

DZINGAI | Zimbabwean still holds 100- and 200-meter dash outdoor records and 60- and 100-meter dash indoor records at Truman.

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an e-mail from Dzingai. The sprinter said he was fatigued from working so hard to make it through the quarterfinals and semifinals to qualify for the final heat.

Still, Dzingai gathered the energy he had left to muster a time of 20.22 and a fourth-place finish. Dzingai's race not only was a good showing for Zimbabwe, but also for Truman, the school that gave Dzingai his first chance to compete at the collegiate level.

"Just seeing how he was running and as he was competing against the best athletes in the world, it was just amazing to me and really exciting," Ed Schneider, Truman's track head coach from 1984 to 2005, said. "I was hoping maybe he'd be able to medal. . . . When you think of all the great sprinters in the world, he's one of the top ones."

Schneider said he recruited Dzingai after the sprinter's high school coach contacted Schneider about the possibility of Dzingai running for Truman. Having never seen Dzingai run in person, Schneider said he offered Dzingai a track scholarship "on good faith with what his coach was saying that he would work hard and be a real good student."

Dzingai delivered on both counts.

Cochrane said he first caught a glimpse of Dzingai in Fall 2001, when he was working out on the track. Cochrane said that although it was clear the Zimbabwean hadn't had much past training, he could see budding talent.

"I talked to some of the track guys, and I [said], 'You need to make sure that this guy comes out and works with you in the fall so he starts to feel part of this world,'" Cochrane said. "Because I said, 'This guy is good.'"

Dzingai instantly proved to be a good student, but Schneider said it took Dzingai a little time to get acclimated to colder Missouri weather — and some American food.

"After a track meet in Indianapolis, we stopped at a White Castle," Schneider said. "Brian had never eaten White Castle hamburgers. I don't think he ever forgave me for stopping at White Castle after the meet. Almost every meet after that, I used to kid him and say, 'Brian, we're going to eat at White Castle after the meet.' He'd give a big groan and his head would go down. Eventually, he knew I was kidding all the time. I think that [Indianapolis] meet was the last time we ever ate at White Castle."

Although Dzingai never took to fast food burgers, David Mayhew, a former hurdler for the Bulldogs and Dzingai's teammate and friend, said he was an instant hit with his teammates.

"He enjoyed joking around, and I guess he was kind of on the lighter side," Mayhew said. ". . . He always had a smile on his face and people responded to that very favorably. I think that probably helped him as far as adjusting to a new country and a new environment."

Before long, Dzingai started posting top times during his 2001 freshman season. He had a breakout meet at the 2001 MIAA championships, when he set the Truman record in the 100-meter dash (10.19) and 200-meter dash (20.50) during the same day.

"At that conference meet, he really just exploded," Mayhew said. ". . . That was one of the best performances I've seen in person. That's kind of when we really stepped back and went, 'Whoa.' We knew he was good, but that was an incredible performance."

Both school records still stand, and the 200-meter time broke the Zimbabwean national record, which Dzingai since has lowered.

"Clearly we knew he had the potential to be world-class," Mayhew said. "That [20.50 time in the 200-meter dash] is pretty much world-class time as it is, and then the fact that he was

No. 1 in Zimbabwe, we knew that he was going to be doing really well."

The 2001 MIAA championships sparked Dzingai's two-year run of success as a Bulldog, before he transferred to Florida State in search of warmer weather and Div. I competition.

In addition to owning the Truman 100- and 200-meter outdoor track records, Dzingai also has the school record in the 60- and 100-meter dashes in indoor track. He compiled six MIAA championships in his two years as a Bulldog and earned All-American status his sophomore season after placing eighth at the 2002 Div. II national meet in the 200-meter dash.

At 5-foot-5, Dzingai doesn't have a prototypical sprinter's physique. But Mayhew said Dzingai's explosiveness made up for any height disadvantage.

"The frequency of his leg turnover was so high that he could really move himself down the track really well," Mayhew said.

Dzingai continued to compile fast times after transferring to Florida State. In 2004, he competed in the Athens Olympics but did not make the finals of the 200-meter dash. He ran in other international competitions before returning to the Games this year. During the opening ceremonies, Dzingai carried the Zimbabwean flag as he marched in with his countrymen.

By placing fourth in Beijing, Dzingai joins Ray Armstead, a 1984 Truman alum, as Bulldog athletes who have excelled at the Olympics. Armstead was a member of the United States' 4 x 400-meter relay team that won a gold medal in the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

Schneider, who also coached Armstead, said the two Olympians had one important thing in common.

"They didn't like to lose," Schneider said. "They trained very hard and were very dedicated, disciplined athletes."

REDSHIRT | Numerous redshirt freshmen are slotted to see playing time, but only one true freshman is sure to play this season

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The biggest change for the Bulldogs in terms of freshmen getting playing time will be at the running back position. Even though alumnus Jake Cunningham saw the most carries from the running back position last year, senior Phil Kenney and junior Marvin Bemby were mixed in and combined for 442 yards. Kenney and Bemby will again start the season in a backup role — redshirt freshman Donald Harvey has claimed the starting spot for tonight's game.

"There's going to be a lot of guys playing, but going into the game [Harvey] is going to be the No. 1 guy, and we're going to like to get him the ball as much as we can," Currier said.

With Harvey in the mix, there could be as many as five ball-carriers per game including senior quarterback Matt Ticich, the leading rusher the last two seasons. Junior wide receiver Vanessa Emokpae is also slotted to see time running the ball.

"[Harvey] is not a really big guy — he's kind of a small guy, but he's got a lot of heart," junior wide receiver Albert Coker said. "He's mostly like a speed back. I wouldn't say he's a power back, but he will lower his shoulder to try to run somebody over even though he's not the biggest guy on the team."

Redshirt freshman Max Kleckner will start at punter, relieving returning junior all-conference kicker Mickey Masucci of the punting duties. Masucci was 10 for 13 in field

goal tries and averaged 34 yards per punt last season.

Michael Elliot is the only true freshman sure to see time this season. Elliot currently is listed as the fourth safety, and he also will contribute on special teams.

"Michael Elliot has really shown well at strong safety for us," defense coordinator Ryan Nourse said.

Freshmen line-backer Casey Kidwell and long snapper Greg Eagle are questionable as to whether or not they will redshirt, as is center Mark Moss.

"[Moss] will be a guy who we will probably travel, and based on how things go, you know, we're trying to save him because he won't be a starter," Currier said. "We'd like to have guys play for four years and get a lot of playing time all four years."

True freshman running back Tracy Milo, who was shown interest by Les Miles, head coach at Div. I Louisiana State University, will redshirt. A prospect from a 5A high school in Texas, Milo injured his ACL early in his senior year of high school and is only 10 months through the 12-month recovery process.

"I believe Les Miles did a home visit at some point in the process," Currier said. "I don't know if he started to be recruited by him — he was definitely well recruited by a lot of people. . . . We were fortunate to get him."

Last year, the freshman who proved most important was defensive back Luther Eta, who played in all 11 games and started the final nine. Eta will return as one of the starters this season.

TICICH | Quarterback enters his third season in a Bulldog uniform

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decisions. Also, many plays are designed so that Ticich can roll out his six-foot frame and see downfield better.

He also has led the team in rushing in his two years as the starting quarterback. In 2006 he gained 678 yards and 4.1 yards per carry, and in 2007 he had 394 yards and 3.1 yards per carry.

"Some guys have a knack for making big plays when you need them," Currier said. "And obviously he's shown since he's been here that when we need big plays, he's in there making them. And you can't measure that. It's not about the guy's speed, the guy's strength."

The extra effort Ticich puts into his game is one of the things that stood out to Vlcko on the recruiting trip.

"I remember one play in particular that he was running downfield blocking an outside linebacker, and you just don't see quarterbacks doing that very often," Vlcko said.

Because of his past success, there are high expectations for Ticich coming into this season. Currier said Ticich has a legitimate shot at winning the Harlen Hill award, which is Div. II's version of the Heisman Trophy. Only one Bulldog has ever won it: running back Jarrett Anderson in 1996.

Ticich said he doesn't let the pressure get to him. He describes himself as a loose guy. He said he doesn't put either athletics or academics above the other, and when asked how he balances his time between football and academics, he responded: "It's simple really. I wake up, go to class, go to football and then go to dinner."

Junior wide receiver Vanessa Emokpae said that even though Ticich is laid-back off the field, he's all business on it. Although Ticich is not one of the most vocal players or captains, Emokpae said his leadership comes from the example he sets.

"He takes losing pretty hard, you know," Emokpae said. "He's out there; he wants to be perfect every rep. He wants everybody to know their assign-

Ticich Tidbits

Major? History/Biology

Favorite color? Purple

Why he wears No. 11? "I have had the same No. 11 since I started playing Pop Warner."

How many brothers and sisters? Three brothers

Favorite Movie? Braveheart

Favorite TV show? The Daily Show

Favorite Sports team? Los Angeles Lakers

Favorite athlete? Kobe Bryant

Biggest Role Model? Dad

Where does he see himself in 10 years? "Hopefully in my own dental practice coaching my kid's flag Pop Warner team."

Photo by Brian O'Shaughnessy, design by Blake Toppmeyer, reporting by Jack Nicholl

ments. He goes really hard in every practice, and it just rubs off on people."

Every wide receiver is returning from last season, which Ticich said should help make the offense more consistent, especially with everyone having an extra year in the system.

Ticich said he can envision the perfect ending to his college career.

"I'd really like to go out a winner," he

said. "I want to beat Northwest, I want to beat Pitt. State and I want to have a shot at the end of it to win the MIAA. I think this team is good enough, and I know everyone counts us out, but I really think that this is the year that we can do it, so I'm excited for it."

And when that's all over, he'll still find himself in the library, studying for success off the field.

COLUMN | Playing at Kirksville High or University of Missouri would not have made sense

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ready for the opener. But playing in Rolla wouldn't make much sense for the Bulldogs, who played on the road against S&T last season.

"The last thing we would do is take our home game and put it in their stadium," head coach Shannon Currier said. "That'd be ridiculous. That was not an option. We went there last year. Home field advantage is huge in college football."

Truman is 4-8 on the road in the past two seasons, compared to 8-2 at home. So playing in Rolla against the Miners, who received national top 25 votes in preseason poll, would have increased the chances of the 'Dogs suffering a season-opening loss. With an ultra-competitive MIAA, the Bulldogs need victories in their two non-conference games if they hope to make the playoffs.

Reason two: Playing at Kirksville High School doesn't make sense.

High school football fields have different dimensions than college fields. For example, the field goal posts at high school fields are about five feet wider than college goal posts.

"I'd hate to have a game come down to a field goal that just barely makes it inside the uprights on a high school field which would have [missed wide on a college field]," Wollmering said.

Playing on a college field eliminates this risk for controversy.

Plus, Kirksville's field has a grass surface. The main reason a new synthetic surface is being installed at Stokes Stadium is so the football team can avoid playing on a grass field.

Playing on a high school grass field actually would be a step

backward from the old grass field at Stokes Stadium. This would be like having bleacher seats at a ballgame and giving them up to move to seats behind home plate, only to find out that you have to sit in the nosebleed section instead.

Reason three: Central Methodist's field is the best option of any college field in the area.

Fayette is about halfway between Kirksville and Rolla, making it a good site for both schools.

Plus, Central Methodist recently installed new lights and a new synthetic surface, making Davis Field a good venue for college football.

Wollmering said he considered playing the game at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Although Mizzou's Memorial Stadium does have FieldTurf and is a top-notch football facility, the stadium also has a seating capacity of about 70,000. A Truman vs. Missouri S&T game at Columbia probably would draw about 1,000 fans, leaving more than 60,000 seats empty and creating an almost eerie atmosphere.

Wollmering and the football team definitely have been handed a difficult set of circumstances with the delayed installation of the synthetic field at Stokes. Yet making a sound choice and selecting Central Methodist as a neutral site for Truman's season opener makes a horrible situation a little bit better.

"We can't control the field, we can't control the site being moved, but we can control our attitude and the way we respond to it," Currier said.

The Bulldogs need to respond by ignoring the field fiasco for one night and turning Central Methodist into a makeshift Stokes Stadium.

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