Women’s Athletics at Truman

Truman State University offers 10 sports for women, and it’s not a stretch to say that each has enjoyed nearly unprecedented levels of success in recent history.

Consider this: Truman has captured 19 conference championships in women’s sports since 1982, the year the Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association began sponsoring championships in women’s athletics. Eight of those titles have been won the last two years.

It’s not just on the MIAA scene either. The Bulldog women’s swimming team capped it all off by winning back-to-back NCAA Division II championships in 2001 and 2002, the first team national crowns for Truman in any sport.

Led by that finish, the Bulldogs placed fourth in the final 2001-02 Sears Directors’ Cup standings, their fourth straight top-10 finish and the University’s highest ever. Truman scored in 10 sports, six of which were women’s. Of the seven Bulldog sports to collect 50 or more Sears Cup points, four were on the women’s side. That includes women’s swimming, which charted 100 points for its national title.

It was a progressive ride to the top for the Truman women’s swim team, which started its run in 1998 with a fourth-place national finish. In 1999, the ‘Dogs finished third, followed by a runner-up showing in 2000. Finally, the team reached the pinnacle of a national championship in 2001 and again in 2002.

Unlike their 2001 title, which wasn’t decided until the final events, the women’s swimmers dominated in 2002, posting an impressive 185-point margin of victory. The team won championships in nine events and set seven NCAA DII records. Seventeen Bulldogs earned all-America honors, led by freshman Diana Betsworth, who joined Jess Martin as the second Truman athlete in as many years to be named DII women’s swimmer of the year. In 2001, Martin went on to win the Honda Award, honoring the Division II Woman Athlete of the Year.

The women’s swimming team may have been the only Truman team to win a national championship, but several other women’s teams continued their outstanding traditions.

The Truman volleyball team went 37-2 and not only won the MIAA title, but also advanced to the NCAA Elite Eight for the first time in team history before finishing with a No. 3 national ranking. The team’s 12th consecutive season with 20 or more wins was one in which the ‘Dogs sported a perfect 16-0 MIAA ledger and went 28-0 against South Central Region foes.

The first all-Americans in program history were crowned in seniors Cassy Felkerson and Eliza Hoerner. Felkerson and fellow senior Jenny Glenn became the first Bulldog volleyball players to earn first-team Verizon academic all-America accolades. Felkerson went on to finish as runner-up in balloting for the Ken B. Jones Award, honoring the MIAA female student-athlete of the year. She also won an NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship and was nominated for the NCAA Woman of the Year.

Also in 2001, women’s soccer returned to the NCAA postseason for the first time since 1997 and finished with a No. 6 national ranking. The ‘Dogs advanced to within a game of the Division II Final Four and also captured their third straight MIAA championship. It took more than two years for a conference foe to score on the Bulldogs, but Truman still takes a string of 21 wins in 22 MIAA contests into the 2002 season. Two all-Americans, Emily Huyck and Jennifer Buscher, were crowned in women’s soccer.

In track and field, the Truman women crowned five all-Americans in 2002, including a trio of three-year honorees, and continued their run of success in the MIAA. Heading into 2002-03, the ‘Dogs have captured four straight top-two MIAA indoor finishes and four consecutive top-three showings on the outdoor level.

In softball and tennis, Truman women also continued their recent recipes for good fortune.

For the fourth consecutive year in 2002, the Bulldog softball team advanced to the NCAA tournament and posted a 30-win season. The ‘Dogs also won their second MIAA Tournament championship in three years. Sophomore Elizabeth Economon hit .513 to finish second in the nation with a .513 batting average in 2002 and helped the Bulldog softball team to its fourth consecutive trip to the postseason.

Division II and was a third-team all-America.

On the tennis court, the women posted a dazzling 16-3 record, including a perfect 6-0 against MIAA foes. The Bulldogs also made their seventh NCAA postseason appearance in the last eight years and had senior Jessica McKinney honored as the recipient of the ITA/Arthur Ashe Award for Leadership and Sportsmanship.

All of the prosperity hasn’t been confined to the last couple years. Success has been a part of every Bulldog women’s sport over the last decade or more.

The Bulldog women’s basketball program surged in 1998-99, when it went 22-9 overall. That year, Truman advanced to the Division II Sweet 16 on the strength of its first NCAA postseason wins and all-America Amy Eagan.

The cross country team heads into the 2002 season riding a string of four consecutive top-three finishes at the MIAA meet. The ‘Dogs have also placed in the top three at the regional meet in each of the last two seasons.

Women’s golf is the latest women’s sport to be added, coming aboard in 1985. In 17 seasons, the Bulldogs have sent a team or individual to the national championships 11 times. Over the last four years, Truman has won 15 tournaments and two duals. In its history, the program has produced 13 academic all-Americans by the National Golf Coaches Association.