



# Bulldogs drop back-to-back games on the road

BY CURT WICHMER  
TMN Staff Writer

Last weekend, the Truman State men's basketball team had its eight-game win streak snapped with back-to-back losses. In their first two games of the spring semester, the Bulldogs fell to No. 9 ranked Bellarmine University on Thursday and the University of Southern Indiana two days later.

The Bulldogs jumped to an 8-2 lead within the first two minutes of the game against the Screaming Eagles of Southern Indiana. However, Southern Indiana gained the lead and kept it for the remainder of the game.

Redshirt junior guard Dwight Sistrunk Jr. had five assists for 20 minutes of playtime during the Bulldogs' 81-64 loss against the Screaming Eagles. Sistrunk said it is difficult for a team to win on the road because there are a lot of additional factors that can drain the athletes' energy, such as the long bus ride and getting prepared in an unfamiliar location. Sistrunk said the Bulldogs went up against some of the toughest competition they've faced all year and he said the biggest contributor to the loss against USI was the lull in the Bulldogs' performance during the first half.

Sistrunk said the team has a lot of strengths that were important factors in its past victories, and the players hope to continue to use those strengths throughout the rest of the season. He said the 'Dogs are close to the top of the league in their turnover ratio, and they do a good job of keeping the flow of the game going, staying mobile on offense and making sure to get inside the paint. Sistrunk said this week will be a good week for recovery.

"I'm new to the team, but I'm sure we'll bounce back," Sistrunk said. "We have a game coming up this Thursday, and at least another ten more games. We just have to make sure we are ready for them."

Head Coach Chris Foster said there's a lot the Bulldogs can learn from last week's losses.

"We're going to watch those two games again and compare them to how we performed as a team during those eight games," Foster said. "After we go over them, we're going to go back to practice and go over some of the fundamentals we didn't execute so well over the weekend."

Foster said games this week against the University of Missouri-St. Louis and Maryville University will be great chances for the Bulldogs to get back into the swing of things.

Foster said getting back on the winning track starts with practice. He said the Bulldogs' best bet is to get back on the practice court and regain the confidence that drove them before facing two losses in a row.

"But for sure, the team's going to bounce back," Foster said. "The team has great balance in sharing the ball. I know we've got six guys who average between eight and 12 points a game, and that balance makes us tough to defend."

Foster said the team is one of the leaders in the nation in terms of taking care of the ball. He said they also force a lot of turnovers and take good shots — things that can make it easier for an offense to run. He said the 'Dogs just need to do what they did during their eight-game streak — get dialed-in on offense and defense during practice and carry that attitude into games.

The Bulldogs fell behind during the first half against Southern Indiana, 32-19. Although the offense managed to score 45 points during the second half, the Bulldogs lost 81-64. The 'Dogs made 24 of 64 field goal attempts on the night.

Redshirt sophomore forward Connor Lusso said being better prepared would have helped the team during the weekend. Lusso said the Bulldogs faced two really good teams, but he said that shouldn't write off Truman's performance as a fluke. Lusso said their best bet is to go over the basics — blocking out, rotating on defense, and the like. However, Lusso said the Bulldogs have many opportunities to recover.

"Most other teams have only one star player they focus the ball on, but I know we have a bunch of guys who contribute evenly to the team, and that makes it a lot harder to guard us," Lusso said. "... So if someone's having an off night, everyone else can easily pick up the slack and step it up. After break, we had a bunch of really great practices where all the guys competed and everyone was doing well."

The Bulldogs' conference record dropped to 4-3, landing them in third place in the GLVC West. Truman will face the University of Missouri-St. Louis at 7:30 p.m. tonight in Pershing Arena and will host Maryville at 3 p.m. Saturday.

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