

TRACK | Men attempt to rebound from last-place finish at conference meet

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senior Katrina Biermann in the pole vault and Shaina Dochtermann in the hurdles. Biermann said the team has strong returners and potentially strong freshman pole vaulter Lisa Kucharski to raise the hopes for the season.

“Everyone is in a much better shape this year, so we are hoping for a good season,” Biermann said.

The indoor track season is much shorter than the outdoor season, which changes runners’ thoughts about the sport.

“People kind of view indoor track as a way to work up to outdoor track,” Dell’Orco said. “It’s definitely a lot different, as a distance runner, Everything is doubled.”

Cochrane said composition of the men’s indoor team is also largely unknown.

“Our 40 people are all young guys, and we don’t know what is going to hap-

pen,” Cochrane said. “Also, [freshman] Matthew Smith has great potential, only if he can get over this illness.”

Last year, the men finished last in the MIAA in indoor track. However, they had juniors Derek Atwood and Alex Van Delft reach the national level. With a more successful outdoor season coming into this season, the team is hoping for national bids.

“Our conference was very tough last year, so we are hoping to do well in conference, and we know if we can hit that, we can do well at nationals,” Van Delft said.

The upcoming Iowa State meet will not see many distance and middle distance runners, such as Ratterman and Dell’Orco. Truman will only take sprinters, jumpers and throwers to Friday’s meet.

“It is basically to see where you are after fall training,” Cochrane said.

“Our conference was very tough last year, so we are hoping to do well in conference, and we know if we can hit that, we can do well at nationals.”

Alex Van Delft
Junior

STAFF | Vlcko becomes an assistant coach, Nesbitt said spots for assistant coaches will be worked out in next couple weeks

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Vlcko, who became the interim coach in March after Shannon Currier’s contract was not renewed, led the injury-riddled Bulldogs to a 2-9 record that included four different starting quarterbacks.

Vlcko was offensive coordinator from 2006-2008. He is the longest tenured member of the Bulldog staff. Defensive coordinator Ryan Nourse came to Truman as defensive coordinator in 2008. Offensive line coach Marty Costello, wide receivers coach Walker Graher and defensive backs coach Thomas Kearney came in 2007.

“I came here to help this program win a championship, whether that was as head coach or offensive coordinator or an assistant coach,” Vlcko said. “I’m here to work hard and try to put the team in position to be successful on the field, and that hasn’t changed.”

Wollmering has said repeatedly throughout the coaching search that it would not be financially feasible for the new coach to bring in his own staff right away because the University cannot afford to pay two coaching staffs. The current staff’s contracts run through the end of June.

which allowed Currier to bring in two new staff members who had been with him at Concordia University-St. Paul (Minn.).

Wollmering said it is not unheard of for a new coach to retain the entire previous staff. He said earlier this season that Minnesota State University-Mankato — Truman’s first opponent — hired a new coach who kept the old staff. Mankato finished the season 10-1 with a first round loss in the Div. II playoffs.

Wollmering said steps have been taken to avoid this situation in the future. University contracts run on a fiscal year basis, from June to June. But now football coaches contracts are transitioning to calendar year contracts, so that situations like this can be avoided, and smoother transitions can take place. Nesbitt’s contract began Monday and runs until Dec. 31, 2010.

Wollmering said there is money set aside to bring in one new assistant coach immediately. He said money was set aside for a graduate assistants program earlier this year, but not all the slots were filled, so the money was put aside in case this situation arose.

Vlcko said he and the other assistants will continue to recruit and continue the normal day-to-day offseason operations they usually perform.

“I’m here to work hard and try to put the team in position to be successful on the field, and that hasn’t changed.”

Aaron Vlcko
Assistant coach

HIRE | Nesbitt makes sense as head coach

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The struggles last season shouldn’t fall directly on Vlcko’s shoulders. He was put in a difficult spot by being named interim head coach in March.

Vlcko’s argument to keep the head coach position after the season was that he has been around this program longer and given it more than anyone else. I’ll agree with him there. And I’ll give him credit for recruiting stud quarterback Matt Ticich four years ago.

But let’s be honest, a coaching change had to be made. The football team needs a facelift that only a head coach turnover can provide. It’s a much easier recruiting tool for a coach to say, “We were bad last year, but we’ve brought in a new coach, and things are going to change,” compared to, “I’ve been here for five years, and the team has gone 20-35 during that span.”

The apparent answer is Gregg Nesbitt, who beat out more than 100 candidates for the job. Nesbitt played for Truman from 1976-79 and won a state championship as head coach of Hickman High School in 2004. He also was defensive coordinator and linebackers coach at Truman from 1990-92.

Personally, I would have liked to see the new coach be someone who is new to Truman athletics — someone who is truly blind to how much work needs to be done to get Truman football back to the glory days of the early 2000s.

But Nesbitt could be just as good of a choice. Truman made the playoffs twice in the early 1990s. Nesbitt has been on the winning side against the ‘Dogs as co-defensive coordinator the last three years at the University of Central Missouri, and he already has established himself in the Kirksville community. There are a lot of good things about him.

What I like most about Nesbitt is that he does not shy away from the difficulty of the situation. Not during the press release, not during my interview with him the day of his signing, not during the press conference Monday did he shy away from the job that needs to be done.

“We’re anxious to roll up our sleeves,” Nesbitt said Monday. “It’s going to take a lot of hard work — certainly the biggest athletic challenge that I’ve been a part of in my 30-year process.”

Although I think Nesbitt was a solid choice for head coach, I’m not sold on him yet. Like Vlcko before this year, Nesbitt has no head coaching experience at a university. If he starts winning games, he’ll make me a believer.

NESBITT | Coach returns to alma mater following stints as high school head coach and college coordinator

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impressed with his connections to high school football in Missouri.

“What we liked most was his record as a football coach for one,” Gall said. “We really liked his Missouri connection. He knows virtually every coach in the state of Missouri, if not the region, so we felt like his ties there were extremely valuable for future recruiting.”

Wollmering said he and the committee had a strong agreement that Nesbitt was the best choice and there was no need to interview other candidates. Wollmering said he had 10 to 12 other names that he and the committee showed interest in had Nesbitt not worked out. Wollmering did not release the names of any other applicants because he said it would be unfair to their current job and football team.

Wollmering said Nesbitt’s \$80,000 contract began Monday. He said most MIAA coaches make \$80,000 to \$90,000.

Nesbitt has been both an offensive and defensive coach during his coaching career, which spans more than three decades. After playing a running back at Truman in the late 1970s Nesbitt was the head coach at Hannibal High School from 1984-89 and led the Pirates to the state playoffs in his final three seasons. From 1990-92, Nesbitt served as defensive coordinator at Truman, during which the Bulldogs amassed a 23-9 record and advanced to the Div. II playoffs twice.

In 1993 Nesbitt became the head coach at Hickman High School, leading the team to six playoff appearances and the 2004 Class 6 Missouri State Championship. During his 14 years at Hickman, 95 of his players received college scholarships.

His most recent coaching stints were as defensive coordinator at Central Methodist University in 2006 and as the co-defensive coordinator at University of Central Missouri the last three years.

During Nesbitt’s three seasons at Central, the Mules compiled a 22-11 record. His defenses allowed 23.3 points and 378 yards per game during his tenure.

Nesbitt said that never being a head coach at the college level should not be a factor in his success at Truman.

“Football is football,” Nesbitt said. “One of the advantages of being a high school coach is the ability to travel around not only the Midwest, but really the country and spend two or three days at a time during spring ball watching [players], practice as a coach and learning different teaching styles, leadership styles.”

Nesbitt said taking the Truman job represents the biggest challenge of his coaching career. Nes-

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Jeff Gall
History professor and part of search committee



Krista Goodman/Index

Gregg Nesbitt waits to be introduced as the new head coach during Monday’s press conference in the Student Union Building.

bitt said the highly-selective admission process at Truman shrinks the recruiting pool but the high academic standards have played to Truman’s advantage in the past and can in the future as well.

Nesbitt said that when he served as defensive coordinator at Truman in the early ‘90s, Truman was an easy sell for athletes who

qualified academically because the academic success and economic value of the school made Truman attractive to potential recruits.

Despite that, Nesbitt said he is aware the process will not be easy. “It’s a huge challenge from a winning-losing standpoint,” Nesbitt said. “We’ve got a lot of work to do. Looking forward to it.”

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