

Volleyball splits in Warrensburg

BY RACHEL STEINHOFF
Staff Reporter

The Truman State volleyball team made its regular season debut last Friday during the Peggy Martin Challenge at the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, Missouri. The team opened its season with a win against the University of Mary, but later fell to the tournament hosts, the 13th-ranked Jennies of Central Missouri.

The day began with the Bulldogs dropping the first set to the University of Mary by a close score of 28-26. However, the 'Dogs rebounded quickly and came back to win three straight sets in a 3-1 victory to open the season. Friday night's game featured the Bulldogs competing against their long-time rivals, Central Missouri. Truman jumped to an early lead and was two points away from claiming the first set when Central Missouri scored five points to steal the set.

Senior hitter Abby Heise said she would have liked to see the team play with more confidence during that rough stretch.

"We kind of went into panic mode, or as our team would call it, 'threat state,'" Heise said. "We had the lead, but as soon as they pushed back, we let them in. I would like to see us have the confidence that we can and will put teams away — no matter who they are."

Heise said she believes hitting will be a major focus of improvement throughout the season.

"Offensively, I think we're still adjusting to each other," Heise said. "We haven't quite found our rhythm yet, but that comes from having new setters, new hitters and a new tempo. Once we start to gel and gain more experience, our offense will come."

Sets two and three went to the Jennies, giving them a 3-0 win over Truman. Central Missouri would go on to win all of its matches during the weekend, finishing the Peggy Martin Challenge with an undefeated 5-0 record.

On Truman's side, the completion of day one would leave the Bulldogs at 1-1. Offensively, opening day was led by sophomore hitter Jasmine Brown, who garnered 23 kills between the two matches. Brown said her success during the weekend largely was because of her team.

"Every time we had a time out or a pause in the game, my teammates would let me know what was open and where

to hit," Brown said. "I was also successful because of our middles being a big threat. They kept their blocker with them and that would leave me with one blocker most of the time."

Brown said both of these things served as advantages for her but in the end, she knows the team is all that really matters.

Brown said gaining experience should be a key factor for the 'Dogs this season. With fresh faces getting a lot of court time, Brown said she hopes the team will continue to reach its potential.

"We are not like normal teams," Brown said. "We don't lose, we learn. We don't complain,

we adapt. We don't run from challenges, we embrace it. We are successful because we are a united front and a family."

A few of those fresh faces led the defensive effort for the 'Dogs during day one of the tournament. Redshirt freshman libero Claire Wandrey led Friday's defensive line with 32 digs. Redshirt freshman setter Matti Mason recorded a double-double in assists and digs during her first two collegiate matches.

Saturday brought yet another split for the 'Dogs as they captured a morning victory over Western University before falling to St. Cloud State University later that afternoon.

Although the team dropped the second set, the Bulldogs won the other three sets in their 3-1 victory against Western University. Senior hitter Ali Patterson led the defensive effort for the 'Dogs and recorded seven blocks. Truman tallied 16 blocks and held their opponents to just a 0.145 kill percentage.

Wandrey said she noted how important this is for her to do her job in the back row.

"The front row did a really good job with blocking this weekend," Wandrey said. "The blocking makes it easier for our defense to set up around them, which in turn, makes digging the opponent easier. Also, repeatedly blocking opponents often frustrates them, making it less likely for them to hit as hard the next time."

Truman's front row stayed consistent during the second match as the 'Dogs tallied 16 blocks. This time, however, it would not be enough to give Truman the victory. After claiming the first set, Truman dropped three sets during a 3-1 loss to finish the tournament. The 'Dogs hit just 0.156 percent on the game.

Next for the 'Dogs is the Vulcan Invitational Tournament in California, Pennsylvania. Truman will face Fairmont State University 2 p.m. Friday.

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