

Men's b-ball set for quarterfinal

The Truman State men's basketball team defeated UMSL in pursuit of its second GLVC tournament quarterfinal appearance. The sixth-seeded Bulldogs will face the No. 3 seed University of Wisconsin-Parkside Friday for a chance to advance to the semifinal.

BY SETH WOLFMAYER
Staff Writer

The Truman State men's basketball team will advance into the GLVC Tournament quarterfinals after defeating the University of Missouri-St. Louis Sunday 90-84.

The Bulldogs concluded the regular season on a four-game winning streak, letting them play further into the GLVC tournament. Truman's next tournament game will take place Friday against the University of Wisconsin-Parkside.

The 'Dogs fought a close game against the Tritons, who led Truman for the majority of the first half. The Tritons built early momentum with accurate shooting but did not get more than a six-point lead. Head Coach Chris Foster said the team struggled to stop the Tritons during the first half because UMSL continued to make shots even when the Bulldogs switched up the defense.

"We just searched for a line-up or a defense we could play to get some stops," Foster said.

Truman closed the gap late during the first period, going into half-time behind by one. The Tritons' lead ended quickly during the second half when the Bulldogs went on a run to take the lead. The 'Dogs led for most of the remainder of the game, only allowing the Tritons to tie the score once before regaining the lead. Junior guard Kyle Kanaskie, who scored seven points in a row at the start of the second period, said the team was a bit sluggish during the first half but came out during the second with more determination.

"We ended the first half on a little run," Kanaskie said. "In the second half, we just really wanted to come out with a lot of intensity."

Five Truman players finished with more than 10 points Sunday, with the

team hitting more than 60 percent of its shots. Kanaskie was among the Bulldog's point leaders, scoring 16. Senior guard Cole Myers led the team with 19 points, converting seven out of eight attempts. Redshirt junior guard Cory Myers earned the most rebounds for the team, bringing down eight of the team's 32 rebounds. Redshirt junior guard Dwight Sistrunk Jr. scored 14 points and finished with a career-high eight assists and four steals.

Kanaskie said Sunday's game is the last time the 'Dogs will play at Pershing Arena for the season because the remainder of the tournament is at The Family Arena in St. Charles, Missouri. Kanaskie said getting one last home game to start the tournament was good for the team.

"We were telling each other and reminding each other just to stay the course," Sistrunk said. "Some teams have flashes of brilliance, but it's hard to maintain that for 40 minutes."

Redshirt junior forward Connor Erickson also returned to the court from injury. Erickson only played five minutes on Sunday, but went two-for-two from the floor. Sistrunk said losing Erickson was a big loss for the team, and getting him back is a big boost. Sistrunk said returning to playing form takes a few games, and last night's game was a big step toward getting Erickson back to playing at full strength.

Truman will compete against the No. 3 University of Wisconsin-Parkside Rangers during the tournament quarterfinals. Sistrunk said the Bulldogs want revenge against the Rangers because the 'Dogs lost 102-98 during overtime to the Rangers Feb. 11. Sistrunk said this game is one he has been looking forward to for a while because the last game against the Rangers sticks out as one of the team's most frustrating losses this season.

Tourney time for women's hoops

BY CURT WICHMER
Staff Writer

Earlier this week, the Truman State women's basketball team had the opportunity to enter the GLVC Tournament with a three-game win streak and seize a bye during the first round. Following a 65-53 loss to Quincy University, however, the Bulldogs entered the tournament through a play-in game at Pershing Arena.

The Quincy Hawks jumped to an early lead during the first quarter and finished the half 30-18. The Bulldogs closed the gap during the third quarter but couldn't finish the comeback during the last ten minutes of the game.

Because of injury, sophomore guard Rachel Steinhoff's return for Thursday was uncertain, but she got 22 minutes of court time and scored five points. Senior guard Courtney Strait led the team with 17 points and six rebounds during 35 minutes of play. Overall, the 'Dogs made 20 of 62 field goals and connected on eight out of 23 shots from behind the arc.

Head Coach Amy Eagan said a lack of focus caused the Bulldog loss. Eagan said it is important to focus during practice the day before a game, and that mentality easily can carry over to the game. She said she thinks the team can use the game against Quincy as a lesson for future games about how important it is to focus at practice. Eagan said Quincy had a better night than her team and was able to execute its game plan better. She said in addition, the Bulldogs had trouble finding ways to score, and they put the Hawks on the free throw line for 20 attempts.

Despite the loss, Eagan said the game was nothing the team should get down about. Instead, she said she wanted players to focus on what was ahead — the GLVC Tournament and the game against University of Missouri-St. Louis during the first round.

"They will learn and move on," Eagan said. "We cannot dwell on the loss and just need to keep looking forward. I'm sure this group knows they can win the tournament. They have worked too hard not to believe that, and they will not go down easily."

The Bulldogs then played their GLVC tournament first-round game against the UMSL Sunday. Although the 'Dogs and the

Tritons hung around throughout the first three quarters, Truman eventually pulled away during the fourth quarter, outscoring UMSL 18-12 during the final ten minutes to take the victory 58-51.

Junior center Cassidy Clark said the loss to Quincy played a part in the win against the Tritons, calling it a "wake-up call" to her teammates. Clark, who scored four points during 17 minutes against UMSL, said the team is prepared to move forward in the tournament and has a new focus on winning.

"We're really motivated to keep winning," Clark said. "We're really doing this for the seniors — they're going to finish this year, and we want to make sure they get to keep playing for as long as they can."

With Sunday's win, the team will move on to the second round of the tournament today, March 3, in St. Charles, Missouri, where Truman will face Quincy for the third time this season. Moving into the quarterfinals, Clark said the Bulldogs are looking to get even with the Hawks. Clark said the team has taken the recent loss personally. She said she thinks Quincy will overlook their game against Truman, but Clark said she has other plans. She said the 'Dogs are going to take Quincy by surprise and beat them just like they did earlier this season.

Senior guard Tawny Tucci also is looking forward to the game against Quincy. Tucci said she thinks the entire team has a chip on its shoulder and will be using that aggression to its advantage. Tucci said she thinks the key to winning this week will be directing that energy to the Bulldog offense while maintaining good communication and control, especially on defense.

"We have a whole new mentality coming into this game," Tucci said. "We were a little stressed and anxious when we were playing for that bye round, and I think it may have psyched us out, but we're coming into Thursday's game with nothing to lose. I think we're capable of exceeding everyone's expectations ... even our own."

The rematch between the Bulldogs and the Hawks will take place 6 p.m. today, March 3, at the Family Arena in St. Charles, Missouri. If the Bulldogs win, they will move on to the semifinals, which will start at 2:30 p.m. Saturday at the same location. The GLVC Tournament will conclude March 6.

Bullets ready for spring competition



Courtney Strait/Index

Above: Senior back Jenna Hail tackles junior forward Taylor Ordnung during a drill in practice called "Triangle Tackle." The Bullets rugby team is 0-1 so far this spring.

BY COURTNEY STRAIT
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A positive mindset and strong team bond are crucial to the Truman State women's rugby team's success. With a large group of returning players, eager newcomers, and a strong coaching staff, team members said they are looking forward to growing the program and improving their skills before the heart of the spring season begins.

The team, which has 22 members, used its practice time during the fall semester

to teach new players the rules of the game and techniques performed on the pitch. Senior back Breanne Durovic, who is also a coach, said the new recruits are going to set a strong foundation for the future of the program, and they have made a positive impact so far during the spring.

"Last year, we ended up having more rookies than returners," Durovic said. "This semester, we have three more rookies and they have been picking up the game so well. I'm proud of them, and they are going to be a super great addition to the team."

The Bullets participate in Div. II competition against teams across the country. Durovic said though the East and West coasts have better-developed rugby programs, rugby is becoming more popular throughout the Midwest. The Bullets compete against teams such as the University of Missouri, University of Arkansas and University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Durovic said during the spring season, the team practices for two hours three times per week. She said players use this time to work on tackling, falling, defense and communication drills. Durovic said the newcomers already are very invested in the sport and committed to improving themselves during the coming weeks.

The spring season began Saturday when the Bullets competed against the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, Missouri. Although the team lost 81-5, Durovic said the players will use the game as a learning experience and an opportunity to work on different aspects of their game. Durovic said it was not the best start to the 2016 season, but it gave the coaches time to plan practices based on what needs to change.

Senior flank Alisa Rippee said the team needs to emphasize defense and communication during its upcoming practices. Rippee said it is difficult to practice these aspects indoor during the winter months, so players will focus on those components to prepare for their next tournament. Rippee said they will

have the opportunity to practice harder when they work on their skills outside.

Off the pitch, Rippee said the team — and the sport in general — has formed lifelong friendships for her and taught her life lessons. Rippee, who played rugby during high school, said the sport teaches players to adapt a positive mindset during competitions, which creates an even better bond off the field.

Junior forward Megan Whitelock said the community aspect is an important facet of the game. Whitelock said during this season, the team is taking advantage of its veterans to teach the new players.

"Each returning player took a rookie under their wing to help them and teach them the rules of the game," Whitelock said. "From watching rugby games to answering questions, [returning players] love talking about rugby and will do anything to help others understand the game."

Whitelock said the combination of experienced players and strong newcomers has energized the team. She said the new faces have added many strengths to the Bullets squad. Looking forward to the remainder of the spring season, Whitelock said she hopes to use the team's experience and try new drills during practice. She said her teammates are willing to learn and are working hard every day.

The Bullets' next competition will take place during the Rufferfest matchup April 2 in St. Louis.

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