

Bulldogs advance in ranking

Truman State women's track and field advance to first in Div. II rankings, while the men rise to second

BY BROOKE JOHNSON
Staff Reporter

The Truman State men's and women's track and field teams have been running up in the NCAA Div. II rankings. After the Dutch Athletics Classic in Pella, Iowa Jan. 24, the women's team placed first in its Div. II rankings, and the men placed second.

The teams' combined total of 216 points was enough to beat Grand View University by more than 40 points. The women won the meet with 122 points earned, and the men finished second behind William Penn University 94-99.

Senior Taylor Dinyer said these victories create a clear path for the road to future conferences, which are the main goal for the team.

"Our major rivals would be anyone we see at our conference meet," Dinyer said. "Last year our team finished third at conference behind both Lewis [University] and [University of] Indianapolis — we really strive to do our best and hope to bump out other teams where they least expect it."

This was the first meet after break, so not many people expected Truman to win by as much as they did, Dinyer said. She said the win came after a long break from competitions, and the positive performance was a good sign.

Dinyer said every Truman competitor had a similar or better performance than at the team's last meet before break Dec. 6 at the Central College Holiday Meet.

Although the team was victorious, junior Na'Kea Shepherd said there was a lot of nervousness among teammates leading up to the races.

"Running the 4x4 was really intense because our coach came over and was like, 'You know that if you don't place in the 4x4, then you won't win overall,'" Shepherd said. "So we were all kind of freaked out, so when we were running, it got intense because it was super close."

With the men placing second and the women taking first overall, these wins added momentum to the meet last Friday evening, Shepherd said.

The Bulldog track and field teams also competed Jan. 31 in Principia, Illinois. With six victories total, it was a successful meet overall, she said. The only individual first place came from sophomore Laura Tarantino in the mile run with a personal record time of 5:15.94.

This meet was snowed out last year, Shepherd said, therefore, the team didn't know who or what to expect at this meet.

Junior Lauren Westen, freshmen Taylor Knoche and Heather Hughes, and Tarantino finished the women's medley relay first with a time of 12:48.20. The men's distance relay, consisting of freshman Nick Terreri, sophomores Trevor Gonzales and Bryce Pavey, and junior Dominic Kacich, took the win against Div. I Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville. The Bulldogs' over-

all time was 10:42.23 while the SIUE Cougars finished with a time of 10:42.56.

For both teams, the 4x200 race led to some victories — the men's team of Gonzales, Kacich, junior Nick Anderson and senior Zach Thomas beat Culver-Stockton by four seconds, while senior Cara Tom, sophomore Nicole Neville, Dinyer and Shepherd led the women's team to third place.

"To be honest, I was really nervous the entire race about how it was going to go, but I never thought we weren't going to win," Gonzales said. "My niece was actually born that day, while we were running that race, at the exact time, and I told [the team] that I wanted to win that race for her. I felt like they weren't going to let me down, because we are a team."

Senior B.J. Smith placed second in the 60-meter hurdles with a time of 8.67, and senior Riley Williams won second in the triple jump at 12.44 meters. Senior Alex Cross threw 13.66 meters in the weight throwing for a personal record, finishing in ninth place.

The next meet is the Fighting Scot Invitational, scheduled for Feb. 14 in Monmouth, Illinois, and with conference right around the corner, athletes are preparing to their max, Gonzales said.

"You have to prep physically," Gonzales said. "We're still where we do not want to peak yet. We want to still be improving, so every physical aspect is geared toward getting to your best and racing the best. Our team goals are always to improve with each meet, with our best performances showing up at the conference meet."

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