

SPORTS

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Norton returns to the court
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Rose Sparks/Index
The women's basketball team competes against the No. 11 University of Central Missouri Jennies Saturday. The Bulldogs upset the Jennies 73-64 and are now looking toward their game today against the Nebraska-Kearney Lopers.

Men split against tough opponents

BY SAM SHERMAN
Truman Media Network, Sports Director

When the Bulldogs stepped on the court Saturday afternoon to face the University of Central Missouri, they did so with a newfound sense of confidence. This is after picking up head coach Matt Woodley's first win against a ranked opponent in Wednesday's 64-56 win against No. 10 Washburn University.

Central Missouri came into the game with the best record in the conference, and despite the confidence boost from Wednesday's win, Truman State couldn't keep up in the final moments, losing 59-63.

Woodley said he wasn't disappointed with how the 'Dogs played Saturday, as it looked like the same level of intensity they had played with Wednesday.

"At the end of the day, [Central Missouri] had a lot to do with [the win]," Woodley said. "That's by far the best team in our league, the best team that we have played besides Washburn. ... At the end of the game, you can't turn the ball over, you can't

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'Dogs defeat Mustangs

Truman wrestling team wins handedly against the Central Baptist College Mustangs

BY DAVID LEMON
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With a dual meet Thursday and an invitational Saturday, the Truman State wrestling team ended up having a successful weekend on the mat.

During Thursday's home meet, Truman tamed the Central Baptist College Mustangs with a 44-4 margin in the Bulldog's favor. The men traveled to the Missouri Valley Invitational where they placed 10th out of 16 teams, and senior Alex Maus and junior Ryan Maus both reached the finals of their weight classes.

To start Thursday's meet, freshman J.J. Dorrell

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'Dogs triumph against UCM

McHenry's 24-point effort lifts Bulldogs past ranked opponent

BY SAM SHERMAN, Truman Media Network, Sports Director

The women's basketball team extended its record-breaking home winning streak to 11 games Saturday, toppling the No. 11 Central Missouri Jennies 73-64 days after suffering a 47-52 loss to No. 9 Washburn University last Wednesday.

The Bulldogs (13-3, 6-2 MIAA) now sit at second in the conference behind Washburn following the win. Head coach Michael Smith said the performance difference between Wednesday and Saturday came from the 'Dogs following the set game plan.

"We went in with a game plan and our scout[ing report] at Washburn, but we did not follow it at all," Smith said. "We went back and talked about how important it is to stick together and do what we do best as a team."

Smith said the 'Dogs learned their lesson Wednesday and applied it Saturday, as they stuck to the plan developed by the coaching staff and pulled out the win against one of the best teams in the conference.

It was a historic day for senior guard Becka McHenry, who became the 17th player in program history to score 1,000 career points after her team-high 24-point performance Saturday.

With the help of McHenry, the 'Dogs shot 43 percent from the court and 40 percent from the three-point line to give them the offensive advantage. Sophomore guard Allie Norton ended the day with 18 points after she shot 55 percent from the floor and 67 percent from beyond the arc. Junior forward Bianca Szafarowicz led the 'Dogs in rebounds with eight.

Senior forward Megan Sharpe, who finished with five points, four assists and seven rebounds against the Jennies, said the team's execution of the plan the coaching staff created was crucial to the Bulldogs' victory.

"Our coaches do a great job of preparing us, and they always have," Sharpe said. "It's just a matter of if we follow the game plan or not and I know we all felt really comfortable going into Central [Missouri]."

Truman's next action is Thursday night as they square off against the University of Nebraska-Kearney Lopers, a team ranked 12th in the MIAA, however, Sharpe said it's going to be tougher than it looks on paper for the team.

"I think it's going to be another good test," Sharpe said. "In the MIAA, everybody can beat anybody on any night, it's just going to be, again, how well we stick to the

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Truman fans remain loyal

Truman State athlete commends Bulldog fans for commitment

BY KIRK SCHLUETER
Staff Reporter

Let's start with the truth: Chicago Cubs fans are the best fans in sports. They're closely followed by fans of the Kansas City Royals, Kansas City Chiefs and Cleveland Browns, to scratch the surface of fan bases that deserve to be idolized.

What do those fans all share in common? They all love their teams deeply, identify with their sufferings and pour their hopes into them — and their teams are awful. They do nothing but lose. There is nothing in their recent history to suggest they have any hope of success. However, their fans love them anyway.

Last week, a guy in one of my classes walked in Monday morning proudly wearing a Seattle Seahawks shirt less than 48 hours after the Seahawks' season ended in a gut-wrenching fashion. That, my friends, is true love.

This is a roundabout way to say something else that's true: Truman State sports fans are the best. Seriously.

Look, I know sports are somewhat a joke here. Columns on the sports page regularly plead with students to attend games. One of the Index Staff New Year's resolutions last week in Opinions was to attend sporting events because you're paying a \$50 fee to support athletics whether you go or not. Forget about all of that.

Also forget about the fact that a



lot of Truman sports teams actually are pretty good. If you talk about something long enough and enough people believe it, it becomes real, and the prevailing opinion here at Truman is that our sports teams aren't very good. And in recent history, at least the sports usually thought of as the biggest or as the face of the University, haven't been that great. So it takes a certain amount of courage to actually strap up and go to a game.

In sports we talk about fair-weather fans all the time, fans that only support their team when things are going great. No one at Truman is a fair-weather fan. They can't be, just like there can't be any fair-weather Cubs fans (Truman athletes, of which I am one, we're still better than the Cubs. Don't worry).

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Bulldogs begin to taper

BY KIRK SCHLUETER
Staff Reporter

The Truman State men's and women's swimming teams fell in a dual meet at Div. I Missouri State University Saturday, but both coaches and athletes said the Bulldogs' focus facing the Bears wasn't winning and losing.

Instead, Truman is in the midst of what's known as "tapering" — steadily decreasing the swimmers' workload during practice to ensure the best possible time at the NSIC conference meet beginning Feb. 7. One side effect of tapering, head coach Ed Pretre said, is that while it will give the Bulldogs a chance to optimally perform at the conference meet, it makes swimming races now very difficult.

"They're all in a kind of state where they don't know where their bodies are at, and to be like that three weeks out from conference is dead-on," Pretre said. "We knew we were going to be hit or miss going into the meet, so it was more about focusing on technique and form and trying to get a good time."

On the men's side, Truman fell by a score of 160-72, while the women were defeated 155-78. The 'Dogs' lone event win came from senior Jerod Simek for the 1,000 yard freestyle, touching the wall in 9:54.04, though several swimmers for both the men and women picked up 2nd place finishes during the meet.

The main positive he took away from the meet was the Bulldogs' mental toughness, Pretre said. He singled out the Bulldog upperclassmen for helping to provide a positive environment for a team comprised of 80 percent freshmen and helping them with their first college season.

Sophomore Abby Hempen,



Sam Gorden/Index
The Bulldog swim team practices Tuesday at the Pershing Natatorium. The Bulldogs have a home meet at 1 p.m. Saturday.

who placed second in the 200 yard individual medley and breaststroke, echoed Pretre and said the team's goals are less results-oriented at the moment and more focused on creating a positive environment as the season winds down.

"At this point, our personal best times aren't going to be there, and we all know that," she said. "[We're focusing] not necessarily on if we win the races, but making sure we're giving the best effort and getting ourselves ready."

Nevertheless, Hempen said the team has been more competitive in the past with Missouri State than was the case Saturday. While the 'Dogs wanted to perform better, she said they understand they are in an awkward phase in their tapering for the conference meet.

Pretre said he isn't worried about Truman's competitiveness down the home stretch, noting that when the team took a recent training trip to Tampa, Fla., the environment was the best he's been a part of for eight years of conference

coaching. Tapering, he said, is like the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly, and right now the Bulldogs are in the cocoon phase.

The Bulldogs' next meet is at home 1 p.m. Saturday against No. 1 Drury University. Throughout past seasons, Hempen said, Drury has been Truman's main rival, but she doesn't know if the 'Dogs will be as competitive against the Panthers this year. She said she expects the team to win races and put up a good showing as they move toward the conference meet.

Pretre said while he thinks the Bulldogs will be sharper at home against Drury than they were after a four-hour bus ride facing Missouri State, the swimmers' focus is on technical and strategic improvements with a bigger picture than an individual meet in mind.

"It's a lot of the little things that will add up and will determine for quite a few of them whether they'll be going to the NCAA tournament [nationals] in March," he said.