

Atwood goes back to basics

After taking a year off, fifth year senior looks to replicate previous success for 'Dogs

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Senior thrower Derek Atwood's hands are rough and calloused. They are hands that are used to lofting a 16-pound ball more than 50-feet through the air. They are hands that Atwood and his coach Leslie Hardesty are convinced still have strength left in them.

In his fifth year at Truman State, Atwood — who already has the school record and multiple trips to the NCAA National Championships under his belt in the shot put — is looking to return his performance to the heights it reached three years ago after redshirting and not competing last year.

"The goal is just to get back to nationals," Atwood said. "I've qualified every year since my sophomore year. I want to get back there and compete with the best in the country."

Atwood's high point so far in his Truman career came during his sophomore year when he qualified for the national meet, throwing more than 54 feet in the shot put. It was after that successful season, however, that Atwood first began experiencing trouble, Hardesty said.

"Instead of just continuing to improve upon the distances he threw as a sophomore, he went for these huge goals," Hardesty said. "The amount of pressure he put on himself just threw him for a loop and he did not recover soon enough to make it happen as a junior."

Hardesty said both she and Atwood realized he needed to regroup. They made the decision to redshirt the 2010-2011 track season in an attempt to approach Atwood's senior year with new, better priorities.

"The goal for me is always to win conference, and throw my best, and make it to nationals and be an All-American," Atwood said.

Hardesty said the pair spent the off-year focusing on small adjustments to

Atwood's technique. She said Atwood has previous experience with technique changes, as he switched from throwing the shot put in a "glide" motion in high school to a "spin" motion at Truman, something Hardesty said requires patience and dedication.

"It's night and day," Hardesty said about the change. "It's two totally different things. You use totally different parts of the body. So that first year where you're truly learning how to be a spinner, there are more downs than ups."

Atwood said technique is the most critical part of throwing the shot put and is something he practices every day.

"I'm stronger than I was sophomore year and I'm not throwing as far, so it's all about technique," he said. "[Hardesty] and I have been working on that for two years, just making sure I use all the strength I have."

Another change Atwood has adopted in competing is the weight throw, an event he previously competed in his freshman year, but not his sophomore or junior season. Although Atwood said he is more skilled in the shot put, Hardesty said adding the weight throw to his repertoire is a way for Atwood to distance himself from the shot put on days when he has bad results.

"Indoor season is very long," she said. "You're throwing the same thing day after day, and on those days when the shot put just isn't clicking, we've just got to throw something else, so we thought let's throw the weight again."

The changes seem to be paying off. So far this season Atwood has placed first in the Cyclone Holiday Preview and second in the Iowa State Open. Additionally, Atwood was named the MIAA Athlete of the Week in Dec. and is performing throws of around 53 feet. He said he plans for his throws to only get better as the end of the season approaches.

Junior thrower Andy Viehmann said the work Atwood puts in both at practice and at meets served as an inspiration for him when he was an underclassman.

"There's definitely some things in the weight room he's shown me that has helped me get a lot stronger," Viehmann said. "He's a big team player and he's al-



Andrea Hewitt/Index

Redshirt senior Derek Atwood practices the shot put Wednesday in Pershing Arena. Atwood was the MIAA Athlete of the Week for the first time this season.

ways trying to get everyone to work together. Now that he's the oldest thrower on the team, that's even more so."

Atwood's sense of team play also intersects with his competitive nature.

"I'd really like to win every time I step out there," he said. "Even when I get second I'm not really happy. I'd like to go out there and get 10 points for the team."

Hardesty said Atwood is prepared

physically for his season to peak at the conference meet and allow him to return to the national meet, but the determining factor in his performance will occur in his mind.

"Right now it all comes down to where he's at mentally," Hardesty said. "If he can get the right mindset at a track meet and focus on the things he needs to work on, yeah he can qualify for nationals."

Bulldogs drop three during weekend

BY GARRETT FRITCH
Staff Reporter

The Truman State wrestling team found itself in unfamiliar territory last weekend as they traveled to Edwardsville, Ill., to wrestle three Div. I opponents.

The 'Dogs lost all three dual matches, but head coach David Schutter said he was pleased about how his team performed.

The match against Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville was the closest match — Truman lost 12-32.

During the first two matches of the SIUE dual, the Maus brothers wrestled the Pousson brothers. Junior Alex Maus lost to SIUE junior Dillon Pousson 6-2, but sophomore Ryan Maus backed his brother up with a 6-0 victory against senior Derrick Pousson.

"I wrestled [Dillon] earlier in the season and he beat me," Ryan said. "It was good to redeem a loss from earlier in the season [by beating his brother]."

Sophomore Devon Fenstermaker got back to winning with a 7-2 overtime victory and gave the Bulldogs a 12-9 lead.

"In overtime it's a lot of heart and then pure hard work and skill," Fenstermaker said. "If



Lindsey Gillam/Index

Redshirt freshman Tyler Schilson wrestles against William Penn University last Wednesday in Pershing Arena. Truman State's dual match record is 2-10 for the season.

you don't find the energy within yourself to beat them in overtime, you're never going to make it in this sport."

That would be the last win of the day for the Bulldogs. During the next two duals the Bulldogs were scoreless, losing to Eastern Michigan 0-47. The Bulldogs wres-

tled the No. 15 Missouri Tigers in the final dual of the day. The final score ended up being 0-52.

"It was a good day of practice," Schutter said. "You can't get that type of competition in practice. Where you get better is hard competition and hard practice, and no matter how hard we

would practice, we still don't have those level of athletes."

While the Bulldogs did not post winning results in the matches Saturday, Schutter said the experience was more important than the actual matches.

"If you look at the All-Americans and national qualifiers,

these guys got there from wrestling the best guys we could find," Schutter said. "Look at a guy like [alumnus] Blake Peterson. He had five losses his first year here and he was a national qualifier, but the next two years he had double-digit losses and was a two time All-American. Its because we went out and found the best competition we could."

The match against Missouri is the kind of competition Schutter was looking for from the weekend. Schutter said he was more pleased with the outcome of the matches than one might expect from looking at the scoreboard.

"Ryan Maus's match against Missouri at 149 pounds was 11-3, but the score was not indicative of how tight the match was until probably the final period," Schutter said. "I think the whole lineup wrestled with a lot more intensity than I've seen all year from our team."

Fenstermaker said the Bulldogs were not intimidated by the wrestling this weekend.

"You just go out there and just wrestle and have fun, that's your best bet," Fenstermaker said.

The Bulldogs look to take that mentality to the Missouri Valley College Open next weekend.

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