

# Women leave season in NCAA's hands

BY ELLIOT ASBED  
Staff Reporter

After a strong performance at the GLVC conference tournament that earned them a spot in the championship match, the Truman State volleyball team lost four closely contested sets to the University of Indianapolis Greyhounds this past Sunday, Nov. 24. The loss meant the team's season rests in the hands of the NCAA tournament selection committee, which announced their picks Monday — the Bulldogs are returning to the NCAA tournament.

Truman, who posted a record of 23-11 this season, was selected as the eighth and final seed in the Midwest region. The appearance will be the 14th through-out team history, and the fourth appearance throughout five years under head coach Ben Briney. During 2008, the team went as far as the national semifinals, but lost during the first round in their three appearances since.

Looking to break that trend, the Bulldogs face a tall task — an opening round matchup against the top-ranked Grand Valley State Lakers. Not only are the Lakers the top-ranked team in the Midwest region, but they are hosting the tournament and playing on their home court.

The Bulldogs are no strangers to hostile environments, and coach Ben Briney said the team thrives when under the pressure of a large opposing crowd.

"We went into Lewis and it was a great atmosphere and the girls responded really well," Briney said. "I think there's excitement rather than nervousness, and I definitely think this team has that extra level in them for this weekend."

Despite some inconsistent play during the second half of the season, the team has won five of their last seven matches and are carrying some momentum into the national tournament. Sophomore middle hitter Ali Pat-

erson said the team has found a groove, and they almost have reached their full potential.

"I think that we are definitely in stride," Patterson said. "I've seen us play at a higher level before, but I think that it's do-or-die right now. Everybody's on the same page. We're getting to our peak and we're going to do great things at the tournament."

During the GLVC tournament, needing wins to keep their hopes of reaching the NCAA tournament, the Bulldogs rallied around another do-or-die scenario and beat strong teams like Southern Indiana and Lewis University — conference rivals that previously had bested the squad.

Junior libero Abby Moser said the team's practices have been energetic and positive, and they will be rested headed into the tournament.

"We want to be more consistent with all aspects of the game — we missed serves that were crucial, we missed digs that were crucial, and we missed hits that were crucial," Moser said. "It's going to come down to limiting our errors."

The team's main focus during practices this week has been serving aggressively and keeping opposing teams on their heels.

"When we can serve aggressive and keep teams out of system with our offense and with our block especially, it makes it really tough on the other team," Briney said. "We know what their attack is going to be and they're put in a situation where they only have one or maybe two options."

Briney echoed his players' confidence, saying the team played its best volleyball of the year at the end of the season. He said even though their best volleyball earned them a spot in the tournament, he still sees potential for further improvement and better play.

"I still think this team has another gear, and it's about finding that other gear come the NCAA tournament," Briney said. "This is what you come to Truman volley-



Elle Fitzgibbons/ Index  
Junior Allie Brak and sophomore Emilee Walters jump up to block the ball at a recent match.

ball for — you come to play in front of big crowds at big matches. I definitely think this team has another gear for this weekend and hopefully beyond."

With their national title dreams on the line, the Bulldogs open the tournament today at 7:30 p.m. against the Grand Valley State Lakers in Allendale, Mich.

## Wrestling hopes to win heading into holidays

BY LEO CARROLL  
Staff Reporter

The Truman State wrestling team is preparing to face off against the William Penn University Statesmen today and attempting to reach winter break undefeated.

The Bulldogs currently are 3-0 in dual meets this season. They have defeated Hannibal-LaGrange University, Grace-land University and Benedictine University this year. Last season, the Bulldogs defeated the Statesmen 29-11, and Truman wrestlers said this year Truman is even stronger than last season.

Although the Bulldogs have been training hard, most other teams across the nation will be doing the same. This includes William Penn.

"I am sure they are just as prepared as we are," 197-pound junior Helmut Rentschler said. "We just need to come with attitude. We cannot give them anything. They are a tough team, and tough teams capitalize on mistakes. We have to make minimal mistakes and capitalize on theirs."

Team captain 157-pound senior Colton Schmitz said the Bulldogs did not wrestle well at their last dual and are determined to bounce back this week and defeat William Penn. Schmitz said he thinks the team is focused on the dual meet against the Statesmen, and the Bulldogs should be 4-0 going into winter break.

Team captain and All-American 149-pound senior Ryan Maus said he wants the team to push harder than last season so

they can win tough duals. Maus said he thinks the team is more than they were last season.

"We have a long, grinding season, but if we stay focused and keep working the way we are, great things will happen for us this year."

- Senior Ryan Maus

"We are working hard in the room, and expect to win when we are competing," Maus said. "We have a long, grinding season, but if we stay focused and

keep working the way that we are, great things will happen for us this year."

Truman wrestlers said they are fairly confident they can defeat William Penn easily, since they won by a large margin last year and the team feels they are better this year, Maus said, but the Bulldogs do not want to take any chances.

The Bulldogs said they were not happy with their performance against Benedictine, and they are striving to wrestle well against William Penn. Schmitz said they had a common goal to remain undefeated going into winter break, which the wrestlers said they think would get the team a spot in the top NCAA top 25 when they return from break.

If the Bulldogs wrestle to the level they said they think they are capable of, the team thinks they easily will defeat William Penn. Team leaders are pushing team members to wrestle hard and make minimal mistakes, so William Penn will not get any lucky points against them. If the Bulldogs do this, the wrestlers said they think they will be 4-0 going into the break.

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