

**PLAYERS** | Larkin, Lawson just two of several Bulldogs to lead their respective teams

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**Jen Lawson - Golf**

The Bulldogs attended five tournaments this season and finished in the top three in four of them. Lawson struggled in the second tournament of the season, finishing in 39th, but rebounded in the final three tournaments by winning each of them. She shot a career-low round of 73 on two occasions.

Truman normally appears in four more tournaments during the spring semester and then the MIAA Championship Tournament. Lawson finished in a tie for second place last spring, only two strokes behind the first place finisher. I look forward to seeing Lawson continue her success and pick up a few more individual wins in the spring.

**Megan Sharpe/Allison Barker - Volleyball**

I really don't think you can mention Sharpe without mentioning Barker. Barker led the team in kills with 335 and was second on the team in digs with 429. Sharpe led the team in blocks with 115 and was second on the team in kills with 309.

While the Bulldogs have had several impressive duos throughout their volleyball history, Barker and Sharpe rank right up there. When teams focused on Sharpe, Barker made them pay. If a team built a game plan to slow down Barker, Sharpe would be there for the kill. Their games complemented each other perfectly.

Barker graduates this year, but Sharpe still has two seasons left. The Bulldogs lose only four players from a team that finished 25-8 this season.

**Karen Grauel - Cross Country**

Who would have thought a runner in only her second year of cross country would advance to the national meet? Not me. When I found out neither of the Grauel sisters had run cross country in high school, I was completely surprised. Cindy had a great season and Karen was outstanding this year.

Karen not only became the fifth women's cross country runner to advance to the national meet in the last five years, she also became the first woman in Truman history to win the MIAA Championship — and the Bulldogs have had some great runners in their program.

**Gregg Nesbitt - Football**

Out of all of the coaches that had great seasons, I think Nesbitt had the biggest impact. He took control of a football team that finished 2-9 last season and suffered losses of 70-0 and 38-3. While the team did finish on a high note with the program's first win against Pittsburg State University since 1989, it was still a season to forget.

Cleaning house is probably what the Bulldogs needed, and Nesbitt proved that he was the man for the job.

While the Bulldogs did finish only 4-7 this season, they seemed to be close in all of the seven games that they lost. Their final two losses were by a combined four points. I really don't think the seven losses are that bad. I mean, I was pretty sure they weren't going to win eight games and go to the playoffs.

The thing that I noticed most, however, was the body language of the team. It was much improved this season and I really think a big part of that goes to Nesbitt.

This fall season was full of several impressive individuals along with several great teams. Stay tuned next season for what I'm sure will be another solid semester in Bulldog athletics.



Senior forward Dan Meagher fights for a loose ball earlier this season against Fort Lewis. Truman upset Fort Lewis 2-1. Logan Jackson/Index

**FALL** | 'Dogs have three teams make the playoffs, football team doubles its previous win total



Blaise Hart-Schmidt/Index  
Junior wide receiver Donald Harvey stiff arms a UNO player in the Bulldogs last game of the season. Truman won four games this year.

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first round. Instead, the focus is on the men's team because they are the No. 1 reason why this fall sports season represented the best all-around sports season at Truman in recent memory.

That's right. In case you missed it, Truman sports teams this fall performed historically well as a whole.

Not everything was perfect. Truman sports teams this fall combined for one playoff win from the women's soccer team, while the men's team and volleyball both lost in the first round. Also, the football team finished 4-7 and was nowhere near being ranked, and the women's cross country team qualified one runner for nationals this season after sending two in 2009.

These are all true statements. But here are some other facts about the overall strength this year compared to past years:

— The last time the men's soccer team reached the playoffs was **2005**.

— The last time the men's and women's soccer teams reached the playoffs was **2003**.

— The last and only other time men's soccer made the playoffs and cross country had a national

qualifier was **1990**.

— The last time volleyball and both soccer teams made the playoffs and cross country had a national qualifier? **Never**.

There you have it. For the first time ever, four Truman fall sports in a single season went to the postseason. Although I haven't done the research on winter and spring, I'll bet it has never happened in those seasons as well.

Even the non-playoff teams performed fine compared to 2009. Football, which has not made the playoffs since 1994, doubled its wins from last season. Men's cross country improved from 16th to fourth at regionals.

Still, a large part of the improved success is because of men's soccer, which has arguably the most difficult road to the postseason of any team at Truman. Only two teams qualify from the men's comparatively small region.

The men have had just one losing season since 2000, but have only three playoff appearances to show for it. Which means anytime the men do make the playoffs, a celebration is in order.

Especially when it means this fall was arguably the greatest all-around sports season Truman has ever had.

**GRAUEL** | Sophomore becomes fifth women's runner in five years to make the trip to nationals

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normally ends in mid-November. However, Div. II will hold the Fall National Championships Festival this year, which will extend the season into December. It is the second fall festival for Div. II.

The festival lasts five days and will crown cross country, field hockey, soccer and volleyball champions. Cochrane said there will be a lot of downtime before Grauel runs her race.

"Get ready to get bored because you're sitting around too much," Cochrane said. "One of the things is keeping focused on the fact that you're going to run. Another thing is, there are a lot of good people at the meet. But if you got there, especially if you got there as an individual, you're not too bad either."

The national meet begins at noon (EST) Dec. 4 in Louisville, Ky. Ratermann said the national meet does vary from a normal cross country meet. Instead of running in a pack of approximately 10 runners, the packs at the national meet will consist of up to 30 runners. Ratermann also said Grauel must stay mentally focused and not worry if a large group of runners passes her.

"The big difference is not being with your team," Ratermann said. "I think Karen will be well equipped to run on her own at nationals be-

<b>Off To The Races</b>			
Year	Runner	Place	Time
2009	Anne Ratermann	67th	22:31
	Dani Dell'Orco	86th	22:50
2008	Danna Kelly	24th	22:23
2007	Danna Kelly	80th	22:34
2006	Jacquie Faust	29th	21:12

cause she has been racing by herself all season. Everybody's a lot more excited and everyone goes out a little faster. The first mile is going to be your fastest mile of the season."

Grauel has finished in the top six in each of the six meets she has competed in. She also has two individual first place finishes — the first earned in the Gary Stoner Invitational, the third meet of the season.

Her second win came at the MIAA Championship meet. She became the first women's runner in Bulldog history to take first in the conference meet.

"She's improved a lot during the season," Cochrane said. "She ran OK in the first meet and ran quite well in the second. After that, she kind of took off. She's made mistakes racing, but she's been able to correct those mistakes later."

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