

'DOGS | The Bulldogs bounce back after two straight losses defeating Southwest Baptist 78-69

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-fense," Smith said.

Junior forward Bianca Szafarowicz said she doesn't personally know anyone affected by cancer, but she said many of her teammates know individuals who are fighting or have fought the disease and she said she feels it is important to increase awareness for the Kirksville community.

Truman trailed by as many as 10 points during the first half before the best three-point shooting team in Div. II caught fire. The Bulldogs connected on three-pointers from senior guard Becca McHenry, sophomore guard Allie Norton, and Gloor to give the Bulldogs the lead, and the team drained seven of nine attempts from deep during the first half to put the Bulldogs ahead at the half.

Norton said the Bulldogs strong shooting during the first half was important for the team because they quickly overcame a large lead and were able to put pressure back on the Bearcats heading into halftime. After the intermission, Gloor hit three of her four three-pointers for the night and gave the Bulldogs the lead for good as the team connected on 10 of 15 shots from beyond the arc to edge the Bearcats by nine.

Smith said a key to the game was the team's ball distribution. The Bulldogs had 19 assists and featured three players who reached double figures, meaning his offense was firing at all cylinders after the initial rough start. He said the win was important because it exposed some weaknesses the Bulldogs can improve upon before the MIAA Tournament.

"This win was big for us because we got the bad taste out of our mouths from two straight losses," Smith said. "Tonight we did a lot of things well, especially shooting the ball, but we also exposed some areas we can improve on."

Smith said the area the Bulldogs need to improve upon the most is their defensive communication, which he said was lacking during the first half of the game against the Bearcats.



Calli Lowry/Index

The Truman women's basketball team comes in for a timeout during Thursday night's game against Southwest Baptist University. The women went on to defeat the Bearcats 79-68 during "Think Pink Night" in Pershing Arena, led by junior Nicole Gloor's 20 points.

The Bulldogs dominated offensively, shooting 71 percent for the evening from beyond the arch, but Smith said the team's defense was the key to victory during the game. He said the 'Dogs dealt with some major communication errors during the first half offensively, but they were able to fight back thanks to a defense that scored 24 points from turnovers on the evening.

For the game, Gloor led all

scorers with a career-high 20 points and McHenry and Norton followed with 14 apiece for the Bulldogs. Senior Jennifer Conway reached a career milestone as well — midway through the first half — as she grabbed her 500th career rebound, making her the 13th member of the Bulldogs' 500 rebound club.

Tonight, the Bulldogs will host their final home game of the season at Pershing Arena for senior night before they begin a three

game road trip to end the season.

Smith said the Bulldogs will be working hard to tune up for the last stretch before the conference tournament. Szafarowicz said the team needs to continue to work on their on-court awareness and communication before the MIAA tournament and to focus on rebounding the basketball with more confidence. The first round of the MIAA Tournament begins March 5 at Pershing Arena.

SOFTBALL | The women go a perfect 6-0 at Alabama tournament

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The 'Dogs competed against Tiffin (Ohio) and No. 15 Indianapolis Greyhounds for their final day of play. Bollman said these were the two toughest games of the weekend.

The Tiffin game featured another comeback as the Dragons led by four runs at the end of the second inning. Things changed, however, during the fifth inning, beginning with a bunt from junior Danielle Lewellyn and two errors from the Dragons, allowing Lewellyn and sophomore Ally McReynolds to score runs. Grossman hit an RBI with Bollman on base to tie the game at five. With efforts from freshman pitcher Kindra Henze, who struck out eight players and allowed one run during 5.2 innings of play, the Bulldogs were able to focus on offense and score two runs during the last inning to take the contest 9-6.

For their final game, the Bulldogs faced Indianapolis. They focused on the things in the team's control rather than on the Greyhound's ranking, head coach Erin Brown said.

"It was a pitching war," Bollman said.

Nobody scored until the fifth inning when sophomore Cate Simon supplied a hit, giving the Bulldogs two runs and the lead. The pitchers' duel continued, leaving Washburn on top. Giving up one run during the seventh inning, the 'Dogs defeated Indianapolis 2-1.

"In a game like that the margin of error becomes a lot smaller," head coach Erin Brown said.

Truman ended their first tournament with a .329 hitting average and a 3.24 ERA for the pitchers, with a total of four errors in the six games.

The Bulldogs continue their season next weekend with a tournament in Minnesota. They hope to continue their success by strengthening the few weaknesses they had this weekend, such as pitch selection, Kusky said.

"The true test is going to be focusing on each game," Brown said.

BASEBALL | Men open up the 2013 season winning one of three

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weekend.

One of those players who gave the pitching staff run support this weekend was junior Corban Williams. During the three games, Williams had 13 plate appearances, hit for .385 with five hits and six RBI's and only struck out once after coming back from being injured all last season. Utilizing the two straight hit-by-pitches in front of him, loading the bases during Sunday's second game before Williams smacked a double down the left field line clearing the bases and contributing to a six run fourth inning for the Bulldogs.

Williams said there's one specific lesson to be learned from the weekend's series against the Ichabods.

"Stick to the game plan," Williams said. "The coach has implemented a solid offensive approach and I feel that if we go out there and compete and stick to the game plan with the things that they taught us, we are going to be a tough team to beat offensively."

The Bulldogs were going to host the Northeastern State Riverhawks to a three game series this weekend. However, due to the incoming snowstorm, the games have been moved to Tahlequah, Okla.

HOMETOWN | Students who attended Kirksville High School become Truman State athletes

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Luckily for Rentschler, Schmitz had made the same transition a year earlier, to which Rentschler said he owes a lot of his early progression as a wrestler.

Schmitz said he's been around Kirksville athletics his entire life. A three-sport athlete in high school, he said he was best at wrestling, a sport in which he won two state championships during his high school career. So when head wrestling coach David Schutter approached him with a scholarship offer at a time when he hadn't been garnering much interest from schools, he took it.

Just like Rentschler, Schmitz said a big factor in his decision was the athletic atmosphere surrounding the Kirksville community.

"We just had an amazing fan support [at KHS]," Schmitz said. "I knew that if I go to Truman, I'm still going to have my family and friends and other people around the community that will still come and watch."

Schmitz and Rentschler have seen a lot of success as Bulldogs on the mat. Schmitz is 25-8 this season and recently finished third in the MIAA Championships while Rentschler has amassed a 18-13 record during his second season of competition.

While wrestling is the only sport on campus to have two hometown athletes on its roster, both the football team and the softball team have pulled from the Kirksville crop during the search for impactful athletes.

Jacob Lamp, who has been the backup punter behind senior all-MIAA punter Eric Phillips, will see the field regularly for the first time during his career next season, head coach Gregg Nesbitt said, replacing the graduating Phillips.

Lamp's father works for the University, which he said was a big factor in determining where he wanted to play football. While he received offers from a handful of Div. III schools and was asked to walk on to a few Div. I schools, he said growing up with Truman football and being around the program made the decision easy.

"I've been around Truman football for a long time," Lamp said. "I figured it'd be a good idea to stay in town and continue to be a part of the Truman football organization."

He said the transition from high school football to college was difficult because of the notable differences in athletic caliber between the high school and college athletes. But Lamp said being from Kirksville and being familiar with Truman football helped him get over that difference quickly.

"[The transition] was rough at first, just because ... the difference between the athletes that you see whenever you're used to playing high school teams," Lamp said. "Being from a town where you see a lot of college football, I've been to many games and you're used to seeing that talent and skill level on a weekly basis."

Right across the road from Stokes Stadium is the softball field, where outfielder

Danielle Lewellen showcases her talents for the 6-0 Bulldog softball team.

Lewellen originally didn't decide to go to Truman out of high school, opting instead to play softball for the Central College Dutch in Pella, Iowa. After a semester away from home, she said she ultimately decided Central wasn't a good fit, so she returned to her hometown to suit up for the Bulldogs.

"I decided to go [to Truman] just because it's home," Lewellen said. "I wanted a place to play softball and I knew [head coach Erin Brown] was looking at me in high school."

She was no stranger to success in Kirksville, as her high school team competed at the state tournament three of the four seasons she played for the Tigers.

Lewellen said a major draw of playing at Truman was the town's knowledge about its hometown athletes.

"You have so many people supporting you, knowing you can do it and cheering you on," Lewellen said.

Since transferring to Truman, Lewellen has seen time on the field as a pinch runner and left fielder. This past weekend at the Alabama-Huntsville Tournament, she hit .333 and led the team with five stolen bases.

While the four Bulldogs now wear purple and white, they all share a special bond that goes beyond the field and the mat.

Unlike most students, Kirksville is more than just a place of higher education and college experiences for them — it's home.

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