

SCHLUETER | Truman State tennis player believes loyal Truman fans rank among sports' best fans

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All of this is to say that Truman fans are great. Because when you show up to sporting events thinking the Bulldogs are nowhere near as good as their opponents, well, that takes something. Even if you're just there so your \$50 athletic fee doesn't go to waste, or because you know one of the players or your friend really wanted to go, you're still there.

So without getting too poetic, that's a pretty deep measure of loyalty, and it's one every athlete appreciates. Usually at the end of an interview, I ask athletes and coaches if they have anything else they'd like to say, and if we've been talking about a home game, they'll inexorably talk about how great it was to see so many people in attendance, and what a fantastic crowd they were.

The other thing is this — not only does that loyalty get noticed, but it also gets rewarded. Because yes, every team loses, but every team wins. One day the Chicago Cubs are going to win the World Series, and I fully expect all the Cubs fans I know to be insufferably

happy about it, and they'll deserve it. And not to keep comparing Truman to all the mediocre sports teams on earth, but the same thing is true here as well.

Last week, the men's basketball team beat the 10th-best team in the nation on the road. The women's team is near the top of the MIAA, both swimming teams are nationally ranked and these are only the examples I'm using because their seasons are going on right now. Through all the .500 seasons and all the jokes and punchlines, athletic success is a real part of Truman State. Our teams win games.

So if you're not already going to Truman athletic events, you should, and just laugh if someone calls you a fair-weather fan. However, no one will because this isn't a Division I football program. If you're already going, I won't tell you to keep going, because you're awesome. You don't expect miracles. You don't expect championships. You just want to see your team play.

So get up and give yourselves a standing ovation.

WOMEN | Bulldogs ranked second in MIAA after win against UCM



Rose Sparks/Index

Senior guard Becka McHenry shoots a free throw during the Bulldogs' 73-64 victory against UCM Saturday. She finished with 24 points.

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game plan and how well we execute." After winning their 13th game of the season, the Bulldogs are ahead of where they were during this time last season. While both teams had fast starts, the Bulldogs this season have been able to remain consistent after winter break, something last year's team had trouble doing.

"We have more of a veteran team, a lot more experience," Smith said. "Our kids had the chance to taste success. We knew that we had a good team coming back and if we continued to stay the course and work hard, that we could have a better year this year, and up to this point we have."

After the game against Nebraska-Kearney Thursday, and Saturday's game against Fort Hays State, the Bulldogs will begin the biggest challenge of their season. Six of the team's last eight games are on the road, with three of those games against teams in the top five in the MIAA.

Smith said he's not worried about his team being able to handle the challenge, as they have an air of confidence unlike any team he's coached at Truman, and it translates to the court.

"Our kids now are walking with a little bit of confidence, a little bit of swagger, and they should," Smith said. "I believe we are a very good team, and if we play within our strengths and stick together, there's a lot of things that we can accomplish this year."

MEN | 'Dogs eye conference tournament after solid weekend

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miss free throws and you have to be able to make open shots, and we really didn't do that."

The Bulldogs and Mules traded leads all game, accounting for 11 lead changes and nine ties, but it was a 7-2 Mule run at the end of the game that proved to be the difference. Truman's last lead was at the 3:29 mark of the second half, when freshman Jaylon Jones hit a jumper to put the Bulldogs up by one, but only made one basket after that as Central Missouri reeled off a three-pointer and four free-throws to win its sixth conference game of the season.

Junior forward Mike Carlson led the team in statistics, finishing the game with 15 points, six rebounds, three blocks and three steals. Offensively, sophomore guard Seth Jackson was close behind, making all eight of his free throws to finish with 14 points and eight rebounds.

Jackson said the win against Washburn showed the team they could compete with the best teams in the MIAA and, despite picking up the loss, the close game against Central Missouri merely reinforced that statement.

"Going into Saturday, [Wednesday's win] just gave us a little confidence to show us that we can play with the best teams in the country," Jackson said. "I don't think there was any nervousness or worries about being able to compete with [UCM] and I think that showed on Saturday."

Jackson said the difference was the team's shooting percentage Saturday, as the 'Dogs

ended the day shooting 37 percent from the court while the Mules shot 45 percent.

"We didn't really turn the ball over that much, we were right there with rebounds, but we just didn't shoot the ball as well," Jackson said. "Some of those [missed] shots were shots that we made on Wednesday against Washburn that helped us win the game."

The Bulldogs are tied for 11th right now in the MIAA as they approach their next conference matchup Thursday against the University of Nebraska-Kearney, but junior guard Isaac Gardner said if the Bulldogs can keep up their high level of play, he predicts a solid second-half of the season.

"Right now I would say I could see us in the conference tournament, for sure," Gardner said. "We'll have to keep doing really well, but I think things are looking really good."

Woodley said the Lopers are going to be an offensive test for the Bulldogs, as he expects a full 40 minutes of zone defense from UNK, a team that upset Missouri Southern at home earlier this season.

"It's just like any game in this league," Woodley said. "They went to Missouri Southern and won, and that just shows you the balance of our league. I'm not so sure very many teams can go there and win. ... They're going to play us 40 minutes of zone [defense], and any time a team does that it worries you because you don't see a lot of that around here."

The Bulldogs will compete against the University of Nebraska-Kearney Lopers at 7:30 p.m. Saturday in Pershing Arena.

WRESTLING | Men led by Maus brothers in Invitational

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claimed a 14-5 victory in the 125-pound weight class with three takedowns during the first three minutes alone. In the 133-pound weight class, freshman Tyler Stanley did not lose a any points, winning 9-0 with a reversal and two takedowns for his first victory wearing purple and white.

Stanley is the newest member of the Bulldog squad after transferring from the University of Northern Iowa at semester. With his 9-0 victory against CBC Saturday, he is now 1-1 in dual meets this season. Stanley says he seeks help from his teammates to become familiarized with the team and competing on a consistent level. So far, Stanley said he has gotten a good look at the team in practices and likes what the Maus brothers bring to the squad.

"I really like the way Ryan and Alex Maus hit 'the cradle' the same way I like to," Stanley said. "Learning different tips and pointers about stuff like that is something I enjoy."

Two days after the Thursday meet, Alex reached final bout in the 141-pound weight class. Maus fell to Central Missouri's Eric Mateo in a 3-2 loss and ended his invitational run with a second place finish.

Alex ended up taking the night off during the dual meet against CBC Thursday. He said this was a good thing for him because he had time to rest for the invitational Saturday so that way he could wrestle with all the energy he had instead of having to be slightly winded from wrestling two days prior. He ended up

wrestling in four matches during the invitational including the title bout.

"I pretty much just try to give everything every single match," Alex said. "I try not to think about pacing myself or anything along those lines."

With an 8-3 record this season, Alex currently is wrestling at a higher winning percentage than any other season in his college career so far.

Head Coach Dave Schutter said Thursday's home meet against Central Baptist College as a great win, but even though the men dominated on the scoreboard, he thinks the meet could have gone better.

"I actually think the Missouri Valley [College] dual here at home was a much better performance than the Central Baptist performance," Schutter said. "Sometimes people get wrapped up in the end result and not necessarily the level of competition or how well each individual performs in the match."

Because there are a lack of seniors and this is a young team, many of the younger wrestlers are seeing time on the mats in competition. Talented wrestlers like Alex Maus will be leaving after the year and if he sat out during the 44-4 win against Central Baptist, and coach Schutter said many freshmen wrestled during the meet, the team has a shot to continue their winning ways next season.

As the season progresses, the Bulldogs will have this week to rest and prepare. Their next match will be at home Jan. 30 followed by two back-to-back away duals Feb. 2 and 3.

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