

UCM ends mens' postseason hopes

BY TYLER POE
Staff Reporter

The Bulldogs were on the losing end of a thrilling 79-82 victory by the University of Central Missouri on Sat. Feb. 25 in Warrensburg, Mo., despite a career-best 34-point performance by redshirt sophomore Mike Carlson. The loss ends any chance Truman had at advancing to the MIAA tournament.

Without the help of sharpshooter sophomore Isaac Gardner and leading rebounder sophomore Marek Bush because of injuries, the Bulldogs couldn't withstand the Mules' second-half surge. Truman lost for the 12th time on the road this season during head coach Matt Woodley's first year at the helm of the program. Carlson said the loss was tough when coupled with the momentum built up during the past few weeks.

"We really felt this was our time and we expected to win despite all the odds against us," Carlson said.

The Bulldogs led 34-33 at the half against a 19-7, 15-5 MIAA, Central Missouri squad, but they eventually were outdone by the Mules' advantage at the free-throw line where they made 22 of 32 attempts to Truman's 6-11 free-throw percentage at the charity stripe.

Seth Jackson, newly crowned MIAA Freshman of the Year, scored 13 points. He said the team was tremendously disappointed by the loss and by not reaching the tournament for another year. Jackson said the team was hurt offensively and defensively by injuries during the contest.

Truman still had a chance to pull out a tough win before a pair of free throws by Central's junior Lance Beckwith sealed the victory for the Mules. Freshmen Bulldogs

Patrick Burmester and Tyler Anderson played while recovering from back injuries during the game while Bush and Gardner sat out with injuries. As a result, Truman's depleted bench scored seven points during the game compared to 28 scored by Central Missouri.

With the loss, the Bulldogs dropped into a two-way tie for eighth place with MIAA foe Emporia State, who owns the season head-to-head tiebreaker and ultimately eliminated the 'Dogs from the MIAA Conference Tournament for the fourth time during the last five years. The Bulldogs finished the season with an 8-20 (5-15 MIAA) record, the best since the 2006-2007 season previously coached by Jack Schrader. Carlson said that despite the disappointing end to the season, he is optimistic about the program's future heading into the 2012-2013 season because only one senior, Vesko Filchev, is graduating.

"We're excited for next year because we have finally become a team," Carlson said. "We had so many new pieces and adjustments during the season that held us back, but now we know what it takes to win in this league."

The Bulldogs will begin their offseason program during the coming weeks. Woodley said the next step for the program to continue to develop a winning culture among the players and coaching staff is to focus on getting and staying healthy. Woodley said the team's committed focus to defensive basketball and toughness has set the foundation for the offseason regimen, which will supply a diet of rest and workouts.

"Our biggest area of concern in the offseason is to im-

prove individually, particularly in strength training," Woodley said.

Truman battled through injuries to eight players this season, and Woodley said the team's goal to win close games starts with increasing strength and health. Jackson, the first player from Truman to earn MIAA Player of the Year honors since Grant Agbo in 2004, said success next season comes down to developing a will to win. Jackson said that because everyone has had a year of playing together, there will be no excuses next year for the 'Dogs.

"We are going to look to come back with a big bang next season," Jackson said. "We know how to win, and I am excited with what we have coming back."

This week, Norton and Jackson were named to the All-MIAA Honorable Mention team. Norton said the honor is humbling for him and it motivates him to work hard during the offseason to continue to improve.

Jackson said that while he needs to improve his outside shot, his primary focus is to develop his leadership skills.

"Coming in as a freshman I just did what I felt I could to help," Jackson said. "Now I need to establish myself as a vocal leader and to help my team in every way that I can."

Woodley said there is no limit to what Jackson and the Bulldogs can do during 2013. He said many players, particularly the freshmen, have great opportunities to grow this summer. Woodley said he is excited for Jackson's development as the team's go-to scorer and for Burmester's off-



Lindsey Gillam/Index
Senior center Vesko Filchev puts up a layup Feb. 22 against Lincoln University as junior guard EJ Hicks looks on.

season. Burmester sat out a majority of the season with a back injury, but is ready to go this off-season.

With season one in the books, Norton said the work Woodley already has done is nothing short of amazing. He said Woodley's

desire to win has been infectious and that the culture has changed tremendously. He said he and his teammates can't wait to pick up where they left off.

"There is no question — this program is all about winning now," Norton said.

Softball wins 3 and loses two last weekend

BY SAM SHERMAN
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When the Bulldogs headed to Denton, Texas this weekend to participate in the Texas Women's Invitational, head coach Erin Brown said the team's record wasn't the only thing hinging on the team's performance.

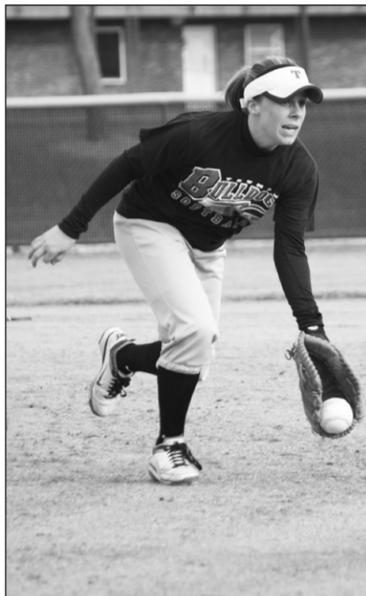
"When we go down [to Texas] early [in the season], teams from our conference have struggled in the past, and that is not good for regional rankings," Brown said. "So it's really important for us to go down and beat those [Texas] teams so that we can get a little more respect."

The softball team found some of that respect at the tournament, finishing the weekend 3-2, beating St. Mary's University (4-3), Texas A&M-International (14-1) and Texas A&M-Kingsville (9-1). The 'Dogs lost to the Quincy Hawks for the second time this season and to Texas Woman's University during extra innings.

Senior outfielder Bridget Schade said she was unsure what to expect.

"I knew they were going to be tough because they had already played 11 to 12 games apiece," Schade said. "So I knew we had to bring it to the competition because we wanted to prove ourselves not only for being a Missouri team but being Truman in general."

The 'Dogs started the weekend with a few pitching issues against Texas Women's University. Freshman pitcher Kelsea Dorsey was called for illegal pitches



Jessie Poole/Index

Sophomore shortstop Corey Niblett fields a ball during practice last week. Niblett has a .364 batting average.

multiple times during the first inning because she raised her back foot off the ground as she threw, Brown said.

This led to Dorsey being pulled from the game before the first inning ended and senior pitcher and team captain Ashley Rotkovich getting the reins from Brown. Rotkovich was given the loss for

the game after the Bulldogs left two on base to go into the bottom of the eighth and final inning.

The Pioneers then capitalized on the empty inning, ending the game with a walk-off single from freshman infielder Kendra Saucet to hand the 'Dogs a 9-8 loss.

The Bulldogs recuperated quickly from the first loss as they prepared to face St. Mary's University. Led by freshman third baseman Cate Simon's two-hit, one RBI outing, Truman led the Rattlers 4-1 going into the seventh inning before St. Mary's was able to mount a small comeback, making up two runs to bring the score to 4-3. Despite the runs scored during the seventh inning, Dorsey was able to pick up the save in junior pitcher Kirsten Krause's first win of the season.

Brown said this win was needed after the team had suffered the disappointing loss earlier during the day to TWU.

"That was a big win for us," Brown said. "I was proud that we came back after that tough loss in extra innings and got that win against a good team."

The next day, the Bulldogs defeated Texas A&M-International quickly, winning 14-1, which ended the game during the fifth inning because of the eight-run rule.

Brown said the team had great at-bats against the Dustdevils as Dorsey picked up the win. Simon and juniors Meredith Kusky and Kristen Grossman hit home runs for the 'Dogs throughout their way to their 13 hits during the game.

After the Dustdevils, the Bulldogs faced the Quincy University Hawks, who had beat Truman 2-1 last weekend. This

time around, the 'Dogs couldn't handle the Hawks' big bats, allowing five runs in the fifth inning and four in the sixth to bring the score to 10-2 and ending the game in the sixth inning because of the eight-run rule.

Rotkovich said there were a few problems that led to the team's second loss in a row to the Hawks.

"It was just a combination of things," she said. "Our bats were phenomenal all weekend and our bats struggled a little bit that game. I think that pitcher was a little different from what we saw from everybody else, so I think that kind of threw us off a little bit."

The 'Dogs finished the weekend with another short game win, closing out the Texas A&M-Kingsville Javelinas in five innings 9-1.

Sophomore second baseman Kelsey Bollman started the production early for the team, picking up two RBI's with a double to right field. The Bulldogs hit .381 overall against the Javelinas, bringing their team batting average to .354 during the weekend.

Schade said she was happy about how the team played in Texas.

"Overall we knew we had to compete well and we had to give it our all," she said. "Our record shows it, you come ahead in the weekend and that's pretty good."

The team's next match-up will be at the Missouri Southern State University Terry Mathis Zenner Classic in Joplin, Mo. The tournament will begin a six-day stretch for the Bulldogs, in which they will play 12 games.



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