

Index gives best of Truman athletics recap



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The 2014-15 school year has been an incredible one to watch for Truman State athletics. We have seen record-breaking performances, outstanding plays and a GLVC championship. As a couple of guys who covered all the Bulldogs this year across multiple media platforms, here are our picks for the "Best of" Truman sports this school year. We, in altruistic fashion, are opening the floodgates of our own personal Twitter accounts for your opinions or objections. Who got snubbed? Let the flame war begin for @ScottKriegs and @booz_radley.

Play of the Year

Scott — Junior outfielder T.J. Wood robs potential game-tying home run vs. Drury University, April 10

The Bulldog baseball team was ahead by two runs during the bottom of the 10th inning against the Panthers, with two outs and a runner on base. Drury's junior Conner Wilson, a redshirt first baseman, hit a long fly ball that seemed destined to go over the fence. But instead, Truman junior center fielder T.J. Wood tracked the ball, timed his jump perfectly and robbed a potential game-tying home run for the last out of the extra inning with a Bulldog win.

"All I remember is jumping on the wall to get up higher and reaching over the fence and feeling the ball hit my glove and squeezing as hard as I could while I brought it back into play," Wood said. "It's a surreal feeling because at the time, it felt to me like that was the type of play I expect to make for my teammates."

Truman head coach Dan Davis said it best.

"It was the best catch I've ever seen in person, without a doubt," Davis said.

Henry — T.J. Wood's robbed home run

Although the only video evidence of the play is akin to the quality of Bigfoot footage, the immediate reaction from Wood's teammates, sprinting to the outfield to carry their centerfielder in celebration, is enough to understand how energizing Wood's leap over the wall must have been. Like Willie Mays' legendary catch deep in centerfield of the Polo Grounds during the 1954 World Series or Pelé's off-camera goal as an 18-year-old, lack of quality video footage won't hinder this moment from being considered perhaps the defining highlight of Truman baseball's most successful season.

Team of the Year

Scott — Volleyball (29-4 overall record, GLVC championship win and regional No. 1 seed in NCAA Tournament)

The Truman volleyball team had 23 wins during the 2013 season and fell just one game short of a conference championship after losing to Indianapolis last year. After a first-round exit at the NCAA Midwest Regional, the team had a bit of a chip on its shoulder coming into this season. During 2014, the team went 29-4 overall, 17-1 in the GLVC, was a perfect 9-0 in road games and won the GLVC tournament by defeating McKendree University in a 5-set thriller. It was the program's first GLVC title, and the first conference title for volleyball since 2007.

At the NCAA Midwest regional, the Bulldogs were seeded No. 1, and they had to face a familiar foe during round one — McKendree, just five days after beating them for the GLVC title.

This time, Truman won in a clean sweep, 3-0. Although Truman lost during the next round, the team's season still should be considered a success, as they are the only Truman team — thus far — to win a GLVC championship this season.

Henry — Baseball (27-15 overall record, 18-12 GLVC, season still in progress)

For a program that has had more than its fair share of bumps along the 49-year path to success, head coach Dan Davis finally has Bulldog baseball moving in the right direction. Davis certainly has gotten some help from his players, a handful of whom are downright studly. The Bulldogs currently have three players batting more than .350, led by senior infielder Paul Trenhaile, who is hitting an eye-popping .404. The team is not lacking defensive efficiency or pitching either, and Davis' squad of hand-picked talent has well exceeded the fans' expectations for the team's 2015 outing. Senior Cody Gardner and redshirt freshman Kent Frantz lead a solid Bulldog pitching rotation, combining for 14 wins and just four losses in 18 total starts. The 'Dogs have performed against the highest level of competitors — earlier during the season they swept a four-game series on the road against defending national champions, the University of Southern Indiana. While it might be a bit unfair to discount other successful Bulldogs' seasons for this distinguishing honor simply because of an early end to their postseasons, such as the men's basketball program, the turnaround Davis' team has taken in both performance and culture is so stark — sorry Scott — it makes them a no-brainer for team of the year.

Female Athlete of the Year

Scott — Junior midfielder Alexis Heffernan, Soccer

Let's just list Heffernan's 2014 accolades — First-team Daktronics All-Region, National Soccer Coaches Association of America All-Region, All-GLVC — her second all-conference nod — and both GLVC and NSCAA Player of the Week for the week of Sept. 8. Oh yeah, and she's only a junior: Heffernan scored 10 of the team's 27 goals during the season, after scoring only nine total during her first two years. Head women's soccer coach Mike Cannon obviously is impressed.

"When your midfielder is your best attacker, that says a lot," Cannon said. "Her role on the team expanded after we lost a big class, and her leadership gradually improved. She really carried a younger team."

When asked how Heffernan could improve for her senior season, Cannon said there's not a lot she needs to work on.

"We just want to give her more freedom on the field, and we hope to have a stronger supporting cast around her next year," Cannon said.

Henry — Senior guard Allie Norton, Basketball

Norton completed an exceptional career as a Bulldog, albeit one that sadly came to a halt when the 'Dogs dropped their first-round GLVC tournament game after winning the conference title during 2013-14. Norton shot a career high 41 percent from the field, scoring 15.5 points per game. Her 272 career 3-pointers with a .424 rate are the best throughout the program's history, and she is eighth on Truman's all-time women's basketball scoring list with 1306 points. Norton's 3.4 rebounds per game also were an unexpected lift in production for the 5-foot-6-inch guard from Bloomington, Illinois. Assistant coach Adam Tandez said Norton's presence on the court alone provided big matchup and game-planning questions for opposing defenses. Head coach Amy Eagan will be looking to fill a huge void in the point guard position with Norton's departure.

Male Athlete of the Year

Scott — Senior guard Seth Jackson, Basketball

Bulldog senior guard Seth Jackson had a historic 2014 season. His 623 points not only were a GLVC high, but also tallied the most points scored in a single season by a player in Truman history. His 198 free throws made and 269 free throws at-

tempted also were school records. Out of the 28 games played this year, Jackson was in double figures 26 times, with 18 of those games eclipsing the 20 point mark. He finished his career as Truman's third all-time leading scorer in men's basketball, behind alumni Cory Parker and Steve Schieppe.

During a conference loaded with strong teams, Jackson helped lead the Bulldogs to the second round of the GLVC Tournament. Jackson was a pleasure to watch all year, and this season undoubtedly will go down as one of the best individual seasons in Truman basketball history.

Henry — Senior guard Seth Jackson, Basketball

Jackson, as fans saw all four years of his Bulldog career, has no ceiling. From being the MIAA Freshman of the Year three years ago to earning a spot on the All-GLVC team as a senior, Jackson's career was electrifying to follow. Jackson led the GLVC during his senior season by scoring in a generally unselfish manner. His senior season drew the attention of a number of European clubs and he will test his hand at a professional basketball career once he graduates during May. Even when the game was on the road, Jackson's performance against conference-tournament champs Drury was an outing that bordered on legendary, as he posted a career-high 42 points. While all the hubbub seems to be about Jackson's innate slashing and scoring ability, he quietly managed to post 4.6 rebounds per game to go with his 22.3 points on average. The 2014-15 academic year saw a number of other very qualified candidates for the Male Athlete of the Year honor, namely senior running back Garrett White and senior infielder Paul Trenhaile, but no one provided quite as much excitement for the Bulldog fans as Jackson did.

Coach of the Year

Scott — Dan Davis, Baseball

Henry summed this up pretty well earlier, but Davis has taken Truman baseball to a place it never has been before. The season is not even over yet, and the team already has set a school record in wins. This comes off the heels of a 26-win season last year, marking the first time in the history of the program the team had consecutive 20-plus win seasons. However, Davis has a much bigger goal in mind for this team this year — a trip to the College World Series.

"If we can continue to move forward, and we can find a way to get an at-large bid by being in the top six in the region, we are only three or four wins away from making the College World Series," Davis said. "We can win four games in a row against the best. We've done it."

Henry — Chris Foster, Men's Basketball

While Foster and his men fell short of the ultimate goal for the 2014-15 campaign, his inaugural season as the head basketball coach was a resounding success. The 'Dogs finished with a final record of 20-10, and though this point is now one that has been run into the ground, it marks the first time in 70 years that Truman men's basketball reached 20 wins during consecutive seasons. When former head coach Matt Woodley decided he would move up to the NBA Developmental League during the offseason, less than a week went by before Athletic Director Jerry Wollmering announced Foster, an associate coach under Woodley, would be taking the position. Foster certainly got a great deal of help from his studs, Jackson and senior guard Reed Mells, but the cohesion of this year's team was paramount to Jackson and Mells' selfless brand of basketball. Foster will have a hard time replacing his seniors, but with junior guard Cole Myers and redshirt sophomore guard Cory Myers and sophomore guard Kyle Kanaskie, young, post players such as sophomore forwards Billy Daniel and Connor Erickson, and pure shooters like junior guard Andrew Vander Zwaag, Foster has a notable pool of talent which he already has made considerable strides in developing.

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