

New football recruits



RECRUITS | Bulldogs look to complement linemen on offense while balancing the defensive side with a mix of defensive linemen, linebackers and defensive backs

Continued from Page 15

ing is to focus on the academic prowess Truman possesses.

"In recruiting, if you end up here, we want this to be a good four or five-year marriage until you graduate," Nesbitt said. "Right now the football graduation rate is 88 percent. We're fifth in the country from a football perspective. We want to continue that. ... Our cumulative team GPA on our 87 returners is 3.05. That speaks to you as an incoming freshman and your parents."

Before he began coaching at Truman, Nesbitt served as head coach for Columbia-Hickman High School. He said his time as a head coach and a parent has allowed him to understand the recruiting process in a different light and explain it better to possible recruits and their parents.

"At the last high school I was at, we had 95 kids sign in the 13 years I was there, so I certainly understand the recruiting process from a high school perspective," Nesbitt said. "Both my sons have been through the recruiting process so, if nothing else, I can educate you and your parents about that process. ... I'd say that's probably a strength."

Hardin said Nesbitt's experience as a high school coach gives the program a high school feel while maintaining the expectations and rigor of a college program. He said Nesbitt's love of Truman football helped him make his final decision to come to Kirksville.

"He lives and breathes [the program], so that's the one thing I really liked about him," Hardin said. "That's what made me want to come up here."

Another common occurrence for college teams is walk-on athletes, Nesbitt said he and one of his sons were walk-ons who ended up starting. However, he said there is not much room to add players and the only players he's specifically looking for are offensive linemen.

The Bulldogs finished last season at 4-7 with narrow losses against eventual national champions Pittsburg State University and Missouri Southern State University. Nesbitt said time will tell whether the players he recruited could match up well against MIAA opponents, but he said Truman does not run into MIAA opponents often on the recruiting trail.

"We recruit such a different type of student athlete than the rest of the league," Nesbitt said. "The people that we see are Drake, Dayton, Butler, we see the Ivy League, we see the academies. So those are the guys that we do battle with from a recruiting standpoint. Time will tell, but I think athletically [the class] will stack up with anyone in the league."

The Bulldogs will get to see some of their new recruits in action when they start their fall season Aug. 30 at Southwest Baptist University.

SIMEK | Junior chases dreams while leading 'Dogs

Continued from Page 15

swimmer.

"[Kerry] has changed the way that I'm used to having a practice run for me, which I think has helped me," Simek said. "I get frustrated with her a lot and I think she can tell sometimes but it really helps. It allows me to warm up and helps me get into a pace and I think that really showed at Chicago even after only having her for a semester. I'm excited to see what I can do at conference and nationals."

Simek got the 'Dogs' only win in one of Truman's final meets of the season at Missouri S&T, a top-10 ranked school, and is hoping to have another good showing at the NSISC Championships that will propel him into his third straight year qualifying for nationals in multiple events.

At the conference tournament, which will be held Feb. 22-25 in Cleveland, Miss., Simek will be swimming in the 1,000- and 500-meter freestyle and 400-meter individual medley.

"I expect him to get his best times," Smith said. "That's really all I can ask of him. As far as where that places him, that's really up to what other people are doing and you can really only worry about yourself in this sport."

There will be 142 swimmers that advance to the Div. II National meet this year, with roughly 11-13 swimmers in each event.

"With the way that I'm feeling in the water right now, the way that my season was and looking at the rankings of where I am, I feel as if I can go top eight in two events, if not three," Simek said. "But, I mean, I would be happy with just one."

But the NCAA meet isn't the end of the road for Simek during 2012. After the NAAs, he is going to take a few days off and then he will be back in the pool training. He said he hopes to cut times to make him eligible for Olympic trials and make his childhood dream a reality.

"In swimming, that's the pinnacle of the sport," Smith said. "You want to make an Olympic team. ... Next year, I think he can definitely be a top three contender at NCAA's. I think that getting to trials would help him to do that."

SHERMAN | Sports Editor Sam Sherman thinks the Pro Bowl has been a joke for too long and the NFL and Roger Goodell should do something to fix it

Continued from Page 15

I know it's not possible to decide home-field advantage like baseball, but give it something to make things interesting. Now, the million-dollar question is what possibly could give these guys motivation to perform in such a lax atmosphere? Well, for one, move the game out of Hawaii. That way, the Pro Bowl would get actual fanfare. There aren't a lot of fans willing to go out of their way to see this game, but if you held it in an actual NFL city, things would be a lot different. Look at the NBA All-Star game, for instance. It's far from being an example of old-fashioned competition, but it's specifically geared toward the fans in the city

the game is played in. That way, die-hard fans have a chance to go watch their favorite players play for a fraction of the price of going to Hawaii.

My third suggestion is to stop taking this game so lightly. You might be asking yourself why I actually care about the sanctity of this game. I guess the answer to that question lies in my absolute adoration for football. I've loved it since I could crawl and haven't once wavered. The men trotting onto the field of Aloha Stadium are not only representing themselves and their teams, they're representing the game. For people to have nothing more than a tickle fight on the field is an embarrassment to the game and a waste of time for

all the fans hoping to see at least a glimmer of greatness on the field full of all stars.

They won't see greatness in Hawaii. Well, at least they won't see it for a while. Yes, the Pro Bowl is supposed to be a celebration of the players' achievements during the season, but it's also supposed to be about the game of football being performed at the highest level possible by the best players in the world. What I saw on Sunday night was a mockery of the sport and was more embarrassing than it was entertaining.

There are ways to make this game worth fans' time, but at its current rate, I think we can all agree the Pro Bowl is better off dead.

TENNIS | Truman tennis teams look to put previous spring season behind them with new lineups and players

Continued from Page 15

a difference. They are very solid players. Also, [sophomore] Joe Murphy-Baum has improved so much since last year it's scary."

The women's experience last year closely resembled the men. The women opened the season 2-1 a year ago — just as they have this past fall — only to go on and drop seven of their next 13, including a first-round loss to Southwest Baptist University in the MIAA tournament.

"Usually both teams have very good fall records because of who we play," Kendall said. "We don't play a lot of

matches in the fall because they are so hard to get. The competition level changes in the spring. [That] always decides how well you do."

The women's team will continue play Feb. 17 at the Principia College Tournament featuring Quincy University, University of Illinois Springfield and Principia College.

"We've been mixing up our hitting drills, conditioning harder and a lot of us have been working out on our own which will help immensely," junior Maggi Schutte said. "We're excited to be back on the court in a competitive atmosphere."

The Principia tournament always has proved challenging for the team because it is the Bulldogs' first match on a hard court after months of practicing in Pershing Arena all winter.

Kendall said every school in the tournament will have solid teams.

"There will definitely be some close matches," Kendall said. "There are always going to be those [matches] you think you should have gotten, and there are going to be those [matches] that the other side thinks they should have gotten, [but] we expect to do well."

Kendall said he is taking the same ap-

proach to the game and practice as he does every year.

"[We] just try to get better at what [we're] doing," Kendall said. "Your record is based off how good you are and how good your opponents are."

He said he thinks both of his teams will play well enough to finish in the top three going into the MIAA tournament. Washburn, Northwest Missouri State and Southwest Baptist are the top tier teams in the conference on both sides, and Kendall said Truman definitely has a chance against one of them.

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