

Stand up for clubs



BY TIM PICKEL
Staff Writer

The Truman State Bulldogs might get plenty of representation from nine different men's and women's varsity sports, but they're not the only ones who suit up in purple and white to compete for their school. Week in and week out, a number of student athletes compete for Truman in club sports, though the team names might be a little different.

Club sports have an interesting dynamic. A few of these organizations are lucky enough to have a coach, but oftentimes it is a fellow student, sometimes the team captain, leading the way. Teams sometimes have to practice at unusual times, like 9 p.m. or later, just so they can reserve the proper space to play. Travel can be very tough, too — many teams rely on their own members to provide transportation to competitions. No one particularly enjoys driving six hours to play one game before turning right back around to head home, but when push comes to shove, members just to have stick with it and play for the sake of the team.

Travel isn't necessarily the toughest part, though. Most club sports charge dues, meaning players are paying to play. This doesn't include the money spent on gas, food, equipment and other unforeseen expenses that might pop up on the road. At a time in life when many people are strapped for cash, it can be tough making those ends meet, yet the players still choose to play.

So why do people play club sports? For many, it's the competition — soccer, rugby, basketball and volleyball are some of the bigger men's and women's clubs on campus, and they compete against schools across the Midwest throughout the year. The draw of higher level competition than an intramural or pickup game can provide fulfills a need inside many students.

There's also the sense of sportsmanship and being a part of a team. Many athletes who play these sports probably could compete with players on varsity teams, but for one reason or another don't play. It might be because of the level of commitment a varsity sport requires, or a level of skill they might not have, but for people who love to play a certain sport, it's nice to know there are still options available.

For many though — myself included — it's an outlet. Before coming to Truman, I was a multi-sport high school athlete without much interest in playing college sports. Two years into my Truman career, it felt as though something was missing. Growing up, I played a sport of some sort every season, so after a two-year hiatus it was pretty easy to diagnose my problem. Since last spring, I've been a member of the Truman Bulls men's rugby club. It's been one of the best decisions of my college career and definitely one I wish I had made sooner.

These thoughts are by no means a knock against Truman's varsity athletes, who are outstanding in their own right. Instead, these are merely some words of recognition to students who might not always get the attention they deserve. So whether you're an athlete who loves to play, or maybe just someone who wanted to try something new, here's to you.

Grad assistant program teaches future coaches



Photo submitted by Sarah Henry
Alumna Sarah Eagan (far right) poses with her team, Helias Catholic High School, after its Class 4 District Championship. Eagan worked under her sister, Amy Eagan, coaching for the Truman State women's basketball team from 2013-2015.

BY RACHEL STEINHOFF
Staff Reporter

Embracing college athletics is different for everyone. For some, it's putting on school colors and leading cheers from the stands. For others, it's putting on a jersey with the name of their school embroidered across its chest. But, for a very select few, it's the opportunity to walk the sidelines, get their feet wet and begin their coaching career.

This opportunity is known as a Graduate Assistant position, open to graduate students pursuing their master's degree who plan to enter the coaching field. Truman Athletics currently hosts five graduate assistant coaches, but the department has been developing young coaches for years.

Alumna Sarah Eagan served as a GA for the women's basketball team from 2013-15 and currently is the head coach of the Helias Catholic High School varsity girls' basketball team in Jefferson City, Missouri. Eagan used her two years at Truman to acquire a master's degree

in leadership and said she learned valuable coaching tools that prepared her for a head coaching job.

In her first year as head coach, Eagan led her team to a 16-12 record and a Class 4 District Championship title.

Eagan said her first year as a head coach was a learning experience and she felt prepared to take the job after her two years of coaching at Truman.

"I honestly think my leadership skills from my master's program at Truman really played a huge role this year," Eagan said. "It was my program this year, and I had to lead as a head coach for the first time. ... Going straight into a coaching job, I don't think I would have had enough knowledge to even be an assistant coach right away. I think the GA spot slowly transitions you into being ready to take on any and every role after that."

Eagan said she has implemented offensive schemes she learned at Truman into Helias' style of play, and though they're only high school athletes, Eagan said she aims to teach them to play and practice with a college-level competi-

tive drive. Eagan said her biggest take-away from her GA experience was fully realizing the importance of individual player development.

After a successful first year, Eagan said she is very happy at Helias but is keeping her options open and looking at potential opportunities to return to the collegiate level. Eagan said her experiences at Truman could draw the attention of potential employers.

"It's on all my résumés," Eagan said. "A lot of the job search process and getting interviews has come down to seeing the experience of Truman State on my résumé. They know we had a lot of success while I was there, and they know [Head Coach Amy Eagan] runs a really good program."

Graduate assistant experience is not limited to basketball. Cross country, wrestling and football offer similar opportunities to gain coaching experience. The Truman football program in particular has a history of developing former players into future coaches. SEE GRAD ASSISTANTS, page 13

Softball builds momentum

BY COURTNEY STRAIT
Assistant Sports Editor
tsusportseditor@gmail.com

With only four regular season matchups left, the Truman State softball team has experienced a streak of success. The Bulldogs won 15 of their last 20 games in conference play. Players attributed this continued success to aggression at the plate, a strong pitching staff and contributions from all players in the lineup.

Cate Simon, a redshirt senior third baseman, said the team is playing so well because her teammates all are on the same page.

"We finally found our groove," Simon said. "It took some time, but everyone is on the same page, and everyone is competing. We trust each other and support our teammates no matter the situation."

Simon said she is impressed with how well the entire batting order is performing this season. She said the Bulldogs have the ability to rely on any player to come through with defensive plays and big hits when the team needs them.

Heading into the final stretch of the season, Simon said the team could improve

before heading into the GLVC tournament. She said each team member needs to focus on the details. She said sometimes in games, the players have a tendency to get caught up in the moment and forget to do the little things right. Simon said once the team perfects these details, less mistakes will happen when the postseason arrives.

"We finally found our groove. It took some time, but everyone is on the same page, and everyone is competing."
-Redshirt senior third baseman

Cate Simon

Senior pitcher Kelsea Dorsey said pitching and hitting have contributed to the Bulldogs' recent success. Dorsey, who has a current earned run average of 2.39, said she is confident when she is on the mound because she can rely on her defense to make key plays.

The Truman pitchers have held their opponents to under a .250 batting average this season, with all three pitchers working

with an ERA under 2.5. Bulldog pitchers senior Kindra Henze and freshman Lauren Dale also have pitched in significant innings for the Bulldogs. Henze, who has a 2.01 ERA, has pitched 94 innings despite a torn ACL earlier this season. Dale has pitched 34 innings for the 'Dogs and has posted a 2.45 ERA thus far this season.

Dale said getting on the scoreboard first also has helped the Bulldogs to their winning record. Overall, Truman has outscored its opponents 32-13 during its 36 games. In fact, the Bulldogs have outscored their opponents in every inning but the fourth and eighth innings in total this season.

Dale said to prepare for post-season play, it is important for the team to remain aggressive at the plate and try to jump ahead any chance it can. Dale said if the Bulldogs focus on each game separately, take one pitch at a time and finish strong, they will continue to win.

The 'Dogs will face a four-game home stretch before hitting the road for the final two GLVC matchups of the regular season. Truman will play against the University of Southern Indiana Eagles noon Saturday and Bellarmine University noon Sunday.

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