

Bulldogs score nine goals in two matches

BY JOHN MOENSTER
Staff Reporter

After a long and successful weekend, the Bulldogs have room to breathe as they celebrate their first road victory and another shutout at home, extending their winning streak to four games.

The men's soccer team first took down University of Missouri-St. Louis last Oct. 7 in St. Louis in a dominant win, outscoring UMSL 4-1. Head coach Duke Cochran said the team was aggressive from the start and came out ready to play.

The 'Dogs scored early in the first half when junior midfielder Charlie Backus received a volley from senior midfielder Bobby Larkin. At about 25 yards out, Backus kicked the ball as it bounced and sent it rolling over UMSL keeper Adam Giese's head. Cochran said it is likely to be the best goal of the season.

"He brought down a difficult ball as it bounced on the half volley," Cochran said. "The great thing about Charlie is you can drive a ball at him any which way and he seems to be able to handle it."

Cochran said the team feels confident right now. He said the 'Dogs want to play other teams to show how good they can be. The next stretch of matches is important, Cochran said.

"We've practiced a lot and we've kicked the crap out of each other a lot," Cochran said. "So playing other teams right now is exciting for the guys, because they get to showcase themselves against someone else and get in it together."

The 'Dogs remain undefeated at home after shutting out Upper Iowa 5-0 on Monday. Assistant coach Joe Nick said the team has been emphasizing setting the tone



Sophomore defender Ben Hasse blocks a Missouri S&T shot. He has started all eight games this year. Jack Nicholl/Index

and using home field advantage. Nick said the team's early success against St. Edward's (Tex.) University and Fort Lewis (Colo.) College caught on.

"It's a great little infectious

thing that begins to happen," Nick said. "You start to become very comfortable on your home field in knowing that you can battle there the hardest."

Nick said the team had a little

trouble at home last year, but now the team is reestablishing the tradition of success at home. All three losses from last year's 12-3-1 season were at home.

There has been no shortage of

offense from the 'Dogs this season. Nick said the offense has been reacting to the team and that overall they are solid across the field. Nick said the midfield has done a great job providing support for the team while the defense has been playing intelligently.

"We're entirely balanced from Tyler [Knierim] in goal to how our defense is playing," Nick said. "The team has had three shutouts in the last four games."

Nick said there are several outstanding players that have been playing together now for four years. The 'Dogs have a wealth of senior leadership, such as captain and senior midfielder Dan Meagher, senior forwards Matt Kimball and Larkin. Senior defender Ben Friesen also has been a leader in the backfield, Nick said.

The 'Dogs will travel again this weekend to take on rival Lewis University at noon Sunday in Romeoville, Ill. Truman has not beat Lewis since 2005.

"I'd really like to see us go in and beat them," Biggerstaff said. "They're a really good team and we've had some tough losses to them in the past."

Truman moved up in the NCAA South Central regional ranking to the No. 2 spot, which would put the team in the postseason if it started today. Biggerstaff said it is sometimes difficult to tell about the South Central Region because Truman doesn't have the chance to play all of the teams who are in it.

"Last year, I think we kind of made a splash in the region because we had just come in the year before, and we were competing for one of the top two spots pretty much the whole time," Biggerstaff said. "This year, I think people are kind of looking out for us, especially the two or three teams in Texas with whom we typically compete with."

Athlete of the Week

Bobby Larkin

Sport: Soccer
Year: Senior
Position: Midfielder
Hometown: St. Louis, Mo.

Larkin recorded seven assists in two matches this week and now has 11 assists in eight matches this season. His four assists against the University of Missouri-St. Louis is tied for the highest in a match in Div. II this season. Larkin has 21 assists in his Bulldog career.

Larkin leads Div. II in assists

Truman has scored nine goals in the last two matches

BY LOGAN JACKSON
Sports Editor

The Bulldogs continue to score goals and senior midfielder Bobby Larkin continues to assist them.

Larkin recorded seven assists in two men's soccer matches this week. He has 11 assists during eight matches this season and ranks first in assists in Div. II.

"He almost always beats the first defender," head coach Duke Cochran said. "If you do that, you have the opportunity to get your head up and go, 'Who's open?' It breaks the other team down. When you beat the first defender, the other team has to adjust. When the other team adjusts, Bobby's punishing them."

The Bulldogs have scored nine goals in their last two matches. Truman beat the University of Missouri-St. Louis 4-1 on Oct. 7. Larkin had an assist on every goal the Bulldogs scored.

Truman won 5-0 against Upper Iowa University on Monday. Larkin posted three

assists in the contest. "To be honest, during the last two games, our forwards' finishes have been unreal," Larkin said. "With us moving the ball around, it just works out that I am the one to give the ball to them. There were a few goals that were completely unexpected."

Last year, Larkin led the team in goals scored with six. He added two assists and ended the season with 14 points.

Larkin also led the team his sophomore season with seven assists.

Larkin has 21 assists in his Bulldog career, which ties him for sixth place all-time in Truman history.

"He's matured immensely," Cochran said. "More than anything, he's matured mentally. He's kind of figured the game out. He was a bit chippy when he came in as a player, and he was still trying to find out what the college game was all about. He's gotten bigger and stronger, but he now knows what he can and cannot do."

The 'Dogs have won four straight matches, with three of them coming at home. Truman won its first road match of the season against UMSL. The Bulldogs have

three road and three home matches left on the schedule before playing in the Newman University Classic in Wichita, Kan.

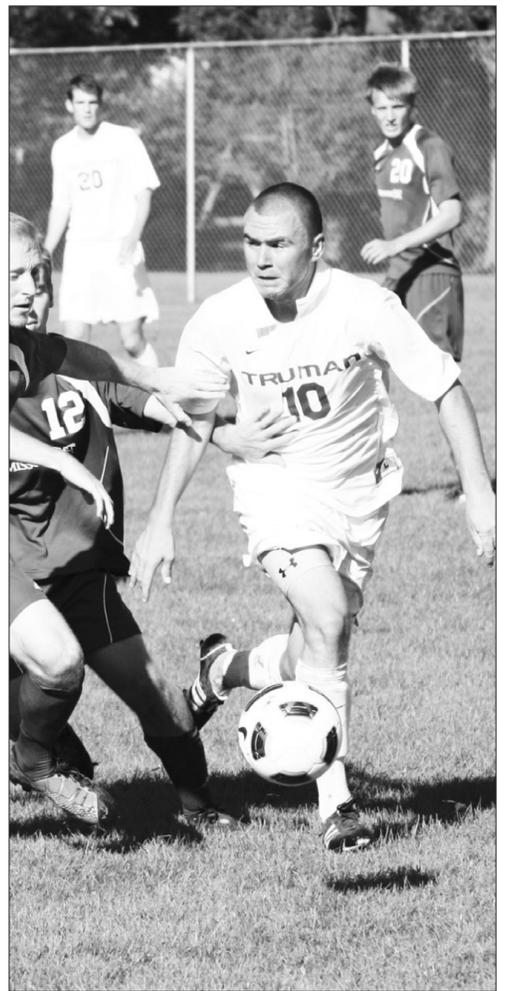
Truman is 6-2 on the year and recently moved into second place in the South Central regional standings.

"What we're doing right now is just so good," Larkin said. "If we can continue to play like we're playing, it's going to be hard for teams to stop us. [Senior forward Matt] Kimball is finishing real well, [sophomore forward Andy] Chapman is always a threat. It's tough for teams to keep up with our speed."

Larkin is only six assists short of tying the record for most assists in a season by a Truman player. Former Bulldog Claes Meldal recorded 17 assists in 1998.

Larkin's 11 assists already put him in a tie for the fifth most assists in a season.

"The assist is kind of his bread and butter right now," Cochran said. "The ball's not going in for him, but he's finding guys in spaces that are one-time finishes. If he's in the attacking third, we want him to dribble. We want him to take people on."



Senior midfielder Bobby Larkin beats two Missouri S&T players to the ball. Larkin has 10 career goals. Jack Nicholl/Index



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