

# Nourse hired as new defensive coordinator

**Former NAIA assistant coach of the year replaces Wallie Kuchinski**

**BY BLAKE TOPPMEYER**  
Assistant Sports Editor

Ryan Nourse has 10 years of college coaching experience and was nationally honored for his role as an assistant coach in 2007. But it was a personal factor that helped him get hired last Thursday as the football team's new defensive coordinator: his wife and family.

"A big part of the process is ... getting coaches that don't have wives that want to push them back home," head coach Shannon Currier said. "I've learned a lot in hiring people over the last four years, and I think we're getting better by getting more families that are connected to Kirksville — people that maybe grew up in smaller towns that fit Kirksville."

Nourse's family fits that profile. "[The Nourses] were from a small town," Currier said. "They're from Montana. His wife did come with him on the interview, so I got a chance to meet her. After meeting her and meeting his family, I felt like he's going to be a great fit for Kirksville."

Nourse will replace former defensive coordinator Wallie Kuchinski, who left Truman last month to take an assistant coaching position at the Div. III University of St. Thomas (Minn.).

"[Kuchinski's] parents are in the Twin Cities," Currier said. "His wife's parents are in the Twin Cities. A lot of times when there are opportunities close to home, it's something to look at, obviously."

Nourse emerged from a field of about 40 applicants and four finalists to get the defensive coordinator position, Director of Athletics Jerry Wollmering said. The other finalists were Truman's linebackers and strength coach Nate Holtz, NAIA Lindonwood University's defensive coordinator Shawn Nagel and the University of Mary's (N.D.) special teams and defensive backs coach Mike McMahon.

Nourse coached at NAIA Morningside College (Iowa) from 2001-07 and served as the Mustangs' defensive coordinator for the past five seasons. He was named the 2007 American Football Coaches Association NAIA Assistant Coach of the Year after helping lead Morningside to a 9-3 record and playoff berth last season. The Mustangs' defense ranked sixth in the NAIA in 2007 by limiting opponents to 13.2 points per game.

Nourse will take over a Bulldog defense which ranked ninth in the 10-team MIAA in scoring defense in 2007 and last in yards allowed. After experiencing success in the NAIA, Nourse said he is eager for the task of competing in the MIAA.

"This is a phenomenal football league," he said. "It's going to be a challenge, professionally, for me. I want to play the best, and we've been able to do that at Morningside at that level of the NAIA, which

was fun, but I kind of felt career-wise that I have to make a new challenge."

When Nourse was hired last Thursday, he became Truman's fourth defensive coordinator in as many years.

"It definitely is difficult for the players because it takes time to build trust," Currier said of the constant turnover in coaches. "It takes time to build relationships."

Junior defensive end Les Hammers is one player who will compete next season for his fourth defensive coordinator at Truman. Hammers said Kuchinski's departure came as a surprise to him.

"It just kind of popped up on us," said Hammers, one of nine defensive starters returning to the Bulldogs next season. "We thought he was going to be here next year. It was better for his situation. He was thinking about having a family and getting closer to his family and his wife's family."

Nourse will keep the 3-4 defensive system — which Kuchinski and 2006 defensive coordinator Josh Kotelnicki employed — intact. This should help ease the coaching transition for the Bulldogs.

Nourse said he wants to emphasize utilizing the team's speed out of the 3-4 system and forcing turnovers. Morningside intercepted 31 passes last season. From 2005-07, the Truman defense intercepted a total of 27 passes.

"I think I asked a whole bunch of people about [Nourse] and heard nothing but good stuff about him," Hammers said.

In an effort to get a new defensive co-

## TURNOVER

Ryan Nourse was hired last Thursday as the football team's new defensive coordinator. He replaces Wallie Kuchinski, who left Truman in March to take a job as an assistant coach at the Div. III University of St. Thomas (Minn.). Nourse becomes Truman's fourth defensive coordinator in four years.

Year	Defensive coordinator:	Where are they now?
2008	Ryan Nourse	Defensive coordinator at Truman
2007	Wallie Kuchinski	Assistant football coach at the Div. III University of St. Thomas (Minn.)
2006	Josh Kotelnicki	Outside linebackers/special teams coach at Div. II North Dakota
2005	Aaron Rasset	No longer coaching

Reporting by Blake Toppmeyer/Index

ordinator before spring practices started Saturday, Wollmering hired Nourse less than two weeks after Kuchinski resigned.

Kuchinski became the final assistant coach who was a member of Currier's original 2004 staff to leave the University when he took the position at St. Thomas in mid-March.

"It all happened pretty fast, as it typically does in the coaching world," Wollmering said. "Kind of over Spring Break, [Kuchinski] was contacted about an opportunity at St. Thomas University. He went up there

on Friday, was offered and accepted the job and was gone on Monday."

Kuchinski also was on Currier's staff in 2003, when Currier was the head coach at Concordia University-St. Paul.

"As you have more success, guys look to go on," Currier said. "And as guys get better in their field, other people want them, too. I think four years from now, I'd be surprised if we had all the coaches that are on staff currently still here. It's just part of the business. All you can do is keep trying to hire good people."

# Better defense, running game focus of spring

**BY BRENT FOSTER**  
Staff Reporter

Spring football got underway Saturday with the Bulldogs eager to improve on back-to-back six-win seasons.

The Bulldogs averaged nearly 29 points per game last season and had the No. 2 pass offense in the MIAA with more than 250 yards per game. Second team all-MIAA quarterback Matt Ticich will return to lead the offense for his senior season.

"For me, I'm trying to fix the little things that I messed up on last year," Ticich said. "[I'm] trying to work a little bit better on throwing on the run and stuff like that, little things, since I already know the offense."

Another point of emphasis

for the Bulldogs this season will be the running game. Last season the Bulldogs finished ninth in the MIAA in rushing yards per game with 114.

The Bulldogs had no players average more than 40 yards per game on the ground. Senior running back Jake Cunningham led the team, averaging 37 yards per game. He will not be back after graduating this semester. Ticich is the 'Dogs leading rusher returning from last season. He averaged 35 yards a game and had five touchdowns on the ground.

"We are making more of a commitment to our inside zone, which is more of a downhill running play, and I think we are going to be better at it because we are going to be better up front, and our offensive line is going to be

better," head coach Shannon Currier said. "... It all comes down to blocking. We have to block better than we did last year."

Truman will work this spring to fix a defense that gave up an average of 37 points per game last season, including 71 in a loss to Washburn University. The 'Dogs ranked ninth in the 10-team MIAA last season in scoring defense.

Truman hired defensive coordinator Ryan Nourse, formerly of Morningside College (Iowa), to try to shore up play on the defensive side of the ball. Nourse replaces former defensive coordinator Wallie Kuchinski, who took an assistant coaching job at the Div. III University of St. Thomas (Minn.).

"Our focus is just to get our

defense installed and learn a defense," Currier said. "And again, to play fast and gain confidence in our defensive system and gain confidence in our defensive players, so we can have confidence going into our first game."

Sophomore linebacker Eric Sternberg said the key is listening to what the coaching staff teaches.

"You just have to buy into what coach Nourse is teaching us and what his philosophy is," Sternberg said. "I think we are going to be a lot less confused and a lot more sound defensively. I mean, we've had two days of practice, and we've had a lot more fun. So just buy into what coach Nourse is telling us to do."

Special teams is one area where the Bulldogs look solid ear-

ly in the spring. Second team all-MIAA kicker sophomore Mickey Masucci is returning for his junior season. He led the MIAA in field goal percentage, making 75 percent of his kicks. He was second in the conference with 10 field goals made. Sophomore Albert Coker will be returning punts again. Coker was fourth in the MIAA last season, averaging just less than 10 yards per return.

Spring also brings lots of competition at different positions. Currier said there are many battles going on not only for starting jobs, but also for second and third spots on the depth chart.

"Defense, for example: There are some battles at corner," Currier said. "We have some good corners right now that are battling. There are five corners that

are battling for two spots. I think we have some battles potentially at safety on defense. On offense there are a lot of battles on the offensive line."

The Bulldogs lost starting safety Jesse Cooper and starting cornerback James Thabateau, both honorable mention all-MIAA.

Sternberg said there are aspects of the game that the team does not focus on as much in the spring.

"Definitely contact," Sternberg said. "Full pad, full stuff is definitely a big thing. We don't hit that match in the fall because we don't want to get hurt."

Spring practice will continue for the Bulldogs the remainder of April. The annual spring game will take place at 7 p.m. Saturday, April 26 at Stokes Stadium.

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