

Moser | Freshman sets school record and leads conference in digs

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said she faced a lot of concerns early on as she initially began her career as a setter for the Lancers.

"I was told I wasn't strong enough to be a setter," Abby said. "Then, I realized it wasn't for me, so I told my coaches I was going to play back row."

Throughout the next four years, Abby did just that, establishing herself as a premiere defender while making an appearance on the Under Armour High School All-American watch list and receiving the Prep Volleyball Defensive Dandies Award in 2008 and 2009 for her back row skills. For her high school career, she posted a 95 percent serve-receive and averaged more than 5 digs a set.

On her mother's club team, Abby earned a 10th-place finish in the 17-Open Division Nationals in 2010 as a defender with the Thunder. Even with those accomplishments, Abby said it wasn't enough.

She said she heard about Truman during her sophomore year in high school and contacted Truman right away. She said junior Heather Hargadine, a Truman teammate and long-time friend, was instrumental in recruiting her to Truman.

"I saw this program and I knew it was the right place for me," Abby said.

Head coach Ben Briney met Moser at a regional qualifier in Minneapolis. Briney said he knew right away the impact Moser could have on his team because of her intangible skills. He said Abby was a natural defender, someone who knew where the ball was going to be and who knew the perfect touch to put on the ball. It was Abby's cool-headed temperament on the court and determination to succeed that won Briney over.

"I knew from the moment we recruited her that she would have success here," Briney said. "And with her being the only libero, it wasn't a matter of I hope she does. She had to. We brought her here to be successful."

Before she could achieve success, Abby was hit with another obstacle — her mechanics. She struggled with serve-receive during the preseason at Truman. Abby said she always was taught to not move when she passed and to keep the volleyball in line with her body. Briney told her she needed to learn not to center her body but to take it off of her left hip.

"I kept getting harped on for taking the ball too close to my body," Moser said. "But Ben never gave up on me and I never gave up on trying to improve."

Abby's teammate, freshman setter Meghan Zimmerman, said Abby worked hard before and after every practice this season to improve her form. Abby said the mechanical change was difficult to overcome because she had to break down everything she knew to improve. Struggling to adapt her game to the college level, she said she didn't think she would find any success with the Bulldogs. Abby sought to prove someone wrong yet again. This time, it was herself.

Success came in the form of 189 digs through her first three games and three straight MIAA Specialist of the Week Awards to start her career at Truman State — a feat no other Bulldog in the history of the program has accomplished. Soon after the shock of success wore off, Abby was back to practicing hard and continuing to improve her mechanics. Zimmerman said a big part of Abby's success is her ability to prepare.

"She has a winning attitude and she wants to win now," Zim-

merman said. "Yet she does it in a way where she has fun at the same time. She has made a great impact this year and will be better in years to come because of that attitude."

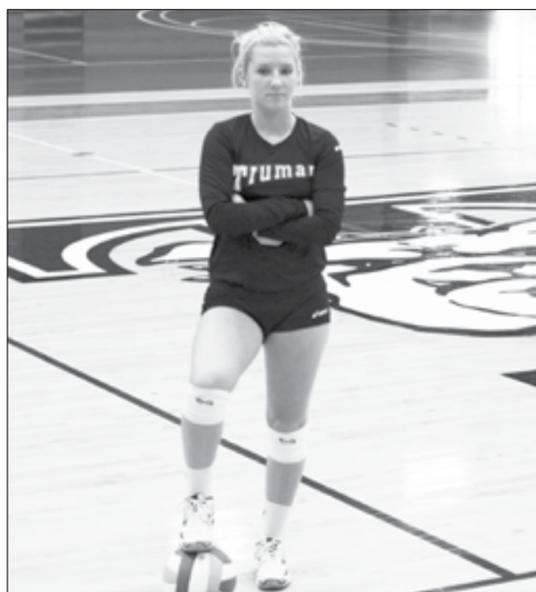
Abby said winning the back-to-back-to-back awards motivated her to continue working hard. She credits Briney with her success as well. She said Briney always has had faith in her and knows how to help her improve, whether she has a good or bad day. Briney said Abby's work ethic is what is so wonderful about her.

"What I love about Abby is that when she wins all of these awards she says 'OK Coach, that's neat, but I want to win,'" Briney said. "And that's an awesome thing. She has that drive in her and she wants to get better every day."

Soon after earning MIAA Specialist honors, Moser faced another setback off the court. She began feeling discomfort in her right arm and what felt a rock-like object below her skin on her forearm during late August. A trip to the hospital with her mother in early September revealed more than just a bump or a bruise. Doctors diagnosed her with Staph infection, a disease that can be fatal in some cases. She had the infected cells removed, but doctors encouraged her to take a secondary measure to protect her from potential disease.

"They told me there was a chance the infection could be life-threatening and that they needed to cut my wrists too," Abby said. "I told them I didn't want any more cuts."

Instead, she continued to play college volleyball. During her first game back, Moser set her career high of 37 digs in a single match against Minnesota-Mankato. She said it has been



Ryan Cersten/Index
Freshman libero Abby Moser finished the season averaging 5.34 digs a set. She also had a total of 699 digs.

her highlight of the year because she learned how to persevere on her own.

"Growing up, I learned to always push myself from my mom," she said. "Now that she is gone, it is my job to carry that over and to challenge myself to work harder. That game was special because it really proved that my hard work was paying off."

From that moment in the season, Abby went on to record 699 digs — a single-season record — and the Bulldogs finished their season 20-14, 9-9 in the Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association. Abby ranked second in the MIAA with 5.34 average digs a set and 377 digs in conference play. Her 699 digs is the highest of any player in the MIAA. Briney said the sky is the limit next season with Abby in the back row. Briney ranks Abby's season among the top of those whom he has

coached defensively and said he has full confidence that she could become the standard for future Truman liberos.

"The question for next season is how much more does she have in her tank, and how hard can she push herself?" Briney said. "That's what is so exciting about Abby, there is still more to come." For Abby, the keys to success in the past and for next season are in her perseverance and preparation. A superstitious person, Abby said she owned a "lucky" pair of underwear in high school that she wore throughout her career. Now, she wears a rubber band around her right shoe. To prepare, Abby visualizes a lot, which helps her to focus on the task at hand.

"I close my eyes and envision myself passing the perfect ball or digging a ball 20 feet away," Moser said. "I believe that if you set it in your mind, you can do it."

FOOTBALL | Men outrush Southwest Baptist by 81 yards in win

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bangs it."

Senior receiver Andy Mundwiller said the weather was windy and cold Saturday in Bolivar.

"You understand that it is going to be harder to throw with all that wind," Mundwiller said. "You've got to be ready to play hard nosed football in weather like that."

Despite the weather, Truman had three touchdowns Saturday compared to SBU's one. Neither team scored during the first quarter, but the Bulldogs had their two offensive touchdowns

during a second quarter in which the 'Dogs scored 17 points.

Senior running back Harnish Ayora's first ever receiving touchdown of his career came during his final game as a Bulldog when he and senior quarterback J.B. Clark connected for 50 yards ending a six play, 84-yard Truman drive.

Senior wide receiver Anthony Brown caught a 22-yard pass for the 'Dogs' second score of the game. Brown had five catches for 35 yards and was second on the team behind sophomore wide receiver Dallas Grier, who had 61

receiving yards on the day.

The Bulldogs' third touchdown came on defense when sophomore defensive end Nic Abbate forced a fumble and returned it for a touchdown.

Nesbitt said that next year he hopes to see his team start building on the foundation that has been built during his first two years with the program.

"Nobody is pleased with where we're at even in the take over or change over for the first two years," Nesbitt said. "Even in the same breath, nobody is overly discouraged or pessimistic."

MIAA | Mens Soccer reinstated in MIAA

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there will be a lot of new rivalries," he said. "It's a different makeup of teams, but it's a lot of talent."

Historically, Truman is 23-10 overall against its new conference opponents, though the 'Dogs have not played against Southern Nazarene and Harding.

Sophomore forward Dylan Carter said the new conference has a lot of strength.

"I think it's going to be good competition," he said. "It's going to be just what we expect to have to go up against to make the tournament and keep moving on."

Starting next fall season, Wolmering said the Bulldogs will have a 10-game conference schedule. Carter said the new conference schedule will be a lot easier on the team.

"It will be nice not having to travel nine or 10 hours and being gone for three days of school," Carter said. "It'll be much easier to not miss a bunch of class and get homework done."

SCHLUETER | An MIAA postseason volleyball tournament would create end-of-season excitement and drama

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With all due respect to the MIAA volleyball higher-ups, I don't think that's good enough. Yes, it would be a lot of games on the schedule. A lot of them would be against familiar teams, and there is an old adage in sports that it's hard to beat a good team three times. But if you're claiming you're the best team in the region, shouldn't you embrace challenging opponents? It's not like quality in competition decreases the deeper you go in the postseason, and the MIAA is such a talented volleyball conference that a tournament would be a great warmup for later rounds.

Further, the MIAA clearly believes in conference

tournaments. Out of the 15 sports the conference offers, only two of them don't have postseason tournaments. Indoor and outdoor track have separate conference meets, meaning the true number of conference championships is 14, and next year there will be 15 tournaments with the addition of mens soccer.

Volleyball would seem to be a much more logical candidate for a tournament than several other MIAA sports that actually have one. Mens tennis has a three-day tournament despite the fact there are only five schools currently in the MIAA with tennis programs — to be fair, there will be seven next year.

On the flip side, 10 schools in the MIAA currently have volleyball programs. Next year,

that number will be 13. Many of those schools, including Truman, have passionate fan bases that would travel to a conference tournament, and I have to believe that no matter where this tournament was, fans would come out of the woodwork to watch. Volleyball is a fantastic spectator sport, and the prospect of a conference tournament, with the drama of teams knowing their season was on the line, would be great entertainment.

Astute readers might levy a charge of opportunism against me, that I'm only arguing for a volleyball tournament because Truman volleyball didn't make the postseason. They would be partly right. After all, Truman won the last incarnation of the MIAA tournament every year it was held. But the 'Dogs season serves as a great example of

why a volleyball conference tournament would be a good thing. Truman had an inconsistent year, often playing brilliantly at home, but struggling on the road. With a conference tournament, the team would have had one last chance to increase its regional ranking. Instead, Truman finished 10th in the last regional poll and that was that, period, full stop.

Now, a conference tournament wouldn't have guaranteed the 'Dogs a bid to the regional round, but can you imagine how hard such a team would fight with its season on the line? This year, both Emporia State and Truman would have needed impressive showings in the conference tournament to make the regional round. With both Washburn and Central Missouri in the top 10 nationally, a win against one or both of these

programs could have been the impetus that launched Truman into the regional tournament. From a fan's point of view, that's a great scenario and likely would make for great matches as teams struggled to earn the MIAA's automatic qualifying bid to the NCAA tournament.

Additionally, this year Central Missouri edged Washburn for the conference title and the automatic bid by way of the second tiebreaker after the teams split their season series. That seems a rather anticlimactic way to decide the most important aspect of a season. Teams should earn their championships and NCAA tournament berths, and in the process give fans an entertaining spectacle. With numerous talented teams in the conference, the MIAA needs to adopt a new model toward volleyball: Let them play.

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