

MIAA brings 'rivalry' format to football

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Truman and Northwest Missouri State University have played each other 90 times, dating back to 1908, one of the oldest rivalry games in Div. II football. But starting in 2012, the Bulldogs and Bearcats will no longer play each other every season. Truman's unofficial "rival", based on the finalized scheduling after the four-team conference expansion last fall, instead will be conference newcomer Lindenwood University. Truman and Lindenwood have never played each other. The new "rivalry" format is part of the MIAA expansion scheduling that was voted on by the conference CEOs earlier this month. The CEOs also voted on women's soccer, deciding that every team will play the others in the conference once dur-

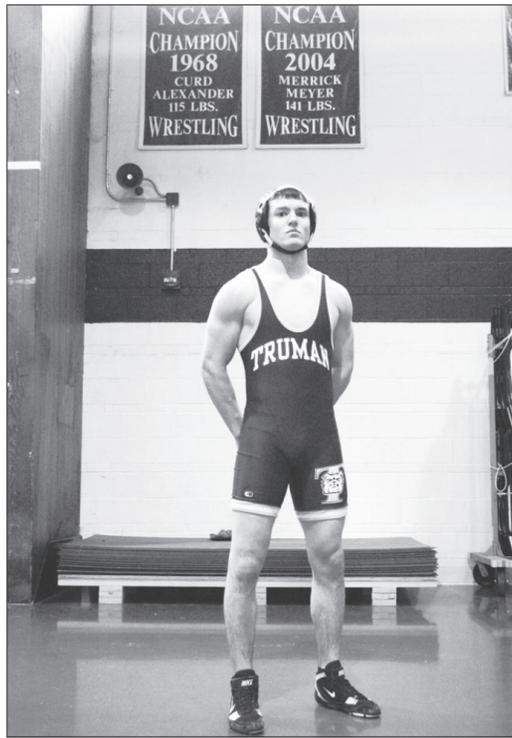
ing the regular season. The volleyball schedule still is being worked on but will include two seven-team divisions. The football format pits two teams in the MIAA against each other every year, and the other 14 opponents are scheduled on an 8-year rotating basis. The 11-game schedule will not include non-conference games. "The natural rivalry game is Northwest Missouri, and I know that sounds strange with where our football program is at right now, but I sure don't want to be one to not play the Hickory Stick game," said head football coach Gregg Nesbitt, who has experienced the game since the 1970s. Athletic Director Jerry Wollmering said the Ol' Hickory Stick game was discussed at expansion meetings, but it made more sense for Northwest to be paired with Missouri Western State University. The two schools are

45 minutes apart and have drawn large crowds in recent years. The other pairs are Southwest Baptist—Lincoln, Nebraska-Kearney—Fort Hays, Washburn—Emporia, Missouri Southern—Pittsburg State, Nebraska-Omaha—Central Missouri and Northeastern State—Central Oklahoma. The new scheduling — with no conference championship — creates a situation in which two teams potentially could tie for first in the conference with no head-to-head matchup. "I think we're just going to have to see how it plays out over a period of time," Nesbitt said. For women's soccer, the conference will transition back to how it was scheduled in 2000 when every team played each other once. This schedule allows for 13 conference matches and five non-conference matches — which likely would be

used for regional competition from a different conference. "I like it better," head coach Mike Cannon said. "I like it just because we get to play some different teams." Cannon noted that with the current scheduling, Truman could play an MIAA team up to three times during a season. In 2010, 17 of Truman's 22 games were played against MIAA competition. Less conference games also means a stronger schedule, as Truman will no longer play two games per season against comparatively weak conference foes. With four more non-conference games, Truman will have the opportunity to schedule more matches against better regional schools. For volleyball, the two divisions will be split diagonally, from the northeast to the southwest. Truman's division will include Lindenwood, Central Missouri, Southwest

Baptist, Missouri Southern, Pittsburg State and Central Oklahoma. Wollmering said there will be 19 regular-season matches in which every school will play divisional completion twice and schools from the other division once. He said they still are deciding whether the conference schedule will last eight or nine weeks. An eight-week schedule would allow for three tournaments throughout the season — and possibly an MIAA tournament — while a nine-week schedule allows for two tournaments. "To do everything the coaches want to do, we have to play the eight-week schedule, but what that would create is a lot of long week-day trips which we're not in favor of," Wollmering said. Wollmering said the next scheduling meeting is in February to finalize volleyball and begin talks about winter and spring sports.

SCHMITZ | Sophomore has 30-19 collegiate career record, won high school state championships as a junior and senior



Krista Goodman/Index
Sophomore Colton Schmitz, after winning two high school state titles, is trying to become Truman's third National Champion.

Colton Schmitz's High School Career
Career Record: 150-14

Year	Place	Weight Class
Senior	1st	140 pounds
Junior	1st	135 pounds
Sophomore	2nd	125 pounds
Freshman	3rd	112 pounds

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Truman was probably his best fit for education and athletics." Schmitz joined a Bulldog program that hasn't had an All-American since 2008. Truman's last national qualifier came in that same season. While Schmitz did dominate at the high school level, he said he wasn't sure what to expect at the collegiate level. Senior Chad Kurvoski said it sometimes takes freshmen time to adjust but Schmitz adjusted with relative ease. "He had great high school seasons but there are a lot of guys that are

studs in high school and they come to college and they're duds," Kurvoski said. "They just can't perform at the college level. Colton is definitely one of the kids that can. He came in and really stepped up." Schmitz said Schutter has had the same goal during his first two seasons as a Bulldog — end the season with three All-Americans. Schutter has never had more than two All-Americans in the same season. The Bulldogs have started the season 2-0 in dual meets after winning just two duals last season. Schmitz had been a big part of that with a 12-5 overall record. He has a

second-, third- and sixth-place finish in tournaments this season as well. Schmitz also has moved up a weight class this season, to the 149-pound class. This move came after freshman Ryan Maus joined the team this season. Maus is 14-7 and has a third and fourth-place finish in tournaments. Schutter said he wasn't surprised Schmitz moved up a weight class and he was actually big for a 149-pound wrestler. "Like anybody, he has to work on perfecting his strategy, his game," Schutter said. "He has to work on strength and conditioning. He's got a good work ethic and he's a good teammate. If we had 30 of them like him in this room, we'd be fine."

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