

# Bulldogs begin Spring



Football team looks to improve upon 4-7 record

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Anna Grace/Index

Sophomore wide receiver Kevin Montgomery runs a ball downfield during the Bulldogs' practice Monday. In the wake of a conference change from the MIAA to the Great Lakes Valley Conference, the 'Dogs are looking to make their mark on the conference that just instated football as a conference sport last season.

Spring is officially here, and with it comes a renewed sense of life. Flowers bloom, rays of sun shine down on Truman State's campus and joy reigns supreme. But, if one travels to Stokes Stadium during the late afternoon most days, junior quarterback Conrad Schottel said you'll find a different theme for the football team's spring practices — the need for aggression.

Following Truman's fast start and subsequent slow decline to a 4-7 season during their final season as an MIAA program, the Bulldogs' spring is, in accordance with the weather, a fresh start. Even though they still hold the title of most MIAA wins of any school, the program's last winning season in the conference was 2006, and the last before that was the 2001 season.

However, the school's transfer to the Great Lakes Valley Conference next year wipes that slate clean. The Bulldogs will no longer fly a banner as an MIAA Charter School, but will join a conference that just played its first full season of league championship football last year.

Despite the new opponents and scenery, Schottel said the conference change is the last thing on anyone's mind, as spring football is the time to shake rust off the gears and relearn the system. He said the physicality is up from years' past, partially thanks to a more rigorous offseason than what the 'Dogs had been used to.

"We had a great strength and conditioning portion of our offseason," Schottel said. "We had a bunch of guys get some pretty crazy numbers in the weight room. Just from a physical aspect, I think it's been the best since I've been here in my four years."

Head coach Gregg Nesbitt said he reinvigorated offseason

program, is because of an increased focus among the coaching staff on player development at a time almost exclusively reserved for recruiting in previous years. Instead, Nesbitt said the amount of focus spent on recruiting and current player development was more equal than it was during the past season.

Nesbitt said the focus shift paid dividends, with players turning into spring camp in better shape than they had been at the start of spring last season, but he said this is just the beginning and doesn't hold much weight when paired with the fact that the season is almost five months away.

"We made a concerted effort to be more visible, to be more hands-on in recruiting season," Nesbitt said. "I think we're in good physical shape, I think we've had a really good start to offseason. We're into spring ball, so now the key is not only maintaining where we've already worked to get to but hopefully building on that before we report in August."

That's where the need for aggression plays into the picture. Schottel said his and the team's performance during the 2012 campaign was at times marred by a lack thereof. The team averaged 85.6 yards less than their opponent offensively, and was successful in less than 30 percent of their third-down conversions. Schottel himself was sacked 28 times and the 'Dogs finished 32 of 49 in red-zone efficiency.

This season, Schottel will become the first returning starting quarterback during Nesbitt's brief Truman career, bringing with him a fully-stocked corps of receivers led by junior Dallas Grier and an experienced running back pair in sophomore Garrett White and freshman A.J. Hartfield — the only freshman to see significant time on the field last season.

The offensive line is graduat-



Anna Grace/Index

Junior kicker Derek Koon takes a kick during the Bulldogs' practice Monday. The team began spring practices last season and currently is in the process of developing a depth chart for the fall.

ing Blake Holland, senior center and team captain, but is returning to the field with an experienced group fronted by juniors Erik Stone, Steve Bosilovatz and Steven Backes.

Overall, Nesbitt said the offense is poised to be successful if experience is any telltale sign, though he said the defense still is in the air.

What Nesbitt said was the strongest position group of last year's team — the defensive backfield — now is a completely new group of players following the graduation of safeties Richie Schumacher and Michael Elliot and cornerback Dennis Walls. The defensive line is graduating defensive end Pat Blackwell, who finished second in the MIAA last season in sacks, but the line will be strengthened by the return of junior defensive ends Jeramey Dockery, who finished tied for third on the team in tackles last season, and Nic Abbate, who was on medical

redshirt last season.

The linebacking corps will serve as the most experienced of the defensive side, with junior Brad Young and sophomores Connor Nagel and Matt Bell returning for 2013 after significant roles during the 2012 season.

Despite the experience on the field during spring ball, Nesbitt said spots on the field are anything but a sure thing this early during the process. He said spring practice is marked by competition between players trying to earn a spot on the team, travel squad and most importantly, on the field.

"[There's a] tremendous amount of competition," Nesbitt said. "Coming out of spring, there'll be some real depth charts. Particularly with the younger guys ... we'll have a really good feel based on your performance in 11-on-11 competition in the spring on where you fit."

Until the end of the semester, the Bulldogs will be preparing in uniform for next season, but once summer arrives the process becomes strictly individualized in accordance with NCAA regulations. This offseason will be more individual than previous seasons because of a new rule mandating that official practice can't start until Aug. 15 — two days before incoming freshmen begin Truman Week.

Nesbitt said this regulation will make it hard for freshmen to come in and make an impact right away for the Bulldogs, thus making spring practices that much more solidifying as to what the rosters will look like Sept. 7 when the Bulldogs open the season at home against the Southwest Baptist University Bearcats.

Until then, the team will have its spring scrimmage at 10 a.m. this Saturday at Stokes Stadium for fans to get their first glimpse of the 2013 Bulldogs.

# Women reach 20-win milestone

BY TYLER POE  
Staff Reporter

The Truman State women's softball team played six games throughout three days on the road last week to reach 20 wins for the program's third consecutive season.

During the team's first pair of games, the Bulldogs handled Lincoln University 6-1 and 10-5 behind strong pitching performances by junior pitcher Hannah Washburn and freshman pitcher Kindra Henze as well as hot bats from junior utility player Kelsey Bollman, sophomore infielder Andrea Klipsch and senior first baseman Kristin Grossman.

The Bulldog bats came alive during the third inning of game one of the doubleheader as Klipsch drove a three-run homerun to center for a 3-0 lead the Bulldogs would not relinquish. Two batters later, Grossman went yard on a count and then sophomore first baseman/catcher Liz Leath homered during the seventh to finish off the Blue Tigers 6-1.

The game featured another winning pitching performance by Washburn as she went six innings allowing no runs and striking out seven to earn her 11th win of the season.

Truman kept hitting during the second

contest as sophomore utility player Ally McReynolds served up another homerun and Henze logged her fourth complete game of the season holding Lincoln to three runs and striking out eight batters on the day to defeat the Blue Tigers 10-5.

Klipsch said the sweep of Lincoln was important because the Bulldogs need to keep pace with the better teams in the conference who already have beaten the Blue Tigers this season. Klipsch said the Bulldogs aimed to go 6-0 during the weekend so starting off the week with a sweep was important for the Bulldogs' hopes to reach the MIAA conference tournament.

During the first game, the Bulldogs were down early as Central Missouri scored first with a two-run first inning. During the top of the third, the Bulldogs rebounded with a three-run inning of their own as senior catcher Meredith Kusky delivered a solo shot to left and Klipsch homered to right with a two-run hit later during the inning for a 3-2 lead. The Bulldogs kept their lead until the bottom of the sixth inning, when the Jennies scored on an error with the bases loaded and then rallied two more runs on a single up the middle to take the lead at 5-3. The Bulldogs' bats went silent during the top of the seventh dropping the first

game of the doubleheader.

"Central isn't a very powerful team, but they are very speedy and we haven't faced a team like that all year," Washburn said. "Most hits stay in the infield in the form of bunts or singles and they maybe had one or two true hits all day, but they forced us to change our game in a way and that was the difference."

During the second contest, errors plagued the Bulldogs again as they tallied four errors from across the infield. Henze's wild pitch during the bottom of the first gave the Jennies a 2-1 advantage the Bulldogs could not recover from. While Henze allowed no earned runs, Central Missouri scored three runs and the Bulldogs lost a 3-2 decision which Washburn said was a tough loss to swallow. Washburn said the Bulldogs played well enough to win despite the team's errors, but the game ended up in the loss column in the conference standings. Currently, the Bulldogs sit in sixth place on the MIAA conference leaderboard with the top eight teams reaching the conference tournament. With the sweep at the hands of the Jennies, the Bulldogs now sit closer to the rest of the pack vying for the bottom seeds of the tournament.

Klipsch said a big reason for the team's losses when Henze pitches is the strike zones

umpires are giving her. Standing at 6-1, Klipsch said Henze is intimidating and has seen her strikezone narrow on the road this season. Offensively, Klipsch said the Bulldogs still are firing on all cylinders and want to score a lot of runs each game. She said the Bulldogs need to tweak smaller areas of their game this season as they near the end of the regular season.

During the final doubleheader of the weekend, the Bulldogs beat Southwest Baptist University, totaling the most runs scored during a doubleheader throughout more than 30 years as the Bulldogs defeated Southwest Baptist 7-0 and 8-2 Saturday afternoon.

The Bulldogs reached their 20th victory of the season and scored the most runs during a single-game since 1997 with a five-inning run-rule victory during game one as the team combined a .415 hitting percentage with a pitching staff that surrendered six hits during 12 innings on the mound. Offensively, the Bulldogs scored during every inning of game one to win 17-0 in five while Henze pounded the strikezone during the second contest. She had a season-high 10 strikeouts without another complete game and allowing two runs on four hits.

The Bulldogs will face Missouri Western for their first conference meeting of the season Saturday afternoon in St. Joseph, Mo.