



Senior defender Ben Friesen and sophomore midfielder Mike Kane fight for a loose ball during practice on Tuesday. Truman starts the season Sept. 3 against St. Edward's.

'Dogs ranked No. 24 in preseason poll

Men will rely on leadership and experience

BY LOGAN JACKSON
Sports Editor

After a frustrating end to last season, the men's soccer team looks to advance to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2005.

The Bulldogs finished 12-3-1 last season but didn't advance out of their region. They finished third in the final region poll, but only the top two teams receive automatic bids into the NCAA Tournament. Truman was No. 19 in the nation in the final poll before the tournament started and still didn't get an invite.

This year, the 'Dogs open the season ranked No. 24 in the nation.

"We want more," head coach Duke Cochran said. "It's nice to get ranked, but if you're not getting into the tournament, it's not good enough. We've got to solidify our home-field advantage."

Truman has a tough task ahead with several top Div. II programs on its schedule. They play preseason No. 1 Fort Lewis College (Colo.) and No. 3 Lewis University (Ill.) during the year. Truman starts the season at 4 p.m. Sept. 3 at

home against St. Edward's University (Texas).

Truman also plays preseason No. 9 Drury University. Truman is 1-3-1 in its last five games against the Panthers.

"It's really difficult for us since the MIAA doesn't have a men's soccer conference," Cochran said. "Creating a schedule every year is one of my most difficult jobs. I try to play our traditional rivals. We'll play any one we can and want to play the best we can."

Senior midfielder Dan Meagher said the team's main goal is to make the NCAA Tournament. He said 13 wins seem to be the magic number to earn a trip to the tournament.

"It's definitely tough," Meagher said. "If we get some key wins and get some results, then we should be able to make the tournament. When we have those big games against those big teams, we have to get good results."

The 'Dogs bring back several experienced players from last year's team. They return their top four scorers from last season, including junior midfielder Jonathan

Brown and senior midfielder Bobby Larkin, both of whom were named to the Daktronics South Central All-Region team. The two combined for nine goals and 31 points for the Bulldogs, and Brown was third in Div. II in assists.

"Having returners is huge," Cochran said. "We have some experience on the attack. We do have quite a few guys back who are good and ready to go."

While most of the Bulldog offense will return, several players in the backfield will not. A strong senior backfield helped take some pressure off of goalie Tyler Knierim last season. A freshman last year, Knierim started 14 games and posted seven shutouts.

"A good goalkeeper is always huge," Cochran said. "He benefited from a back line that was all seniors. He got his licks in and will now be able to lead the guys in front of him."

Bulldog 2009-seniors Drew Pauk, Ben Green and Matt Taylor all spent time in the backfield for the Bulldogs last year. The three combined for eight goals and helped direct the freshman goalie.

Cochran said senior Scott Biggerstaff will move to the backfield position to add some experience. Biggerstaff started eight games and played in 15. He had an assist and two shots on goal last year.

Truman also has several freshmen to choose from as replacements. Cochran said multiple freshmen could make an immediate impact, such as defender Matt Langley, midfielder Tony Diepenbrock and true freshman defender Williams Hirsch and midfielder Jacob Schrier.

Larkin said Knierim shouldn't have a problem directing the younger players in the backfield.

"I think after last year his confidence has skyrocketed," Larkin said. "We have all the confidence in the world in him. It's nice that he has a year underneath him."

Last year, Truman scored 38 goals, the most since 2005 when the Bulldogs scored 53. From 2006 to 2008, the 'Dogs didn't score more than 26 goals in a season.

Truman was ranked 22nd in offense and 10th in defense in Div. II last season.

Cochran said a big part of the offensive increase is because of assistant coach Joe Nick.

"He likes to help players score goals," Cochran said. "He scored goals when he played and wants to help players do that."

"If we get some key wins and get some results, then we should be able to make the tournament."

Dan Meagher
senior midfielder

Women look to capture 10th MIAA Title in 12 years

Bulldogs have 20 underclassmen looking for playing time

BY LOGAN JACKSON
Sports Editor

The women's soccer team will try to replace one of the most successful senior classes to ever lace up a pair of spikes at Truman.

Through their four years of playing, the seniors from last year's team compiled a 59-20-9 record and went 41-12-7 in the MIAA. They won two MIAA Championships and went to the NCAA Tournament three times.

While the seniors helped lead Truman to its ninth MIAA title in 11 years, the Bulldogs return several key players for the upcoming season, which starts Sept. 3 at Edmond, Okla., against Midwestern (Tex.) State University.

"We have a good recruiting class coming in," head coach Mike Cannon said. "We have some kids who moved up in the spring and will play a bigger role. It's going to be a challenge to replace experienced, good players."

Truman does return two seniors. Midfielder Beth Bystrom and forward Danielle Hill will move into leadership roles. Bystrom saw action in 21 games and was tied for fourth on the team with three goals last season. She also was tied for first on the team with five assists. Hill played in only eight games.

The team will look to the strong junior class for additional leadership. Led by midfielder Megan Buri and goalie Jayne Grisham, Cannon said this class will have to step up and help the seniors.

"Hopefully, we have more than one leader," Cannon said. "With only two seniors, we're relying on both of them. Our junior class can't wait to be a leader. Beth and Danielle are very open to sharing the leadership role."

Buri is a first-team All-MIAA player and Grisham earned honorable mention. Grisham started 20 games for the Bulldogs and gave up 12 goals. She ended the season with 10 shutouts.

The rest of the team will be made up of underclassmen. Six sophomores and 14 freshmen will fight for playing time. Eight of those freshmen are redshirts.

Forward Olivia Hayes, last year's MIAA Freshman of the Year, will lead the attack for the 'Dogs. She led the team with 12 goals as a freshman and had six game-winning goals.

"I think our challenge is to replace the kids who scored some goals," Cannon said. "We have to find some kids that are competent at putting the ball in the net. We can't just rely on Olivia."

While the redshirts do know the program better, Cannon said the incoming freshmen can be a wild card. Last year's freshmen class of Hayes, defender Stasia Montgomery and midfielder Kelsey Twellman made an immediate impact.

"I'm hoping they all make it difficult for me and are ready to play," Cannon said. "If two or three are pushing to play right away, that's a huge bonus for us."

One senior from last year's team will return to the Bulldogs as an assistant coach. Katie Reuck will help Truman on the sidelines. Reuck became just the seventh Bulldog to be named an All-American when

she earned third-team All-American status last year. She scored 20 goals and had 50 points as a Bulldog after transferring from Rockhurst University (Mo.) before her sophomore season.

Hayes said having someone who is familiar with the program will help the younger players learn the system.

"She has the experience of playing here," Hayes said. "She knows the team and knows the people. It will be a comfort to know that she went through what we did. We'll benefit from what she's learned."

The Bulldogs start the season at No. 24 in the NSCAA preseason poll. They also were picked by the MIAA coaches to win the MIAA for the 10th time in 12 years.

Grisham said the rankings are nice to have. However, the Bulldogs put more attention on playing to the best of their abilities.

"We just try to focus on not worrying about the rankings," Grisham said. "The more you worry about it, the more you get caught up. You then worry about who you're going to play. It's just not worth it."

Truman starts the season with the University of Central Oklahoma Tournament. From there, they jump into MIAA conference play to finish out the season. The 'Dogs will be on the road at the beginning of the season but play four of their last six matches at home.

The Bulldogs first home match is at 4 p.m. Sept. 9 against Northwest Missouri State University.

The Bulldogs play 16 MIAA Conference games throughout the season. They play each opponent at home and on the road.



Senior midfielder Beth Bystrom looks for a teammate during practice on Tuesday. Bystrom is one of two seniors leading the 'Dogs this year.

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