



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Junior back Jack Randazzo (front) battles for possession with senior back Nick Zarkadis during practice Tuesday. Randazzo and Zarkadis both played key minutes in the men's soccer team's two wins last weekend.

## 'Dogs' offense delivers, men get two wins

Larkin scores hat trick, six players net goals in two games

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For most of last season, the men's soccer team searched for a consistent offense to accompany a stout defense.

If last weekend's season opening games are any indication, the Bulldogs might have found that offensive firepower for the 2008 campaign.

Truman scored five goals in each of its two games in Tahlequah, Okla., last weekend. The Bulldogs beat host Northeastern State University 5-1 on Friday and downed Missouri Southern State University 5-0 on Sunday.

A year ago, it took the Bulldogs seven games to reach the 10-goal mark, and Truman only once scored five or more goals in a game.

Six different Bulldogs (2-0) scored at least one goal during the weekend, and sophomore forward Bobby Larkin notched a hat trick in Friday's game.

"Considering we only had 29 goals last season, and we already have 10 goals after two games, I think it's a huge step," Larkin said. "I think it'll sling-shot us into our season."

The Bulldogs switched from the Great Lakes region to the South Central region before this season. Both wins last weekend were against regional opponents, and Truman is now ranked No. 19 in the NSCAA Div. II national poll.

"We wanted to show the rest of the region — since we don't get to play some of them — that we mean business," head coach Duke Cochran said.

The Bulldogs staked early leads in both games by scoring their first goal in the opening 20 minutes. In 2007, Truman didn't score a first-half goal until the fourth game of the season.

On Sunday the Bulldogs benefited from an own goal by Missouri Southern, and sophomore forward Matt Kimball found the back of the net with a goal from the right wing to give the 'Dogs a 2-0 halftime advantage.

The Bulldogs kept adding to their lead in the second half as Missouri Southern surrendered another own goal early in the half. Although no Bulldog was credited with either of Missouri Southern's own goals, Larkin said the Bulldogs created those breaks by constantly applying offensive pressure.

"Any time you get the ball near the goal, it's just going to be trouble for the other team," he said.

Freshman midfielder Jonathan Brown and senior midfielder Josh Weir netted second-half goals to complete the rout.

Friday's game belonged to Larkin. The sophomore forward entered the contest with

no career goals, after finishing 2007 with no goals and one assist. Larkin's hat trick in the win against Northeastern State was Truman's third hat trick in the last year.

Similar to Larkin's Friday scoring outburst, Kimball scored a hat trick last September in the same game he scored his first career goal. Junior back Ben Green also scored a hat trick last season. Prior to 2007, no Bulldog player had completed a hat trick since 2004.

"[Larkin] hunted the goal really well in this game, and he played with a lot of confidence," Cochran said.

Junior midfielder Drew Pauk set up Larkin's first goal, which put Truman ahead 1-0 less than eight minutes into the game. Pauk sent a header toward the goal, and Larkin buried the ball into the left side of the net.

Larkin struck again 15 minutes later. After Brown's free kick hit the cross bar, Larkin sent a header past Northeastern's goalie, Chris Jones, who allowed five goals while making just two saves. To complete the hat trick, Larkin beat Jones one-on-one for a breakaway goal. Sophomore Dan Meagher sprung the breakaway goal with a through pass to Larkin.

"I think that one was the most exciting, just to get the

hat trick and put us up [3-1] with 30 minutes left," Larkin said.

Senior midfielder Nick Cepicky and sophomore forward Robbie Narrow each added a goal off the bench late in the second half to complete Truman's five-goal performance.

Somewhat lost amid all the 'Dogs' goal scoring was the play of Truman's defense. The Bulldogs limited their opponents to just 11 shots last weekend, while Truman fired 31 shots.

Pauk said Truman did a good job of maintaining possession, which was key in limiting the shots.

"A lot of times we would get the ball, and we would knock it around, even in our backfield," Pauk said. "We'd knock it around, but they wouldn't have it. We would have it for a while and then we'd get forward."

The Bulldogs' weekend wins came against two teams that struggled a year ago. In 2007, Northeastern State and Missouri Southern combined for a 9-22-4 record.

"We came down there and we needed to win those games and we did, but we're going to face a lot more competition," Pauk said.

Competition should be tougher this weekend.

Truman will host the University of the Incarnate Word (Texas) at 1 p.m. tomorrow and NAIA-power Graceland University (Iowa) at 1 p.m. Sunday.

Both opponents had winning records last season.

## TRUMAN ATHLETICS News and Notes

### Football: Hammers to sit out first quarter

Senior offensive lineman Les Hammers will sit out the first quarter Saturday against Southern Arkansas University because of "disciplinary action," head coach Shannon Currier said.

"We have consequences for guys who are late to things, and he is in a position where he has to sit the first quarter," Currier said.

Hammers originally was scratched from starting last Thursday against Missouri University of Science and Technology, but because that game was cancelled he will sit out Saturday instead.

He recorded 6.5 sacks and 78 tackles in 2007, was voted lineman of the year by the team and was All-MIAA.

"He's a great player," Currier said. "But our philosophy is none of our players are more important than the team, regardless if it's your best player or if it's your worst player."

Sophomore Billy Oline was slotted to start in place of Hammers against Missouri S&T. The game was cancelled because of inclement weather.

### Football: Promotions set for Mondays

The football team has multiple promotions lined up for the Mondays after its football games.

The first is with the Truman State University Bookstore. For every touchdown the team scores during a home game, the bookstore is marking down 5 percent on all articles of clothing. The most articles will be marked down is 35 percent.

The second promotion involves the New Super China Buffet. Every Monday after the team records a victory, the buffet serve meals for \$4.99 all day.

### Men's soccer: Talbot, Baker battle for time

There appears to be an ongoing battle for playing time at the men's soccer team's goalie position.

Sophomore Kyle Talbot was the primary starter in goal last season, and he started in the Bulldogs' two wins last weekend. But junior Danny Baker also compiled 20 minutes in net.

As for this weekend's games, head coach Duke Cochran gave no indication Tuesday as to who would be the starting goalie.

"The week [of practice] will always determine who starts," Cochran said.

Talbot started 13 games last season and had a 9-3-1 record and a 0.71 goals against average. Baker was not on the team in 2007.

Even with Talbot's strong numbers last season, Cochran said he would like to see a little more from all of his goalies.

"I would like to see out my goal keepers a little bit more confidence in taking over our defense and leading them," Cochran said. "And that's something I think our defenders need if we're going to play at the highest level is a goalie that's more vocal."

Talbot and Baker were not challenged much in the Bulldogs' 5-1 and 5-0 victories last weekend. Talbot needed to make just three saves in the two games, and he surrendered one goal.

"[Talbot] played well, but he didn't get to show how good he is really, not in those two games," junior midfielder Drew Pauk said. "He didn't have to make any big saves or anything. He didn't get to show off his skill that he has."

Baker also saw some playing time in each game but did not face a shot on goal.

Regardless of who is in goal, the Bulldogs likely will need a strong defensive effort tomorrow against the University of the Incarnate Word (Texas). Incarnate Word, a regional opponent, was the preseason pick to win the Heartland Conference.

### Volleyball: Leshner, Larson not on 2008 team

Two Bulldogs from the 2007 volleyball team did not return to the team this season. Junior Susie Leshner and sophomore Courtney Larson are off the roster this year.

Head coach Jason Skoch said both left the team on good terms and that both will be missed from the team. Leshner remains a student at Truman, while Larson transferred to a school in Wisconsin, where she is not playing volleyball.

Both played significant roles on last year's squad. Leshner, an outside hitter, averaged nearly three kills per set, good for third on the team. She also played in 41 of the team's 42 matches. Skoch said Leshner currently is pursuing an interest in martial arts.

This was expected to be a breakout season for Larson, who played in 28 matches last season and averaged better than one kill per set.

### Volleyball: Boehler receives MIAA award

Senior libero Whitney Boehler received Specialist of the Week honors for her performance in the Middle of Everywhere Classic last weekend.

Boehler had at least 11 digs in every match during the weekend, and she averaged 4.75 digs per set. She is one match away from matching Neely Forbes' school record of 21 matches with 20 digs or more.

### Pat Murray: Former Bulldog signed

Former Bulldog offensive lineman Pat Murray was signed by the Seattle Seahawks practice squad last week. Murray was first signed to the Seahawks in January and he saw time in games during preseason play. Murray did not make the Seahawks' final 53-man roster.

Murray appeared in 41 games and made 32 starts in his four years at Truman.

## Taylor puts past behind him, rejoins team

After off-the-field incident in 2007, junior is back on field as defender

Matt Taylor found himself in an undesirable situation last fall.

Taylor and counterpart Travis Kern, a former Truman student, were charged with tampering with a motor vehicle in an August incident involving an unlawful ride in a Pagliai's pizza delivery truck, according to the Nov. 1, 2007, issue of the Index.

The incident came after Taylor led the men's soccer team with five goals scored in 2006, yet decided not to play in 2007. Taylor is a two-sport athlete, and men's soccer head coach Duke Cochran said he thinks Taylor wanted to focus on basketball last year.

Basketball, however, never really panned out for Taylor. After his off-the-court incident, he was suspended from the basketball team

for the first semester, and he ended up only playing in three games last season.

But that's all in the past. Taylor has seemingly put last August's incident behind him, and he's moving forward with his college career. He's also back on the soccer field, where he excels.

"He's really a great kid, and I think at times we get caught at the wrong place at the wrong time," Cochran said. "... I just think he's seen the upswing to soccer and what it can maybe lead to."

Taylor did not respond to multiple requests for an interview.

Cochran said Taylor originally approached him last fall about rejoining the team and that talks continued throughout the winter.

"I think he realized how important the game of soccer is to him and that there might be an opportunity for him in this game at the next level," Cochran said. "... I just think he's seen the upswing to soccer and what it can maybe lead to."

Taylor, now in his junior season, rejoined the team for spring practices, playing a different position than in 2006, when he scored five goals and added three assists as a forward. Cochran asked Taylor to switch from offense to play in the defensive backfield, the position Taylor played in high school.

Now, the same player who used to cause headaches for opponents' goalies is teaming up with fellow junior center back Jack Randazzo to shut down other teams' forwards. Through the team's first two games, the duo has proven to be an important cog in the Truman defense — a defense that has allowed just four shots on goal and one goal in two games.

"Those two together are very fun to watch," Cochran said.

Taylor provides depth to an already talented defense, but more than that, he brings experience. Taylor joined the program prior to the 2005 season, the last season Truman made the NCAA Tournament.

Cochran said Taylor still has some areas in his defensive game that he needs to improve, such as

knowing when to challenge for a ball and when to play more conservatively.

Still, the same athletic ability that allows him to play two sports at the Div. II level and lead the soccer team in goals while playing an unfamiliar position should help him become an even stronger defender as the season wears on.

"He's solid — that's just a great word for him — he's just a solid player," said junior midfielder Drew Pauk, who played with Taylor in 2006. "He's fast. He's got a good pace to him. He's great in the air. He's got every quality that you can ask for in a good defender."

Taylor also will have a mental edge as a defender. After spending the 2006 season trying to beat defenders and goal keepers, Taylor should have a good idea of what opposing forwards are planning to do with the ball.

"Being a [former] forward helps," Pauk said. "You already have that forward mindset so you know what they're thinking. It helps you defend even more."

Plus, if at some point during the season the Truman offense slumps

or the Bulldogs need a goal late in the game, Taylor can push forward and give the 'Dogs another offensive threat. After all, Taylor has more career goals than sophomore forwards Bobby Larkin, Matt Kimball and Dan Meagher.

The Bulldogs' offense has started the season strong, and Taylor probably won't be switched back to the forward position. But Pauk said having that extra versatility makes Taylor even more valuable.

"He's very coachable," Pauk said. "If Coach asks him to play forward, he'll go up there and play forward and score some goals. If he asks him to play defense, he'll go back there, and he'll stop them from scoring."

For Taylor, his past appears to be exactly that: in the past.

"He's just happy to be back and put everything behind him," Pauk said. "He's on the team to move forward. He's on the happy, he's excited to be here and he's excited to play. He wants to win. He's fighting for what we're all fighting for: the main goal of getting into the [NCAA] Tournament and making a run [for the national title]."

### COMMENTARY



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