



Calli Lowry/Index

Freshman Ali Patterson spikes the ball for the Bulldogs against the University of Minnesota-Deluth. The Bulldogs lost to UMD in three straight sets Friday.

Sharpe leads 'Dogs

Senior Megan Sharpe leads the Bulldogs to three tournament wins

BY TYLER POE
Staff Reporter

Backed by a record-breaking performance from senior Megan Sharpe, Truman State's womens volleyball team secured a trio of wins at the Days Inn Bulldog Invitational last weekend.

Truman notched wins against McKendree University, Winona State University and the University of Missouri - St. Louis, but lost three straight sets to seventh-ranked University of Minnesota-Deluth.

Sharpe led all outside hitters at the tournament with 59 kills and also posted back-to-back 22-kill performances the last day of the tournament against Winona and UMSL. Because of her efforts, Sharpe was named MIAA Hitter of the Week.

Sharpe said the atmosphere at the tournament was enthusiastic and the team was excited to play in front of a big home crowd.

"We really learned our identity," Sharpe said. "We learned to fight and we realized we can't play with teams that we should put away. We had a lot of ups and downs in our momen-

tum and we need to get that at a consistent level."

Sharpe said the lone blemish for the Bulldogs was the team's loss to Minnesota-Duluth. She said the 'Dogs youth was a big factor when making adjustments during the game. She also said although the freshmen stepped up to take the place of injured senior Heather Hargadine, the team will need to adjust more quickly during games to keep up with collegiate competition.

Sharpe also admitted she didn't play perfectly. She said she was disappointed with her serves throughout the weekend.

"I just want to get better every game," Sharpe said. "I want to become the player that everyone in the gym, knows who the ball is going to, but am still good enough to make the play and get a kill."

True freshmen Abby Heise, Kassi Schroeder, Ali Patterson and Sidney King all saw playing time and head coach Ben Briney said he was impressed with the team's performance. Heise had

11 kills against Winona alone and Schroeder had 17 total kills this weekend.

Briney said last week there would be growing pains this season, but said the invitational was a good test for the young 'Dogs.

The team plays away for the first time at the New Victorian Inn & Suites/Runza Fall Classic, hosted by University of Nebraska-Kearney.

Sophomore Meghan Zimmerman said the team performs better as a unit when the crowd is pumped up. Zimmerman said the freshmen will need to continue to impress if they are going to do well this weekend.

Zimmerman also said she and Sharpe will look to connect again as she has assisted Sharpe 117 times through four games thus far during 2012. Overall, Zimmerman said the team's goal is to improve during this weekend.

"We all want to win every game but we learned we need to grow from each game, win or lose," Zimmerman said.



Megan Sharpe

Mens tennis looks to grow

The mens tennis team plans to improve mentally during 2012

BY TYLER SIGRIST
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Only a handful of Truman State mens tennis players finished the 2011 season with better than .500 individually or in doubles play. As a team, Truman finished with an overall record of 6-9 and lost more than they won during conference play, finishing 1-3 in the MIAA.

Sophomore Griffin Smith said the 2011 team was a relatively young one, comprised of two freshmen, five sophomores and only two upperclassmen. Smith said he expects this young team to considerably develop during the upcoming season.

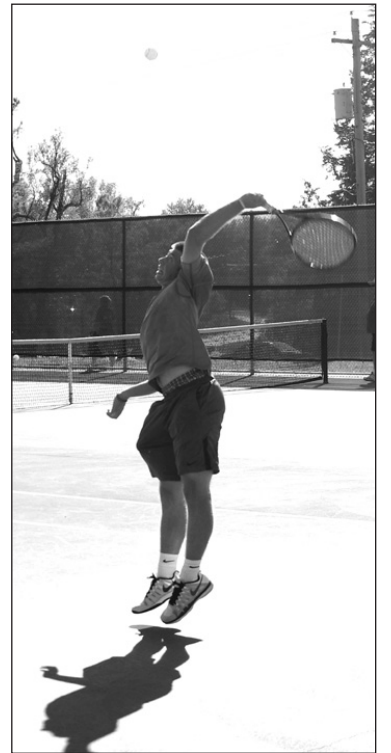
"I'm definitely looking forward to having a year of experience under my belt [this year]," Smith said. "Hopefully that will help us get a few more wins. There's a big difference between [high school level] and college tennis."

Sophomore Jake Ohlhausen said he expects the team as a whole to rapidly gain experience this season, including the incoming freshmen.

New head coach Dan Blodgett said a lot of what happens during this season is going to be a result of the offseason. Ohlhausen said to play well at the college level, you have to do the offseason work.

"Most of these kids have been playing all summer long," Blodgett said. "They play in tournaments and some of them have even played in some of the Challenger tournaments against professionals."

Tournaments haven't been the only way the 'Dogs have been preparing themselves for 2012. This summer, before NCAA rules and regulations allowed Blodgett to begin coaching the team, they came back to Kirksville and practiced without direction from their new coach. Blodgett was pres-



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Freshman Griffin Smith serves at practice Tuesday to prepare for the 2012 season. Smith said he has high hopes for how the young team will grow this season.

ent for some of the impromptu practices but he was only able to observe the team members, not interact with them, Ohlhausen said. He also said coming back early built team chemistry, which can have an effect during the season.

"As a team, we gel really well," Ohlhausen said. "We care about each other a lot. All of us have been out at the courts hitting and we really support each other in accomplishing team goals and I never experienced that before I came to Truman."

Ohlhausen said the team is hoping to lean on its chemistry as they play this season.

Smith said this year's team has a lot of room to grow and the maturation period will begin the moment the team steps onto the court tomorrow at the Western Illinois Invitational to start the 2012 season. But it won't end there, as nearly the entire team will be eligible to return next season as well.

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