

'Dogs split games at home

BY SAM SHERMAN, Truman Media Network, Sports Director

Men drop third straight game

Following the men's basketball team's 60-65 loss Saturday to Emporia State University (6-7, 1-4 MIAA), the Bulldogs (5-9, 2-4 MIAA) extended their losing streak to three games as they continue their conference schedule.

Head coach Matt Woodley said the team is on the cusp of success, but has had trouble putting it all together and integrating the younger players into the system effectively to allow constant progression. The team's habit of losing close games has continued through the holiday break, and the most recent loss to the Hornets marks the 17th of Woodley's career 29 losses by five points or less.

"We're not perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but we're close," Woodley said. "It's not like this thing is 25 points, getting beat every single night. So there's some positives to be taken out of this, minus the wins or losses."

The team's leading scorer, junior forward Mike Carlson, who finished the game with 16 points and four assists, along with seven rebounds, paced the Bulldog offense. Sophomore point guard Seth Jackson, who finished with three points and five rebounds, said to come out of a skid like the one currently plaguing the Bulldogs requires the team to be able to forget.

"In college basketball, you definitely have to have a short memory," Jackson said. "You're about to play in a couple days so you're going to refocus. That's what we're doing, we're definitely disappointed by the recent losses but we know that we can't hang our heads low for too long because we have some tough games coming up."

The Bulldogs' game against the Hornets marks the fourth conference game in a row for the 'Dogs as they get into the meat of their conference schedule.

Jackson said practices have intensified since the start of MIAA play, and only makes the team focus harder as they get closer to their goal of making the conference tournament.

"Last year, we were one game away from making it to the conference tournament," Jackson said. "We know how important every single game is, so that definitely puts a little added pressure onto it but I hope that added pressure will lead us to play a little harder and pick up some wins."

Truman currently is ranked eighth in the conference in scoring, averaging 72.5 points a game. Defensively, the 'Dogs rank 10th in the MIAA, allowing 68.7 points a game.

Woodley said the ultimate goal of the season is to make the conference tournament, but also to place an ultimate importance on practice as the season progresses.

"To me, really, how you practice is how you play the game," Woodley said. "I'm not a tangible goal person, I just think we need to try and get better everyday. When that happens, that's when the wins and the losses and those things take care of themselves."

The Bulldogs' next matchup is at 3 p.m. Saturday as they look to square off against the University of Central Missouri Mules (10-3, 4-1 MIAA). Central Missouri currently is tied for first in the conference with Northwest Missouri State University. Despite the tough matchup, Woodley said his team hasn't had trouble competing in the MIAA this season, and he doesn't expect this game to be any different.

"With the exception of the Missouri Southern game, we've had possessions to win every single game," Woodley said. "It's a good league, at any given time anybody can beat anybody. ... There's not a game on the schedule that we don't feel we can win, unlike a year ago where we had to play perfect just to be in some games."

Women avenge tournament loss

Redemption was on the line in the women's basketball team's 78-58 win Saturday as they faced the Emporia State University Hornets (7-6, 2-3 MIAA) to start the season 12-2 for only the second time in Truman State history.

Last year, the Bulldogs' (12-2, 5-1 MIAA) season was cut short during the first round of the MIAA tournament by the Hornets due to a last second three-pointer to make the final score 64-63. Because of the heartbreaking loss last season, senior guard Becka McHenry said retribution was on the team's mind in the locker room before the game.

"We expected a fight, definitely," McHenry said. "We knew it was a big game, and it was especially important to us returners. ... Everyone was really excited for the game, and we expected a tough one."

The win brought the team's winning streak to five games and its home winning streak to 10 games — a new school record. Head coach Michael Smith said the team's success this season is due to the experience the Bulldogs have on the court. The senior class of McHenry, guard Megan Sharpe and forward Jennifer Conway was Smith's first recruiting class at Truman, and he said their embracing of the philosophy he put into place has elevated the Bulldogs to another level.

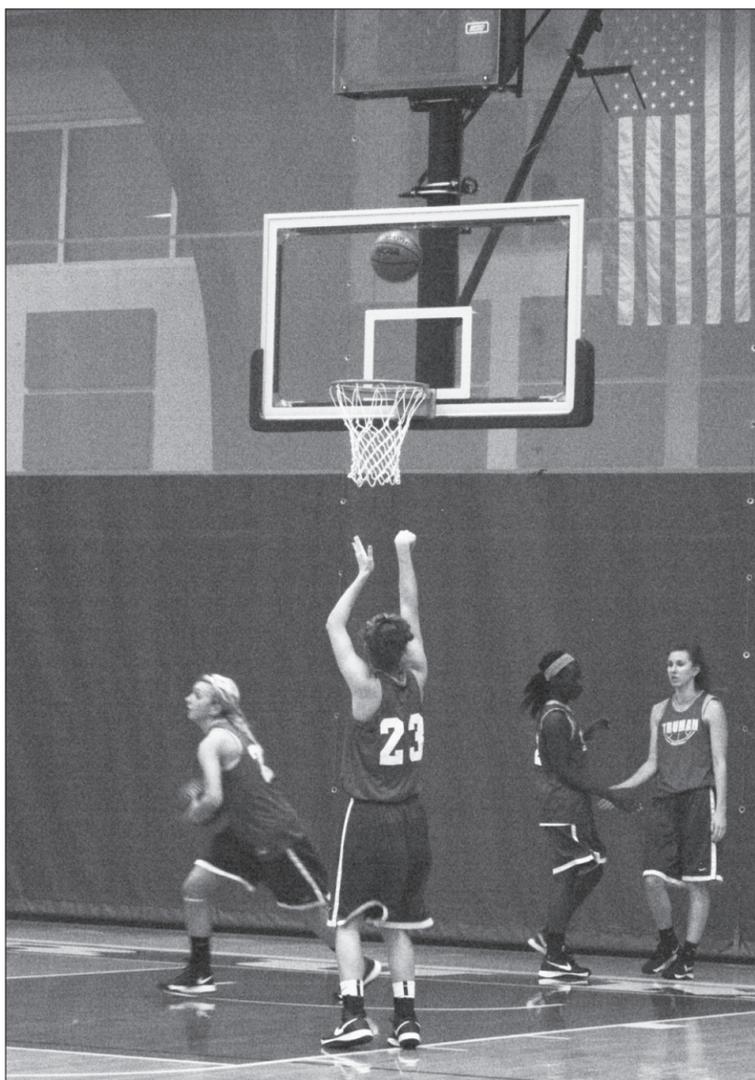
"They bought into the system, they bought into what we've told them, they believe in our system," Smith said. "We have great balance on this team, I mean we don't have three of the same type players. Everybody brings their own identity to our program, and that's what good teams have."

The win against Emporia State is just the most recent of a string of successes since the holiday break. The Bulldogs' record-breaking three-point effort against Mount Mercy College among others propelled the team to the top of the national statistical rankings. Truman State is currently the best shooting team in the country, averaging a nation-best .489 field goal percentage and a nation-best .458 three-point field goal percentage.

While the Bulldogs only earned one vote to be in the top-25 in the latest national poll, McHenry said the team isn't discouraged as it's used to being overlooked since the pre-season MIAA Coaches' poll, which ranked the Bulldogs seventh in the conference.

"It showed in the Coaches' poll," McHenry said. "I think teams are still looking past us, but in the end I think that gives us more motivation."

Truman currently is ranked second in the



Sam Gorden/Index

Senior guard Becka McHenry, middle, takes a shot during practice Monday following the team's 78-58 win against Emporia State University Saturday in Pershing Arena. The Bulldogs currently have the best field goal percentage, .489 and three-point field goal percentage, .458, in the country.

conference behind Washburn. The Bulldogs rank first in the conference in field goal percentage, three-point field goal percentage, free throw percentage (.763) and defensive rebounds (402).

The Bulldogs' next matchup is at 1 p.m. Saturday in Pershing Arena as they face the University of Central Missouri Jennies, a team ranked right behind Truman in the conference standings. As the team's conference

schedule has picked up, as have the stakes. McHenry said last season served as a stark reminder of how important every conference game is.

"Especially in this conference, every game is the most important game," McHenry said. "I think we learned our lesson last year. Every game counts, because in the end it's going to come down to what place you're ranked in the conference."

Mark your calendar

Wrestling

7:30 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 17
Pershing Arena

The men have a home dual against Central Baptist College as they look to build on their early success.

Wrestling

9 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 19
Marshall, Mo.

The wrestling team heads to the Missouri Valley Invitational for competition.

Women's Basketball

1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 19
Pershing Arena

The women host Central Missouri for the last time in the MIAA.

Men's Track & Field

Jan. 18-19
Ames, Iowa

The men's indoor track team will compete in the Iowa State Open.

Men's Swimming

1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 19
Springfield, Mo.

The men travel for a meet against Div. I Missouri State University.

Men's Basketball

3 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 19
Pershing Arena

The Bulldogs face off against Central Missouri at home.

Women's Track & Field

Jan. 18-19
Ames, Iowa

The women's indoor track team will compete in the Iowa State Open.

Women's Swimming

1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 19
Springfield, Mo.

The women travel with the men to take on Div. I Missouri State University.

To see Wednesday night's basketball results, log on to tmn.truman.edu/theindex

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