

Five games in eight days

BY JASE WILLHITE
Staff Writer

The Truman State University men's basketball team started its season strong last weekend, winning the first two games of the season. The Bulldogs were on the road as they faced off against Trevecca Nazarene University and Cedarville University during the GLVC/G-MAC Challenge in Maryville, Missouri.

The Bulldogs won their game Saturday against Trevecca Nazarene 84-73. Redshirt senior forward Zach Fischer led the team and posted a double-double with 24 points and 11 rebounds on an 83.3 percent shooting display. In addition to Fischer's double-digit scoring, junior guard Jake Velky had 23 points while redshirt junior guards Jack Green and Taurin Hughes had 14 and 10 points, respectively.

Game two on Sunday looked similar, with Truman beating Cedarville 75-65. Fischer nearly reached another double-double with 16 points and 9 rebounds and Velky led the squad with 22 points. Hughes also reached double-digit scoring again with a 13-point display. Junior guard Nathan Messer was also able to reach double digits, scoring 11 points for the Bulldogs.

The Bulldogs will start their season with five games this week. Within those first five games, only one is on Truman's home court. Many road games in



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Junior guard Jake Velky returns to the Bulldogs after leading them in scoring last season. Velky also shot 47 percent from behind the 3-point line.

said. "Making sure we get our sleep and eating healthy is obviously important. The coaches do a great job of balancing our practices so we can have fresh legs for our games."

Fischer said the athletic training staff is helpful in periods like these. He said they do a great job making sure the players are ready to go for practice and games, whether it be treatment for injuries, ice baths or anything else that is going to help the players get ready for the season ahead.

Green said being a student athlete can take a toll on players, as they have to learn to manage their time to make sure they finish the fall semester on a strong note. He said veteran leadership and strong coaching techniques help newer players balance their athletic and academic schedules. Players still need to find time to study for tests or work on papers or projects.

"We try to help the younger guys as much as we can, but it honestly just comes down to finding a system that works for them to balance schoolwork and basketball," Green said. "You can't really know what it is going to be like until you do it. We are there to help and give advice during stressful times, but our coaches are also great mentors when it comes to this topic because they too went through that same thing."

Green said it can be hard to make the quick turnaround when there are many games during a shorter period of time. He said he is confident the players can handle it because they have been preparing for it all offseason, and the team is used to playing many games in a short stretch. He said players should treat their bodies well by eating healthy and doing extra conditioning.

Assistant coach Mike Annese said the coaching staff doesn't solely care about conditioning and stretching. He said the coaching staff also takes a hard

stance on ensuring the team's academics are sound.

"We make sure the guys manage their time well before Thanksgiving break," Annese said. "It's important for them to stay on top of their school work during this stretch of games. We have study hall four times a week for two hours, so that really helps with time management and keeping up on school work."

The Bulldogs look to continue to improve and keep the ball rolling as they face off against Upper Iowa University on Friday followed by a huge match-up against the highest-ranked team in the nation, Northwest Missouri State University.



Junior guard Nathan Messer prepares to take a shot. He averaged 11.6 points per game last season.

so few days can take a toll on the team, but Fischer said he is confident the Bulldogs are preparing the right way.

"There is no denying that this is a tough stretch of games for us," Fischer



Redshirt senior guard Zach Fischer debuted as a starter Saturday. He recorded a double-double in the game.

NOVEMBER

17 FRIDAY

Swimming
TBA in Evanston, Ill.
at TYR Invite

Volleyball
2:30 p.m. in East Peoria, Ill.
vs. McKendree University

Men's Basketball
5 p.m. in Maryville, Mo.
vs. Upper Iowa University

18 SATURDAY

Swimming
TBA in Evanston, Ill.
at TYR Invite

Wrestling
9 a.m. in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.
at Coe College Open

Women's Basketball
1 p.m. in Kirksville, Mo.
vs. Missouri Southern State University

Men's Basketball
5 p.m. in Maryville, Mo.
vs. Northwest Missouri State University

19 SUNDAY

Swimming
TBA in Evanston, Ill.
at TYR Invite

24 FRIDAY

Women's Basketball
5 p.m. in Topeka, Kan.
vs. Newman University

25 SATURDAY

Women's Basketball
3 p.m. in Topeka, Kan.
vs. Washburn University

28 TUESDAY

Men's Basketball
7 p.m. in Kirksville, Mo.
vs. Washburn University

30 THURSDAY

Wrestling
7 p.m. in Kirksville, Mo.
vs. William Penn University, Iowa

NFL star's battle with his inner demons can be inspiration for others

BY PATRICK PARDO
Staff Writer

To some, Cleveland Browns wide receiver Josh "Flash" Gordon is just another potential fantasy football savior. His story is the triumphant tale of a man trying to outrun the demons in his life.

During his second season as a wide receiver for the Cleveland Browns in 2013-2014, Gordon was suspended two games for violating NFL substance abuse policies. His suspension, combined with being an unproven receiver on a losing NFL team, caused many fantasy football owners to draft him late or not at all. Later that season, Gordon would total more than 1,600 yards, becoming the first receiver to ever have back-to-back 200-yard games. His presence alone would cause many fantasy team owners to make the championship that year. This one season cemented his legendary status across every fantasy league.

The next season, Gordon was arrested and suspended for a DUI. He ended up playing only five games with less than desirable results, but many owners still believed in his talent. In 2015, he was suspended for the entire year for, once again, violating NFL substance abuse policies. On Jan. 20, 2016, Gordon applied for league reinstatement. His request was denied after failing another drug test in March of that year. He would apply for reinstatement again on March 1, 2017 and be denied.

On Nov. 1, 2017, after a three-year absence from the NFL, Gordon was reinstated on a conditional basis. He will finally return to the field during Week 13, Dec. 3 against the Los Angeles Chargers.

In a November interview with GQ, Gordon said his initial reinstatements started with the mentality that if he wanted any type of career, he would stop using alcohol and drugs, and he now says it's a matter of stopping so he can live.

Sports fans forget that for a lot of these athletes, their sports might be an escape from a troubling past. In Gordon's case, he said football provided escapism and served as an inhibitor, which is a scary environment for someone like Gordon who is only 26. In college and in the NFL — even during his legendary season — Gordon has gone on record saying he always had at least something in his system before every game.

Throughout the years, comments by the league and media were made about the NFL giving up completely on Gordon — another player fallen victim to inner demons. Because of this, Gordon has made an effort to better his life before his return. He said he wants to break the stereotype of being an absent father and subsequently disappointing his mother. He also said he wishes to prove he can beat this self-destructive life style.

It's amazing Gordon has gotten a third chance after failing his first two reinstatements, and we should celebrate the NFL not giving up on this young player just yet — despite all the criticism the league attracts these days.

I hope with Gordon's reinstatement that he can leave his addictions behind him and go on to have the career he deserves because his story is an important one that can inspire others who might also deal with such demons.

ATHLETE

of the week

Redshirt senior Zach Fischer started his first weekend averaging a double-double. Fischer scored 24 points and snagged 11 rebounds Saturday against Trevecca Nazarene University for his second career double-double, and then he followed with a 16-point and 9-rebound performance Saturday against Cedarville University. He had five steals across the two games.



Zach Fischer