



Men lose spring opener

Calli Lowry/Index

Senior Jared Hoffman takes a swing during practice at the Truman tennis courts. The 'Dogs fell 8-1 to Grinnell College Saturday before losing 9-0 to Graceland University.

Men open spring season with a pair of losses to Grinnell College and Graceland University

BY SAM SHERMAN, Sports Editor

The Bulldog men's tennis team kicked off its spring campaign with a series of matches at the Grinnell College Invitational in Grinnell, Iowa this weekend.

The team, due to winter weather in Kirksville, had been practicing during the offseason in Pershing Arena — a fact junior Adam King said contributed to the Bulldogs' 8-1 loss Saturday to Grinnell College and their 9-0 loss to Graceland University Sunday.

"We were worried about the courts because they were a lot slower," King said. "We figured we were pretty much prepared for it. We'd been hitting a little more than the last couple of years and doing more workouts, we thought we were prepared."

The 'Dogs entered their first competition since October having just completed a new offseason program with the direction of first-year head coach Dan Blodgett. Sophomore Griffin Smith said the program the team followed was entirely different from what they were used to with former head coach Pete Kendall.

"[Blodgett] changed our conditioning program, he had us doing Insanity three times a week as opposed to just running laps," Smith said. "I feel like I'm definitely in better shape than I was going into last spring season."

However, with the snow and cold that accompanies Kirksville winters, the team was relegated to the hard and fast surface of the Pershing Arena gym

floor for hitting practice for the whole offseason.

King said the team expected the transition from the gym to the court to be difficult, a notion reinforced by the difference in game length once the Bulldogs arrived in Grinnell.

"The courts still kind of got us, even though we knew what we were going into," King said. "The matches take longer and each point just lasts forever. ... Playing a match where you're moving your feet constantly for three hours, that makes it a lot more difficult."

Junior Joe Murphy-Baum picked up the lone win for the 'Dogs during the weekend against Grinnell, winning 7-5, 6-3 against Grinnell freshman Tracy Johnson. Murphy-Baum and King narrowly lost their doubles match the same day, losing 8-6.

On Saturday, the doubles team of juniors Mike Merchant and Kirk Schlueter dropped a close decision to Graceland, losing 9-8, while the 'Dogs lost all singles matches of the day in straight sets Saturday.

Sophomore Griffin Smith said the court transition made other facets of the matches more difficult than usual.

"We just couldn't really maintain the rallies, we couldn't be as consistent as we'd like to be," Smith said.

Despite difficulties on the court, King said there were a lot of positives taken from the team's trip to Grinnell.

"We all played pretty well," King said. "That's kind of what we're taking away



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Junior Mike Merchant takes practice swings while warming up. The Bulldogs lost their first two matches of the season in Grinnell, Iowa this weekend.

from this is that we are much more prepared for the season as a whole than the last couple years."

The Grinnell College Invitational served as the starting point for the Bulldogs' spring season, which ended with the Bulldogs finishing 2-9 and losing all but one conference match.

This season, Smith said the team should be more successful because the players are in better shape than in years past, due not only due to Blodgett's regimen, but also to the work ethic of some players on the team. Smith said the Bulldogs decided to begin weightlifting regularly.

Smith said the intense offseason workouts, combined with the gradua-

tion of only one player from last season's team, spell success for the experienced Bulldog squad.

"I think we have a chance to do better than we did last year," Smith said. "We only lost one guy in our singles lineup, he was our No. 1, but still, that's pretty nice to only lose one guy."

The Bulldogs won't see competition for a month and their next matchup will be their first conference match of the season, when they face off against the Southwest Baptist University Bearcats March 9 in Bolivar, Mo.

The team's first home match of the season will be March 19, when they face the Lindenwood University Lions.

Mark your calendar

Women's Basketball

5:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 7
Pittsburg, Kan.

The 19th ranked Bulldogs travel to take on the Pittsburg Gorillas.

Men's Basketball

7:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 7
Pittsburg, Kan.

The men look to bounce back against the Gorillas after two straight losses.

Swimming

Feb. 7-10
Rochester, Minn.

The men and women travel north to swim in the NISC conference tournament.

Women's Basketball

1:30 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 9
Tahlequah, Okla.

The 19th ranked Bulldogs take their talents to face MIAA newcomers Northeastern State.

Men's Basketball

3:30 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 9
Tahlequah, Okla.

The Bulldogs play a weekend matchup against the Northeastern State Riverhawks.

Men's Track & Field

11:30 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 9
Monmouth, Ill.

The men and women's track teams compete in the Fighting Scot Invitational.

Wrestling

10 a.m., Sunday, Feb. 10
Edmond, Okla.

The wrestlers host their last dual meet of the season against Division I Southern Illinois-Edwardsville.

Intramurals

The last day to sign up for Ping Pong singles is Feb. 20 in the Student Recreation Center.

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