

# Vlcko takes over on offense



Chris Tharp/Index  
Junior Aaron Lowe caresses the ball during Wednesday's practice. Vlcko's theory of "you practice like you play" could motivate his players to do their best this year.

Josh Sisson  
Staff Reporter

The coaching carousel continues to spin into the 2005 football season.

Upon the resignation of former coordinator Scott Strohmeier, Aaron Vlcko was named Truman's new offensive coordinator July 20. Vlcko becomes Truman's third offensive coordinator in the last three years.

Vlcko is no stranger to head coach Shannon Currier and his staff.

"Coach Vlcko was the guy I was contacting when I first came here because I wasn't sure if Coach Strohmeier was coming," Currier said. "When the job came open again, [Coach Vlcko] was the first choice I had. Everything worked out real well."

Vlcko said a number of factors played into his acceptance of the job.

"I think Truman has a lot to offer students, as well as faculty and staff here," Vlcko said. "For me personally, the community of Kirksville is also a good choice. I have a young family, and I'd like to have a nice community to raise my family in. Kirksville definitely fits the bill there."

Strohmeier left Truman to become head coach at North Iowa Area Community College.

Currier said the opportunity was too good for Strohmeier and his family to pass up.

"I knew he was looking to be a head coach," Currier said. "He turned down the Concordia State job to come here, but [NIACC] is a junior college with scholarship money, and I think that system has always appealed to him."

Currier said the lack of continuity at offensive coordinator over the last

few years shouldn't adversely affect the offense because the system is unchanged, for the most part.

Vlcko said he has to work harder to adjust to the offensive system than a lot of the players do.

"Really, the one guy learning a lot, besides the freshmen, is me, with terminology and things like that," Vlcko said. "Our players have been in this system now for a full year, and we felt it was best to stay with that and not have to teach them all new terminology."

Previously, Vlcko spent a year coaching at Coe College (Iowa), his alma mater. Vlcko enjoyed success in his playing days at Coe. After spending one year at quarterback, he played the final three years of his career at free safety. During Vlcko's three years as a starter, Coe piled up three conference crowns along with two [NCAA] Div. III playoff appearances.

Vlcko said all his playing experience during high school and college provides him with a unique perspective from an offensive coordinator's standpoint.

"I think it really helps having played free safety and now coaching the quarterback. A lot of times the quarterback will have to know what the free safety's looking for, especially when you're throwing the ball down field," Vlcko said. "Having played that position for most of my career, I can provide the quarterback with some insight there."

Vlcko served as an assistant coach at Bemidji State (Minn.) from 1996 through 2003. In 1998 he became the program's offensive coordinator and experienced a level of success similar to that of his playing days.

He initially broke into the coach-

## Key Offensive Returners

RB Michael Patnode	662 rush yds
WR Jeff Amundson	76 catches
WR James Walton	6 touchdowns
G Tyrone McCormick*	
T Pat Murray*	
C Mike Shelden*	

\* denotes Hon. Mention All-MIAA

ing ranks by taking the running backs coaching position at Lindenwood University (Mo.) in 1994.

Vlcko said he is happy with the vast arsenal of weapons he has to work with on the offensive side of the football at Truman.

One of those weapons is senior wide receiver James Walton, who likes the intensity the new coordinator brings to the table.

"He's a good addition to our team," Walton said. "He brings a different perspective. He demands perfection. If you do anything wrong, he's going to correct you."

Vlcko said this perfectionist attitude in practice is the way to get to the top.

"I believe that you practice like you play, so I do demand a lot out of our guys on the practice field ...," Vlcko said. "My objective coming in is to get everyone prepared to win a championship, and in order to do that you have to practice and play like champions."

"He brings a different perspective. He demands perfection. If you do anything wrong, he's going to correct you."

James Walton  
Senior wide receiver

## Influx of recruits and veterans should improve squad

Josh Sisson  
Staff Reporter

The Bulldog Kennel is full right now, in more ways than one.

In the not too distant past, Truman only had enough football players to fill roughly three-fourths of the lockers. Thanks to the tireless recruiting efforts of head coach Shannon Currier and his staff the kennel is crowded, with some Bulldogs having to share lockers.

The dramatically expanded roster gives Currier a sense of optimism for the future.

"I feel good about that because that's part of getting better," Currier said. "It's depth and competition, and numbers equal power."

The 'Dogs returned to Kirksville Aug. 16 after eight days of training camp in Nevada, Mo.

They followed a rigorous practice schedule throughout camp, while also participating in a leadership course at the local National Guard training site.

Senior linebacker Marcus Yokeley said the team accomplished a lot during its stay in Nevada.

"I thought camp, especially compared to last year, was unbelievable," Yokeley said. "With all the guys Coach Currier brought in, all the freshmen, we were able to get a lot of reps, a lot of good reps at high intensity, full speed, low injury. Everything seemed to click really well."

Several of Truman's new recruits will be pressed into action immediately. True freshman Andy Swedenhjelm figures to start at defensive tackle when the season opens Aug. 27.

True freshmen Courtney Jordan and

Les Hammers could see considerable playing time at the defensive end spots, too. Such a youthful defensive line worries Currier.

"There's a lot of young players that'll be playing at D line, which makes me kind of nervous, but there's a lot of potential there, too," Currier said.

The linebacking core looks different this year. With the departure of players like Mike Mowen and Ben Wilson, redshirt freshman Kyle Glenn and junior Larry Giglio seized the opportunity to become starters.

Yokeley, the one returning starter at linebacker, said the new players are progressing nicely.

"It might be a little rough in the beginning. As much as you do in practice, it never compares to a game," Yokeley said. "But with the reps we've seen in the spring and thus far in the summer/fall, [sophomore] Josh Lucas, Kyle Glenn and Larry Giglio are all on top of their game and ready to step in."

The defensive backfield is the most experienced part of the defense, with battle-tested players returning at each position. The quarterback position is still up for grabs, although the field of likely candidates has been thinned out drastically.

Sophomore Jonathan Duffy and redshirt freshman Kurt Napier are the two frontrunners, with true freshman Michael Long being a less likely possibility.

Redshirt freshman Matt Burel, who competed for the job in the spring, has since been moved to linebacker. Currier said he is pleased with the progress shown by Napier.

"Kurt's a quarterback. He knows the game," Currier said. "He studies film.

He's smart, he's ready, he's prepared ... Part of being a quarterback is anticipating things when things get open, putting the ball where it needs to be put. I think that's what he's doing pretty well right now."

Senior wide receiver James Walton said Duffy is also a tremendously improved football player.

"He's like night and day right now," Walton said. "It just takes a while to get acclimated to the system. His accuracy is much improved. He's going to surprise a lot of people."

Whoever calls the signals for Truman in its season opener against Winona State (Minn.) will have plenty of help. Four starters on the offensive line return from last year's team.

Junior wide receiver Jeff Amundson, the team's leading receiver a year ago, is expected to start the opener after suffering a knee injury in the spring.

Walton is also an important part of the receiving corps. Junior Rich Mason made the move to tight end during spring practice and is expected to contribute.

Through recruiting, the program now has a stockpile of young talent at tight end and fullback to help provide depth.

Walton, one of the team's few seniors, said he feels an obligation to all his newly recruited teammates, as well as to his former teammates to put a good product on the field in 2005.

"There's not a lot of us in this class, but one thing we can give is the winning tradition Truman used to have," Walton said. "We could bring it back for these young guys. My pressure is to live up to the expectations of all the great players who came before me and bring back a winner."

## TWO MIAA COACHES SCOUT THE BULLDOGS:

The new quarterback should be able to do a super job in their system. Coach Currier knows how to [mold] a quarterback ... The offensive line will be a big part of the team. They're very athletic and pass protect very well. Returning all those starters and their experience should make this offense a lot better ... **James Walton** is potentially their best receiver. He reminds me of a guy they had a couple years ago, Alfonso Pugh [who tried out for several NFL teams]. Walton needs to work on his pass-catching abilities to be a more consistent threat ... Senior LB Marcus Yokeley is an intelligent playmaker who provides solid pass defense and run support .... This is their second year in Currier's system. That's the big key. The players have a lot more familiarity now and **this is their chance** to make a big jump. Do you look at the team that should have beaten [No. 2 ranked] Northwest Missouri State last season or the team that lost [77-7] to Pitt. St.? ... They need to get a good start out of the box.

-Conor Nicholl  
Sports Editor

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