into a second overtime.

The teams again kept it close during the second extra period, but this time Northwest was too much for the Bulldogs to handle, ending the double-overtime thriller with a final score of 94-87.

Other notable players for Truman include Hicks, sophomore Mike Carlson and freshman Seth Jackson, who all finished scoring in double digits in the losing effort. For Northwest, it was Reinders who put up 20 for the Bearcat cause.

The Bulldogs snapped their three game losing streak Monday as they hosted and defeated the Hannibal-LaGrange University Trojans 76-73. Gardner had what proved to be his year's best performance thus far, setting a program single-game record by making 10 three-pointers. Gardner also became the first Bulldog to go for 30 points since Matt Beran scored 31 during 2002. Not to be outdone, junior E.J. Hicks had 11 assists, which marked the first time a Bulldog broke double digits in the assist column since Ethan Freeman did during January of last year.

THE RANKINGS

A QUICK LOOK AT THE BULLDOG'S Standings as of Wednesday Night



Mens Basketball
7-18
9th in MIAA



Womens Basketball
14-9
7th in MIAA



Mens Swimming
1-5
conference does not rank



Wrestling
3-12
conference does not rank



Womens Swimming
2-3
conference does not rank

UPCOMING SEASONS



Mens Tennis
First match:
Feb. 24
at Elsay, Ill.



Womens Tennis
First match:
Feb. 17
at Elsay, Ill.



Baseball
First game:
Feb. 25
at Rolla, Mo.



Softball
First match:
Feb. 17
at Decatur, Ala.