

Softball senior overcomes injury



Trevor Stark/TMN

Senior pitcher Kindra Henze throws a pitch in a game last season. Henze was honored as a third-team selection in the GLVC last year. Henze currently holds a record of 10-7 for the 2016 season, going 6-2 on a torn ACL.

BY RACHEL STEINHOFF
Sports Text Editor
tsusportseditor@gmail.com

On March 13 of senior pitcher Kindra Henze's final season as a Bulldog, Henze suffered an injury. Henze faced a serious setback and an improbable comeback.

It was an exciting day as the finale to a doubleheader against conference opponent McKendree University went to extra innings. But rather than excitement, the eighth and final inning brought a different kind of emotion for the Truman State softball team.

After releasing a routine pitch, the team watched as its 2-time All-Conference pitch-

er went down in pain, left the game and was evaluated for her injury.

The result was a torn ACL — a potential season-ender for the senior.

Truman athletic trainer Cassie DeBlauw said the anterior cruciate ligament is one of the main sources of stability in the knee. DeBlauw said the ACL prevents the tibia from moving forward — a necessity for competitive athletics. DeBlauw has worked with Henze throughout the rehabilitation process and said she is proud to credit Henze's successful comeback to hard work in the athletic training clinic and on the field.

Deblauw said rehab for the ligament is extensive and tedious, often requiring surgery and 6-9 months of post-op recovery,

but with her senior season on the line, Henze did not have the luxury of time.

"The pain was the first thing that registered in my mind," Henze said. "It was intense, and at first that's all I could really think about. Once [the trainers] were able to get me off the field and into the dugout, that's when it became more real. I saw my season flash before my eyes. My senior year felt like it was over right there."

Henze said she struggled to grasp the reality of the situation at first, and with the ACL injury's track record for ending athletic seasons, Henze said she doubted the possibility of overcoming the injury. Henze said a lot of people reached out to her following the injury, but many of them told her she couldn't or shouldn't go back and finish her final season.

But the year was far from over. Henze said after only two weeks out and one weekend of watching games from the dugout, she made her way back to the field. Henze said she took to the pitching circle to throw her first full, post-injury game against Quincy University March 29. Henze stepped away credited with the 10-1 win and allowed only one hit.

Henze said the first game back was scary as she felt her knee shift in ways that were not normal or natural, but she said she reminded herself this would be part of her game from there on out. Henze said she has changed some of her mechanics to better suit her injury, such as landing lighter and dispersing her weight to her ankle rather than her knee.

Despite the changes in her game, Henze currently carries a 10-7 record and has allowed 1.9 earned runs per game — the fifth lowest ERA in the GLVC. Henze is 6-2 while playing through the injury and has thrown five complete games.

Henze said DeBlauw, along with her coaches and teammates, were major contributors to her progress and encouraged her decision to play through the injury. Henze said she saw the support and love of the softball community this year more than she ever has before, and she said she has been humbled by the ups and downs of this season.

Henze said she didn't know what to expect coming back from such a major

injury but felt motivated by the challenge rather than discouraged.

"I knew in my heart I was going to play again," Henze said. "I just didn't know how successful I was going to be. Coach [Erin] Brown and I had a talk after coming to the realization that I could pitch. She said I wasn't going to be treated any differently, and if I couldn't perform then I wouldn't be allowed to play. It was a challenge for me to come back. I was told I might never throw a full game again, or that I could possibly throw a few innings here and there. Being able to prove people wrong has motivated me to stick with it and play again."

Fellow senior pitcher Kelsea Dorsey said she could not be more proud of Henze's heart and determination to get back out and help the team.

Dorsey said Henze is a tremendous worker and said she is not surprised at the way her teammate has come back to finish her career.

"At first I was devastated," Dorsey said. "It took all I had to hold my tears back because I had no idea if she would be back or not. I didn't want that to be the way she ended such an amazing career at Truman. It would have been a huge loss for all of us because she is a key asset to our team's success."

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-Senior pitcher Kelsea Dorsey

With the end of their final season quickly approaching, the senior pitching duo will attempt to lead their team through the GLVC championship tournament. The 'Dogs will play Maryville University in their first round game 10 a.m. Friday at the Eastside Centre in Peoria, Illinois.

Baseball adds wins at home



Damian Soane/TMN

BY SETH WOLFMEYER
Sports Multimedia Editor

The Truman State baseball team won three conference games last weekend against the University of Missouri-St. Louis, which improved its conference record to an even 10-10 on the season and increased Truman's chances of making it into the GLVC tournament.

The wins followed a slow start to the conference season for the Bulldogs, as the team's record was 7-9 in the GLVC before the weekend series. In their most recent series against the Missouri University of Science and Technology, the 'Dogs lost 3 out of 4 games. With the wins this weekend, the team now has a .500 record, placing the Bulldogs fourth in the GLVC West division with eight conference games remaining in the regular season.

The 'Dogs will have to maintain or improve their current position in fourth place in the West division to clench a spot in the 2016 GLVC tournament. The team is scheduled to play against William Jewell College next, which is fifth in the standings. The Bulldogs will then finish out the regular season with four games against Rockhurst University, which is tied for first place in the GLVC West.

Head Coach Dan Davis said the season is far from decided for any team in the division, because even the lowest seed holds the potential to make a run into the conference tournament. Davis said the Bulldogs' remaining schedule is not overly difficult, but that does not mean they can overlook the ability of any of the opposing teams. Davis said the team started the season with a pitching staff that struggled to win games. In the seven games before last weekend's series, he said the team pitched very well, but he said the hitters struggled to score runs despite making a lot of good contact.

"It's always easy to feel good about winning, but evaluating games that you aren't winning, but you're playing well in, that's tough," Davis said.

Senior pitcher Mark Roberts said making it into the GLVC tournament is a very obtainable goal with how close the division is. Roberts said this point in the season is the best time to get a higher place in the division. Roberts said pitching always seems to start off slow at Truman, but now that the pitching staff has been able to throw regularly throughout the season it should continue to improve. Roberts said the most important part for the players to focus on is themselves — to understand how they play and put all of their strengths together.

Freshman outfielder Mason King said the team did not start off the season as well as the players expected it to, but lately it has been playing better. King said the team lost games by larger


margins to start the season, but is becoming more competitive as the season advances. King said the biggest struggle for the Bulldogs this season is playing a complete game of baseball with good pitching, hitting and defense all at once.

The 'Dogs will play noon and 3 p.m. Saturday at Bulldog Baseball Park as they take on William Jewell College. The 'Dogs will then honor their seniors as they host the Cardinals again for Sunday matches at noon and 3 p.m. Sunday.



Damian Soane/TMN

Left: The Truman outfielders gather during a pitching change. Above: Bulldog baseball players gather in the dugout to watch the game. Truman baseball will have its final homestand this weekend.



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