

Bulldog cross country faces team challenges

BY GARRETT FRITCH
Staff Reporter

Collegiate athletic programs rarely transition from one year to the next without losing top athletes. But Truman State's womens cross country team understands they are working with that uncommon advantage this upcoming season.

Every scoring runner from last year's third-place MIAA and fourth-place regional finishes is returning for the 'Dogs during 2012. The team will be lead again by the Grauel twins, seniors Cindy and Karen. The sisters finished 19th and 11th at the regional meet during 2011. Karen won the MIAA championship as a sophomore during 2010 and also finished fourth, a team high, during 2011. The same year, three other Bulldogs also became all-conference runners at the MIAA meet.

"[My sister and I] have been trying to push each other hard this summer," Cindy said. "If we have easy days we'll go easy, but in our ab workouts and our exercises, we've been trying to push each other really hard because we know what we've got coming for us in the fall."

Head coach John Cochrane said the fifth runner for the women has been the weakness for the 'Dogs, during past seasons. During the 2011 regional meet, the Bulldogs were in second place with 81 points through the first four runners. However, they were unable to maintain the pace as Pittsburg State University's fifth runner finished 39th, advancing the Gorillas to the national meet.

The Bulldogs are looking to off-season work and incoming runners as ways to strengthen the fifth runner spot. Incoming runners include sophomore Emma Burditt, a transfer student from Missouri State University, as well as four freshmen.

"I don't know what to expect from the incoming runners," head coach John Cochrane said. "If we had been running five and scoring four, we would have won the conference and been in the national meet. That's what makes cross country so interesting. Everyone is looking for a fifth runner."

While the women are looking for just one runner, the mens cross country team is finding itself in the opposite situation as they head into 2012.

The men enter the new season with only one returning senior and must replace seventh and 11th place regional performers alumni Joey Walls and Michael Dial. With the knowledge that the



Rose Sparks/Index
The Grauel twins, seniors Cindy, left, and Karen, right, running Wednesday Aug. 15 on campus. The pair have been pushing each other during training to prepare for this fall's season. They lead the team to a fourth-place finish at regionals.

team will be entering a rebuilding period, the preseason polls picked the Bulldogs to finish last in the conference this year. This is nothing new for the team, said mens head coach Tim Schwegler.

"Even the year we went to regionals, two years ago, we were the second best team in the conference, and they ranked us really low," Schwegler said. "Preseason polls, especially in cross country, don't mean a whole lot."

Aside from replacing some of their best athletes, the men also must face

the fact that they only have two new runners. Schwegler said the upcoming season will be about building on this year's team and creating success for the future of Bulldog cross country. Success will come from everyone on the team being committed to improvement all year, he said.

The Bulldogs will have their first opportunity to see how well they compete together when they begin their season with the Les Duke Invitational September 8th at Grinnell College.

Womens golf sets goals

Coach Lessieg and his golfers aim for more consistency throughout this season

BY MEREDITH KUSKY
Staff Reporter

The 2012 fall womens golf season brings new players and new goals to the team lead by head coach Sam Lessieg.

Last year the Bulldogs averaged 343.3 through 22 rounds of golf. Lessieg said his goal for this year is to get the scoring average down in the 320s in order to give the 'Dogs a shot at making postseason play.

The team hopes to see growth from returning players, including seniors Jessica Tomash, who averaged 87.1 during 2011, and Kathryn Hogan, whose average was 90.8.

"I was able to shoot scores last year that I knew I was capable of," Tomash said. "This year, I hope to be able to put up these scores more consistently and be a solid contender for the titles at our upcoming tournaments."

Two freshmen, Kim Barmettler and Mackenzie McDermott will be familiarizing themselves with Truman State's greens and joining the eight returners to womens golf.

Last season the team hit the ball well some days but struggled with consistency. Lessieg said he would like his team to make hitting a focal point, leading to consistent scores.

"You can putt poorly, but if you can hit the ball solid all of the time, your team is going to be reasonable," he said. "That's not what you want [your team] to be, but your scoring is going to be all right."

The Bulldogs wrapped up the 2011-2012 season having placed in the top-five in four different events. The women placed fifth last April during the final day of the MIAA championships at Paradise Pointe Golf Club in Smithville, Mo.

Lessieg said he wants his team to keep the mental focus they had on each course last year.

"It's so easy [to lose focus] when you're out there playing a round, and it takes five to five and a half hours because [courses at] tournaments are full and it just moves slow," he said. "You just really have to stay focused. Most of them did it real well last year."

The Bulldogs will kick off fall play at the Mount Mercy Fall Invitational hosted by Mount Mercy University. They will not see their own course for tournament play until mid-October when they host the Bulldog Fall Classic.

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