

SHERMAN | Experience will help restore basketball program's damaged legacy

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three players reach that mark, all during the season's final weeks.

A slow start to the season from the team was too much for the Bulldogs to overcome in the end, but that didn't take away from the late-season drama. The Bulldogs battled to score the eighth seed in the conference tournament, a feat that seemed completely out of the question mid-season. Though, it was their young roster that plagued them in the end.

The lack of experience on the court was evident for the Bulldogs, as they struggled to put things together late in the game. However, what they lack in experience, they make up for in promise. The program is returning all but one of its players next season and Norton provides the leadership needed to take this team to new heights. Norton's

shot-making ability, combined with his poise and control on the court, will serve as the backbone for the Bulldog's rise.

If you add sophomore guard Isaac Gardner's smooth, record-setting shot into the mix, and freshman guard Seth Jackson's ability to drive to the hole, you have a roster that can only grow. This season's 8-20 finish was the highest win total for the 'Dogs since 2007, which isn't saying much. However, the Bulldogs had a lot of games slip away during the final minutes this year, and with the team gaining experience, the fourth quarter woes will fix themselves.

What Woodley brings to the table is Div. I coaching experience and a will to win, which the Bulldogs haven't seen from a coach in a long time. The system he brought to Truman allows for Bulldog scor-

ers to do just that — score. Instead of strictly following a team-first, disciplined system, Woodley has given the green light to Gardner and others to do what they do best, which has allowed the team to flourish in the stats column.

I know we always harp on students to give Truman athletics a chance, but the problem with that is a team has to win to gain support. Basketball games this season have been marked by empty bleachers in the student section and a lack of home-court advantage, with the only audible yells coming from the pep band.

This team is different, though. This team has a future, and that comes from the young roster gaining valuable experience this season. So, with the season ended and a fresh outlook on the horizon, I can promise you this — mediocrity no longer will be a common theme in Pershing Arena.

WRESTLING | Three Bulldogs place at NCAA Super 2 Regional meet in Okla.

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"They need to get in that weight room, and lift like there is no tomorrow," Schutter said. "We are not as far off as sending four or five [to nationals] as people think. Ryan Maus goes to nationals because he buys in, believes a little more. He's not any more athletically talented than [other team members]."

Although there was disappointment because only one wrestler qualified, Fenstermaker said the Bulldogs still were excited to see one of their own make it to nationals.

"Knowing that [Ryan] made it to nationals, I kind of feel like it is an accom-

plishment for the team and his practice partners that he trained with day-in and day-out," Fenstermaker said.

Schutter said he and his team are now aiming for the ultimate prize.

"The goal now is to have a national champ," Schutter said. "That's all anyone is going to remember is if you're national champ. There are only going to be 10 national champions, and there's not going to be very many programs that are going to have one. Hopefully we get that done."

Ryan Maus will begin competing for the national championship March 9 in Pueblo, Colo.



Lindsey Gillam/Index

Freshman point guard Allie Norton passes the ball during a game last week. The 'Dogs begin MIAA tournament play today when they face the Emporia State Hornets.

BASKETBALL | Women ride five-game winning streak into MIAA tournament

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ment for the second straight year, the first time this feat has been achieved since 2001-02 and 2002-03, where the 'Dogs lost in the first round both times. Smith said anything can happen in the Municipal Auditorium during sudden death tournament games.

"Right now, our kids believe in themselves and in their teammates," Smith said. "That trust is in the locker room that we've been looking for. It's tremendously important that our returners have been there and experienced it."

With three days of practice ahead of the 'Dogs before they head to Kansas City, Conway said the team needs to continue to focus and play hard, something it's done a better job of during the

win streak.

"We need to continue playing as a team," Conway said. "Everyone is contributing and playing their heart out but there is not a person on this team that can take a play off during tournament time."

The Hornets are averaging 40 rebounds a game, while only allowing their opponents 34. Freshman forward Merissa Quick is averaging more than seven rebounds a game. Smith said that because Emporia is a big team inside, rebounding will be the key for Truman and it's something they will work on during practice leading to Thursday's game. McHenry said a good week of practice should set the Bulldogs up for the game against the Hornets.

"The most important thing we need to do is play as a team and fol-

low our scouting report," McHenry said. "When we do those things, it puts us in a position to win."

Following Saturday's victory, the Bulldogs ended the regular season with 17 wins, the second most in program history. Smith said the coaching staff has worked hard to instill a winning mentality into their players and they finally are starting to see the rewards.

"It speaks wonders of our players, where our program has been and where it is headed," Smith said. "I'm extremely excited about the future of our program."

The Bulldogs take on the Hornets of Emporia State in the quarterfinals of the MIAA tournament at 8:15 Thursday evening in the Municipal Auditorium in Kansas City.

SWIMMING | Womens swim team could qualify as many as seven swimmers to the nationals meet in Mansfield, Texas

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had fewer athletes to pull it off and no diving events to help rack up points, Pretre said.

A normal roster has 18 swimmers, but this year, because of injuries, Pretre said the Bulldogs competed with 13 women.

"When you don't have the numbers to fill [a roster], our expectations were to go down there and kind of take care of the task at hand and not worry about what Henderson State's doing," he said.

On an individual level as well, Pretre said he wanted swimmers to concentrate on their strokes and race strategy more than beating the competition.

That's how freshman Abby Hempen approached her event, and broke a NSISC record for the 200-breast stroke with a time of 2:18.71, beating the previous record of 2:20.62 set by Truman State's Michaela Osborn.

Hempen said she was striving for a personal best time rather than an all-conference record.

"Before conference I didn't know what any of the records were," Hempen said. "At the [preliminaries] I saw that I was close to it. The whole season I've been trying to get under that 2:20 mark, so I knew if I reached that goal, I'd [also] beat the record."

Hempen said she was excited about

her record-breaking race, and satisfied with the overall second-place finish, especially considering the shallow roster.

For the mens side, junior Jerod Simek also reached a personal best. Simek won the 1000-meter freestyle during the first day of the meet with a time of 9:23.26. During day two, Simek won the 500-yard freestyle with a B-cut time of 4:33.17.

The individual titles were his first times winning a conference race, Simek said.

Simek said he was satisfied with the mens overall sixth-place finish especially considering the tough competition from teams that do well at nationals.

"Looking at everyone's times, we had a

very successful conference [meet]," he said.

But now, with the conference championship finished, the swimmers are not thinking about records. They're thinking about the NCAA National Championships March 14-17 in Mansfield, Texas.

Pretre expects to find out Wednesday or Thursday who qualified for the meet. He thinks Truman might take seven swimmers from the womens team and one from the mens team to Texas.

"If you think about seven girls with a team of only 13, that's pretty damn good," he said. "They all worked their tails off for it — even the ones that aren't being considered."

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