

**RIVALRY** | Northwest Missouri State and Truman will compete tonight for the Old Hickory Stick



Courtesy Photo

The 2011 Bulldogs celebrate after defeating the Bearcats in Maryville, 24-23. Alumnus quarterback Eric Howe and the 'Dogs came from behind to defeat their rivals snapping a 41-game MIAA win streak.

Continued from Page 15  
-ference win streak and were picked to finish No. one in the MIAA this season in the pre-season coaches and media polls.

A Bearcat 41-game conference win streak was ended in 2001, the last time Truman beat Northwest. Alumnus quarterback Eric Howe rushed into the corner of the end zone at Bearcat Stadium in Maryville, with fewer than two minutes left to give the Bulldogs a 24-23 win.

Truman will have a new quarterback tonight. Senior J.B. Clark officially was named the starter this past weekend after taking the majority of the snaps with the starters during training camp.

Clark said even when playing at 1AA Lehigh University [Pa.] he had heard of Northwest's reputation and said they will present a challenge for him at the line of scrimmage as he tries to read the defense.

"The toughest thing they do is vary their coverage," Clark said. "They jump into man [defense] and they disguise it very well. But we've got a great game plan coming in. We've seen a bunch of film and we like where we are at right now."

Rushing four defenders traditionally has been a part of Northwest's game schemes, which will give Truman's relatively young offensive line the chance to prove itself.

Head coach Gregg Nesbitt said seniors Donald Harvey and Harnish Ayora and ju-

## Game 1 vs. Northwest Missouri

**Date:**  
Thursday September 1

**Time:**  
7:30 p.m.

**Location:**  
Stokes Stadium

**Series Record:**  
Truman 54-32-4

nior Will Mosquera will compose a running back by committee system. He said the number of snaps each player gets in the opener depends on how the game progresses.

The Northwest offense averaged fewer than 36 points a game last year, which ranked third in conference. They also averaged more than 433 points per contest during the 2010 season, but ranked eighth in the MIAA in rushing averaging 145.4 yards per game on the ground. Truman

finished the season third in rushing as a team, averaging 175.7 yards per game.

Nesbitt said that Northwest's rushing attack must be respected, but their greatest offensive strength is their veteran receiving core, led by senior Jake Soy who caught 74 passes last year, averaged 94.9 yards per game and caught 12 touchdowns.

Junior Tyler Shaw who is an All-MIAA sprinter during the spring, and University of Nebraska-Omaha transfer and former Maverick's No. one receiver

junior Brian Miller will both start for Northwest as receivers.

"The receiving core in general is probably, arguably the best receiving core in the league," Nesbitt said. "They've got a nice collection of ability at that position and then certainly Jake [Soy], two years ago had a break out season. Set an MIAA and I think national record for touchdown catches in a year."

Soy said he and the Bearcats cannot read into pre-season rankings and expectation but instead have to focus on playing good football.

"Our coaches make a huge deal of [the rivalry]," Soy said. "They make sure everybody else knows how big of a deal it is. I think if you actually look at the re-

cord [Truman] has won it more times than we have. So you know, they always keep that in our minds. It is the first game of the season. We're going to take them as if we're playing anybody else in the league."

This season is the first for Northwest under new head coach Adam Dorrel. Former coach Mel Tjeerdsma retired after the 2010-11 season with an overall record of 242-82-4 and three NCAA Div. II national championships. Tjeerdsma had been the head coach in Maryville since 1994.

Tjeerdsma's replacement Scott Bostwick died of a heart attack June 5, six months after being promoted from defensive coordinator to head coach.

Soy said he thinks that as a young coach Dorrel will be ready to deal with the pressure of the MIAA.

"I think he is going to bring some different things to the table," Soy said. "He's a young coach. He's excited and I think we are too."

Nesbitt said that on paper the MIAA is the most balanced it has been in years and he thinks his team's performance against the Bearcats will serve as a barometer for the Bulldog's progress as a program.

"[The Old Hickory Stick] does mean something to us," Nesbitt said. "It certainly did when I played in the '70s, when we coached in the '90s, it does right now [to my players] so maybe we can steal it back."



Courtesy Photo

The Old Hickory Stick originated in 1930 when Northwest Missouri State University president U.W. Lamkin sent a 30 inch long piece of hickory he found on a farm near Maryville, Mo. where then-president Eugene Fair had grown up. The history of the stick is inscribed on its end.

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