

MYERS | Senior catcher is leader both at bat and behind the plate

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catchers have struggled with the relatively simple task of throwing the ball back to the pitcher. Myers can hardly play baseball without it.

"Every once in a while during summer ball, I'd play a little third base or have to fill in somewhere else, and it just doesn't feel like I'm in the game as much as I am as a catcher," Myers said. "I just feel kind of lost without it."

It's more than the constant action though. Myers said he also loves the aspects of being a catcher that often go unnoticed or ignored.

"You've got to be baseball savvy," Myers said. "That's one of the things as a catcher people don't see you doing — it's not like you're blocking the ball. You have to think what you would do in that situation, what your team would do and think about what you can do to stop it. Most of the time there's something you can do to stay a step ahead."

Being a step ahead seems to be a trademark for Myers's game. During a game his freshman year against the University of Central Missouri, the Mules had a runner on third, and Davis thought UCM might try to "squeeze" and bunt the runner safely home. He called for a pitchout, but the Mules didn't go. Myers went to the pitcher and told him that if he heard "squeeze" on the next pitch he should throw up and away, and Myers would make it look like a pitchout. The next play, UCM did just that, and Truman earned the out. Afterward, the Mules's coach approached Davis. The double pitchout was such an unorthodox strategy, he wanted to know if Truman had stolen Central Missouri's signs and knew what play was coming.

"I said, 'No, that's our catcher,'" Davis said.

Myers's ability to think ahead



Jessie Poole/Index

Senior catcher Devon Myers prepares to block a ball during practice on Monday. Myers is 37 hits away from breaking Truman State's all-time hits record and has a 1.000 fielding percentage.

is apparent in other parts of his game as well. Like most Div. II catchers, Myers calls his own game, meaning he selects which pitches the pitcher will throw during an at-bat. Most catchers learn to call a game by following the accepted by-the-book baseball wisdom of what pitch should be thrown given particular situations.

"The person who taught me did it in a different way than most people learn," Myers said. "I'm able to think about what the hitter expects and then call something different."

Calling the pitches requires Myers not only to know the ins and outs of each pitcher's throwing abilities, but also to pay close attention to what pitches a batter is hitting well. The ultimate goal, he said, is for the pitcher to throw something a hitter won't

be expecting.

Eiskina said having Myers behind the plate is a tremendous asset to the Truman pitchers.

"As a pitcher, if you start overthinking things, it can complicate things and mess them up," Eiskina said. "Whenever he's in there, you can trust him. You know that he knows what he's doing when he gives you the pitch, and you don't have to second guess anything. You're just like, 'OK, he said it, I'll throw it' — and most of the time it works."

Myers said he usually relies on scouting reports for a hitter's first at-bat, but after that he calls based on what he sees from the hitter and the pitcher on the mound. He said he has to always keep in mind both the individual pitch he's selecting and set up the at-bat in a way that the pitcher doesn't end up throwing four

or five consecutive pitches of the same kind. Like many aspects of being a catcher, this part of Myers's job isn't visible to most baseball spectators. Regardless, he sees the value in it.

"The little things that you can do with your pitchers and help them work through situations and mental approaches and stuff like that where you've just got to kind of roll with it and understand the game, that's where catchers come in," he said, "And that's what people don't really understand."

To hear Myers talk, one might get the sense he's an invisible pair of hands behind the plate. Yet Eiskina and Davis see him. The coaches who named him to the all-MIAA honorable mention team see him. Devon Myers isn't the invisible man. He's just hard to define.

SOFTBALL | The 'Dogs rely on pitching, offense to win at Maryville

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many games close together, she's expecting them to compete for a top spot in the conference during the latter half of the season.

"Over spring break, we played a lot of games and the travel just wears on you," Brown said. "I want to see us fighting for that No. 2 or No. 3 spot. We should be able to compete with anyone when we play the way we can, so I would like to see us playing at that level."

Senior first baseman Mary Manley said the team is starting to gain some momentum and team confidence is growing, following its recent success.

"Everyone's been working well as a team and doing everything they can to get wins," Manley said.

The team faces a difficult weekend ahead, having two games scheduled against the top two teams in the conference. On Friday, the 'Dogs travel to Emporia, Kan. to face off against Emporia State University, which is ranked second in the conference with a 12-6 overall record and a 4-0 conference record. Following that game, the team will travel back across the state border to face Missouri Western State University, a team ranked first in the conference with a 19-4 overall record and a 4-0 conference record.

Brown said the team is preparing for its tough weekend by focusing on the offensive side of the ball.

"[Both teams] have decent pitching, and I think we know the pitches that the opposing pitchers will throw," Brown said. "[We] need to bring our bats, ready to go and ready to hit. Being ready to compete mentally in the batter's box is something that I think is going to be important for us to have success."



File Photo/Index

Senior wide receiver Anthony Brown catches a ball at practice early last football season. Brown had six touchdowns last season.

FOOTBALL | Senior wide receiver Anthony Brown never planned to pursue a football career after college

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scouts at the event.

Head football coach Gregg Nesbitt said he's taken a hands-off approach to the process, but thinks Brown has the athletic ability to continue playing.

"Athletically, he has the skill set to perhaps continue his career in terms of running, jumping and acceleration," Nesbitt said. "He certainly is arguably one of the better athletes in the MIAA. ... He really blossomed this year."

Nesbitt said Brown's contribution to the team was more than just his football ability, it was his leadership too. He said he is most

proud of the way he stepped into a leadership role on the team, and was a key role model for younger players.

During his junior season, Brown finished with 16 catches for 252 yards and a touchdown. His senior season, he led the team with 861 yards and six touchdowns.

Brown said with all of his success after the season in the recruiting world, his Bulldog teammates have been there supporting him, but with a catch.

"I'm bashful and I don't really like to talk about it a lot," he said. "But I get a lot of [teammates] telling me, 'Hey, when you sign that contract, don't forget about me.'"

TRACK | Zweifel takes third in long jump and fourth in triple jump, breaks school record at nationals while Atwood finishes 12th

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jump than in the triple jump, I would have laughed at you," Zweifel said. "It's kind of surreal. I never really considered my long jump abilities to be on the same plane as my triple jump abilities."

Zweifel barely made the long jump finals at the national meet, head coach John Cochrane said. She filled the last spot out of nine athletes during the finals, and was last before her final long jump of the day.

"She finally got on the board and jumped [19-06.00] and got third," Cochrane said. We have kind of a saying in here with field events that it only takes one. It was good she hung in there and kept battling real well."

Zweifel credited her focus for her long jump performance, which broke her own school record set in the conference meet Feb. 25.

"I was like, 'OK, I have to jump four more inches,'" Zweifel said. "That was the only thing going through my mind. 'I have to do this. It's my last shot.' So then I did."

Although Zweifel said she was disappointed to not achieve a personal best in the triple jump, Cochrane said her performance was something to be proud of.

"In the triple jump we were jumping far, we just weren't getting the measure [because of fouls]," Cochrane said. "There's nothing that says you're going to finish where you're ranked. I really have no complaint about her finishing fourth."

Atwood tied for 12th at the meet with a throw of 53-05.75 in the shot put on his first throw of the day. The toss was short of his 56-10.25 throw at the conference meet, which was his career's personal best.

"Derek didn't throw as well as he'd thrown in the conference meet, which when it comes down to it, is what you need," Cochrane said.

"He just didn't have his best throws. You can't really say a whole lot more than that."

Cochrane said he did not consider Atwood's performance to be a failure, given the path the redshirt senior took to get back to the national meet following his sophomore year.

"It was good [to be back]," Atwood said. "I've never been to indoor, so it was a whole different thing."

Throwing coach Leslie Hardesty said the national meet competition was by far the toughest Atwood has faced all year.

"Most of [the meets] we've gone to he's been ranked one, two or sometimes three," Hardesty said. "A meet like this he went in ranked 11th."

Hardesty said part of Atwood's struggle at the national meet might have been because of the training schedule the two of them devised.

"We train to peak at conference, which is exactly what he did," Hardesty said. "So the turnaround is kind of hard after such a big meet to try and get your training and your lifting to work to peak a second time."

Despite Atwood's national meet results, Hardesty said she views the senior's season as a success after he redshirted last year in an attempt to reach the national meet again this year.

"He had some goals set for himself coming into this season and I think for the most part he was able to reach the majority of his goals," Hardesty said.

Atwood said he enjoyed being at the national meet and the experience would help to motivate him to succeed during the outdoor season.

With the indoor season under their belts, the Truman men and women will compete in their first outdoor meet March 23 at the Washington University (St. Louis) Mini-Meet.

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