https://www.bgdailynews.com/sports/wku/hilltoppers-making-adjustments-with-hudson-sidelined-with-foot-injury/article_90f447c6-96d4-5638-9c71-56ef69bcc83b.html

WKU VOLLEYBALL

Hilltoppers making adjustments with Hudson sidelined with foot injury

By MICHEAL COMPTON micheal.compton

@bgdailynews.com

Oct 28, 2024



Western Kentucky volleyball coach Travis Hudson talks to the team during a timeout during an Oct. 5 game against Kennesaw State Owls at E. A. Diddle Arena.

Grace Ramey McDowell / grace.ramey@bgdailynews.com

In one of the biggest weekends of the season for the Western Kentucky volleyball team in conference play, head coach Travis Hudson had a unique view of the two victories at UTEP.

Hudson and associate head coach Craig Bere were both unable to travel this weekend after suffering injuries during volleyball league matches on Oct. 23. Hudson suffered a Lisfranc fracture in his left foot, with Bere suffering a torn Achilles tendon about 15 minutes later.

In their absence, assistant coaches Jena Otec and Kristi Griffin and graduate assistant Kyle Cohan handled the coaching duties. WKU won 3-1 on Friday and completed the sweep with a 3-2 win on Saturday, improving to 19-6 overall. The Hilltoppers improved to 12-0 in conference play to open a two-game lead over UTEP.

The only previous time Hudson missed a game as head coach was when his grandfather passed away.

Hudson said the injuries created a pretty interesting dynamic as WKU heads down the stretch in the regular season.

"It was a chaotic 24-hour period," Hudson said. "Our flight was scheduled to leave at 2 o'clock on Thursday. It got delayed by five hours before they were even able to get on the road. I was literally sitting at the airport with them trying to decide if I could make the trip or not. It was just impossible for me to do."

He added he was proud of the way his staff and the players handled the adversity.

"I am just so incredibly proud of how they came together," Hudson said. "UTEP is a fantastic team, the first team in the country to get to 20 wins. With all the chaos our team had, they had every reason to not accomplish what they went down there to accomplish.

"Culture wins. We have a culture of not making a lot of excuses in our program. We have a culture of togetherness and this is really what I think was the other defining thing, we have a culture of empowerment. We empower our players. We don't think as a staff we are punching all the right buttons. We want to teach them how they play this game and empower them to go do it."

Otec said the players deserve all credit with the success this weekend.

"I had a lot of confidence in the players," Otec said. "It was their moment to step up and be a player-led team. I was just coaching volleyball on the sidelines. I wasn't doing anything any differently other than what I do in a typical game-day setting. I put a lot of trust in our team and I knew they had a lot of trust in us."

Hudson and Bere are both scheduled for surgery on Wednesday and will have a period of six to eight weeks of non-weight bearing on the leg following the surgery.

That puts Hudson's status for this weekend's home matches with New Mexico State up in the air. Hudson said it is his goal, not his doctor's goal, to have a secondary role this weekend.

"It's going to be really up in the air," Hudson said. "It's going to depend on how things go post-surgery. It's a fine line between being helpful and being a distraction. I've got to try to manage all that. The good part is, I have great confidence in our players and our staff.

"I feel certain in saying this, I probably won't necessarily be the head coach this weekend. I won't be able to be up and be active and do all those things, but is there a chance I could be another set of eyes sitting on the bench in some capacity? I feel like the doctor knows more what I am in for than I know what I am in for."

Beyond that, WKU has one more road trip in the regular season – at Sam Houston State on Nov. 8-9 – before closing the regular season hosting Liberty on Nov. 14-15. The Conference USA tournament is scheduled for Nov. 22-24 at UTEP.

Hudson said he expects to be ready to travel by conference tournament time.

"This weekend and in what capacity is kind of up in the air," Hudson said. "Next weekend's trip is up in the air, but beyond that I should be able to manage."

After having to scramble a bit last weekend, Otec said preparation going forward will be a little calmer – for the players and the staff.

"I think going into it we will have our typical scout," Otec said. "Have a game plan, prep for the weekend and then we kind of know now what each of us will be in charge of in-game moving forward."{&end}

Privacy - Terms