WOMEN’S SWIMMING WINS SIXTH STRAIGHT NATIONAL TITLE

It was history in the making on March 11, 2006, as the Truman women’s swim team became the first NCAA Division II women’s swimming program to capture six consecutive national championships.

Continuing the dynasty that began under former head coach Seth Huston with the team’s first national championship in 2001, and was later solidified under former head coach Colleen Murphy’s four straight national championship squads, Mark Gole took over the Truman swim teams in 2005, coaching a women’s squad which was once again the favorite to win the national championship.

Gole looked to claim his own place in Truman swimming history, as yet another Bulldog swimming head coach to guide the women’s squad to a national championship.

Taking a team that was in an apparent transition period, having lost several key national champions and all-Americans from the 2004-05 squad, Gole helped the squad along its way to NCAA swimming immortality. Not only did Truman win its sixth straight women’s swimming national championship, but the team also continued along a path that has seen the Bulldogs place in the top five nationally for nine consecutive seasons, dating back to the 1997-98 fourth-place finishing team.

The Bulldogs national championship came in dominating fashion, scoring 664 points to beat their closest competitor Drury by 159 points. This was the sixth straight year that Drury has come in second to Truman at nationals.

While this was not the largest margin of victory that the Bulldogs have had during the national championships run, this victory was quite impressive considering Truman defended its national championship crown in 2005 by a scant 49.5 points over rival Drury.

Winning in dominating fashion, as the Bulldogs did, was Gole’s plan all along, according to the now national champion Truman head coach.

“I didn’t want to have to go into day three going, ‘Is this the day we’re going to come back?’ I didn’t want to come back. I wanted to set everything up and win it outright,” Gole said.

During the team’s run to this season’s national championship, the Truman women’s squad also collected its second straight New South Intercollegiate Swim Conference championship. Coinciding with the team’s run of national championships, this marks the sixth season in a row that the Bulldogs have won their conference championship, with the prior four conference victories coming during the 2000-01 to 2003-04 seasons when Truman was a member of the Central States Conference.

Following the team’s sixth consecutive national championship win, head coach Mark Gole was named the women’s NCAA Division II National Coach of the Year. Gole took over the reins of the Truman swimming program in the spring of 2005 following the resignation of former head coach Colleen Murphy after last season’s national championship victory.

Truman had two relay teams crowned national champions at the meet. On day one, the 200 medley relay squad of Emily Greenwood, Brigit Brunsman, Laura Harp and Whitney Jensen swam a time of 1:44.36 to seal the victory for the Bulldogs.

On the third day of competition, Truman’s 800 free relay team of Jacqui Dempsey, Whitney Wodstrich, Lija Kaleps-Clark and Molly Polette touched the wall first to claim the Bulldogs second national championship at the meet.

While the two national championships won at the meet by the Bulldogs are not as many as they have had in years past, Gole said the team’s depth is what really helped pave the way for the title.

“We only won two races, but we only had two events that we didn’t have anybody in the top eight in,” Gole said. “Out of 19 events, that’s not bad.”

In a remarkable showing of overall team strength, 17 of Truman’s 18 competitors came home with all-American or honorable mention all-American honors for scoring at the meet.

Leading the charge for the Bulldogs all-Americans were the squad’s lone seniors at the meet. Jensen, Katie Funk and Aimee Gregor. Jensen swam away with seven all-American honors, Funk won four, while Gregor rounded out the senior leadership with three all-American awards of her own.

Whitney Wodstrich and Molly Polette each collected six All-American awards, while Lija Kaleps-Clark came home with five.

Other members of the national championship team were: Brittany Anderson, Erika Anderson, Brigit Brunsman, Jacqui Dempsey, Emily Greenwood, Jessie Lemaster, Laura Harp, Lindsey McReynolds, Emily Pufall, Catherine Sonnichsen, Lindsey Vaughn and Katie Welsh.

After a remarkable six-year run of national championship victories, Truman will look for lucky win number seven in 2007. Were the Bulldogs to claim their seventh consecutive national title, they would set the mark for the fourth-longest consecutive national championship winning streak in NCAA men’s and women’s swimming in all divisions. The Division III powerhouse Kenyon College (Ohio) men’s swim team leads the way with 27 straight championships, dating from 1980 to present. The Kenyon women’s swim team is second on the list with 17 consecutive wins themselves, having won national championships from 1984-2004. Third on the list is the Division II Cal State Bakersfield men’s swim team, with eight straight national titles from 1986-93.
Pershing Arena was rocking this winter as the Truman men’s basketball team had a season for the record books. The Bulldogs, picked by league coaches to finish last, won eight of their first nine games, and were 14-2 following a 64-52 win over Missouri Southern on Jan. 7.

The only two losses during that span was a three-point loss to Division I, Southeast Missouri State and an overtime defeat to nationally ranked Southwest Baptist on the road.

After a brief two-game losing streak, the team rebounded to win five straight games, all coming down to the final possessions.

The streak started in Emporia when Austin Kirby’s only two points of the game gave the Bulldogs a three-point lead with :07 seconds to play. Truman watched a Hornet three-point attempt fall short for the 61-58 win.

The next game nearly blew the roof off Pershing. The Bulldogs trailed rival Northwest by 11 points with just under eight minutes to play when senior guard Chip Sodemann took matters into his own hands. Sodemann scored the next eight points, with two three-pointers to pull the ’Dogs to within two with 5:04 to go. Kirby tied the game but Northwest went in front again on a pair of free throws.

The Bearcats had a chance to take a two-possession advantage but the Bulldog defense stepped up with a pair of blocked shots, one by Derek Lindsey, the other by Sodemann with 1:45 to go.

The two teams traded baskets until Sodemann found Andy Calmes down low for the go-ahead lay-up with :31 showing on the Pershing scoreboard. Another strong defensive stand and a loose ball rebound grabbed by Kirby led to a fastbreak dunk by Grant Agbo for the 60-56 victory.

Truman kept the momentum going the following Saturday at Washburn by defeating the Ichabods 81-72 for the series sweep.

Northwest looked to return the favor a week later in Maryville, Mo., but the Bulldogs would have none of it and rained three-pointers on the Bearcats.

Kirby was 7-of-9 from outside and Lindsey added four more long-range bombs to lead the Truman team to a 76-71 road win.

The late game heroics continued at home on Feb. 8. Trailing Emporia State by one point with :14 seconds left, freshman Banks Estridge took a shot that barely missed but Calmes was there for the offensive rebound and tip-in with one second on the clock to give the Bulldogs the 68-67 win.

Truman’s winning streak ended at Missouri Western but the return to the raucous Pershing Arena was just what the team needed in the next game against Pittsburg State.

The Bulldogs again rallied from 10 points down in the second half and needed another late shot to force overtime against the Gorillas. This time, Nick Certa scored with :11 seconds left to tie the game at 69 apiece.

After three Bulldogs had fouled out three players in the extra five minutes, Sodemann dropped a three to put Truman in front for good at 77-74. Kirby would ice the extra five minutes, Sodemann dropped a three to put the game out of reach with :18 seconds left. Calmes missed the second foul shot and after a scramble for the loose ball, Kirby grabbed it and made the game-winning basket with three seconds left.

The Bulldogs entered the final week with home games against the top-two conference teams with a chance to win the league title. As in previous games, the visitors, Central Missouri State, took a double-digit lead and watched as the scrappy ’Dogs came barking back.

The Mules had a 10-point lead with just under four minutes to play but a 15-6 run, capped off by a three-pointer by Sodemann pulled the Bulldogs to within one with :15 seconds showing.

This time the Pershing magic didn’t kick in as the Mules were 3-of-4 from the foul line in the closing seconds, and Central escaped with a 66-62 victory.

Southwest Baptist showed why they were the top team in the league in the next game as they missed just five field goals in the second half and shot 76 percent to win the MIAA championship.

The Bulldogs returned to the MIAA postseason tournament for the first time since 2001 as the number-three seed. Emporia State was the opponent in a game that featured 15 ties and 22 lead changes, but in the end, the Hornets outscored the Bulldogs 13-6 in the final two minutes to win 96-90 in historic Municipal Auditorium in Kansas City, Mo.

Truman awaited word from the NCAA on a possible at-large bid to the Division II national tournament. As the last bracket was announced, the Bulldog players saw they did get invited to the dance and headed to Bolivar for a rematch with Central Missouri State in the opening round.

The Bulldogs came out and took command of the contest, taking a 20-point lead early in the second half. However, the Mules figured out the best way to get uncontested baskets was to get to the foul line. Central scored 29 of its 67 points from the line, including 20 in the second half to send the game into overtime.

After a three by Kirby with 1:55 to go in overtime, Central scored the next six points, with four coming from the line to end the Bulldog season.

When the season came to an end, it also brought to a close one of the most durable players in Truman history in Sodemann. He played and started in every game during his college career, 110 straight. He completed his Truman career with 1,098 points, 15th all-time in school history. He was a second-team all-MIAA pick and a member of the MIAA all-defensive squad. Sodemann was honorable mention all-conference following the 2004-05 season.

More postseason honors came for junior Andy Calmes. After being named honorable mention last season, Calmes was the first Bulldog since Cory Parker in 2000 to be named first-team all-MIAA.

Senior Derek Lindsey was the third Bulldog to be named to the all-conference teams. Lindsey was one of the league’s top defensive players and earned honorable mention all-conference.

Coach Jack Schrader was selected by league coaches as the Coach of the Year in the conference and was later picked as the South Central Region Coach of the Year by the National Basketball Coaches Association.

The Bulldogs 20-win season was the first since the Final Four team of 1998-99 and only the fifth in school history. The previous 20-win seasons were in 1978-79, 1947-48 and arguably the greatest year in Truman men’s basketball history, 1946-47 (30-2).
For the second straight season, the Truman wrestling team qualified four athletes for the NCAA Championship.

At the 2006 national meet, two seniors, Gregg Nurrenbern and Dustin Teeman, both finished off their careers with victories and a fifth-place finish.

Nurrenbern, a 184-pound wrestler, nearly advanced to the championship of his bracket. He won his first two matches with fairly easy victories.

In his semifinal match, however, Nurrenbern tied his opponent during the match. He lost by a 4-3 decision, though, after his foe received one point for having over one minute of ridetime.

He also lost his first wrestleback match, but won the fifth-place title with a decision victory. Nurrenbern finished his stay at nationals with a 3-2 record. In 2005-06, he went 33-5 on the mat and finished his career with 110 victories.

Teeman, at 157 pounds, was involved with six close matches at nationals, with each one being decided by less than three points. He won four of those matches, including a 4-2 decision in the fifth-place contest.

In two years at Truman, Teeman won 64 matches, including having a 32-12 record this season.

Both Nurrenbern and Teeman earned their second all-American awards of their career by finishing fifth at nationals.

Two other Bulldogs, senior Allen Stokes (125 pounds) and freshman Blake Peterson (165 pounds), made their first showings at the national meet. Both picked up wins, but neither was able to advance to the second day of action.

Stokes finished his Bulldog career with 59 wins, including a 15-9 this season.

In his first year at Truman, Peterson compiled a 30-5 overall record, including an NCAA Midwest regional championship.

As a team, Truman finished 16th at the national meet, an improvement of seven spots over the previous season.

The Bulldogs were 10-4-1 in dual meets during the year, their best dual record since 1992-93.

Academically, the program was even better, finishing second in the nation with a 3.413 GPA, as figured by the Division II Wrestling Coaches Association.
WOMEN’S BASKETBALL

Truman women’s basketball team was supposed to take a step back in 2005-06 due to a very young roster. However, the team surprised many people by recording the most wins in four seasons and by advancing to the conference tournament for the first time in three years.

The team was led, statistically, by the top freshman in the MIAA. Georgia Mueller made an immediate impact on the team by averaging 12.1 points and 6.1 rebounds a game. She became the first freshman to lead Truman in scoring since 1987-88.

Truman’s top-five scorers will all return next year, including honorable mention all-MIAA sophomore Candace McGee, who just missed setting a school record this year for three-pointers in a season.

MEN’S SWIMMING

Truman men’s swimming team just missed reaching its goal of a top-10 national finish, coming in 11th. The squad was a mere two points behind the 10th-place squad.

Seven of their eight competitors helped the team score points. They were led by Josh Otis, who had two individual top-16 finishes and was a member of four relay teams that scored. Alex Totura and Ryan Ferrell also earned five all-American awards at the meet.

Rounding out the men’s team at nationals was Tom Applegate, Chris Brammer, Robert Fletcher, Jason Stokes and Tony Wolff.

Bob Carlson Golf Tournament

Mark your calendar for July 14th and the Second Bob Carlson Bulldog Basketball Golf Tournament.

The outing will take place at the Kirksville Country Club and will be a four-person 18-hole best ball format. The registration fee includes golf, range balls, beverages, tee gift and a meal following play.

You can sign up as a group or you can be paired up with fellow Bulldog alumni.

Check the men’s basketball page at gobulldogs.truman.edu for more information and a registration form.

2006 Fall Schedules

The fall schedules have been finalized for three of Truman’s sports programs.

The football team will play five home games in 2006, opening with the Old Hickory Stick Game on Sept. 16. Other key dates include the Family Day game on Oct. 7 against Missouri Southern, and the Homecoming game on Oct. 21 against defending MIAA Champion, Washburn.

The Truman volleyball team, which will likely be ranked near the top of the national preseason poll, has 10 home contests this year. The top match will take place on Sept. 20 when its top rival, Central Missouri, visits Pershing Arena. Other highlights on the schedule include opening the season in Florida, including a match against Barry in a rematch of the 2004 NCAA Championship match.

The women’s soccer team will play nine games on its home pitch in 2006. The seven-time MIAA champions will play their first contest in Kirksville on Sept. 6 against Upper Iowa.

Complete schedules are now available on Truman’s athletics website at gobulldogs.truman.edu.