

SPORTS

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Eight 'Dogs earn All-GLVC

BY RACHEL STEINHOFF
TMN Reporter

Eight Bulldog football players received recognition from GLVC coaches when they were voted members of the 2015 GLVC All-Conference teams.

After finishing GLVC conference play with a 4-4 record, the 'Dogs finished with a tie for fourth place in the conference standings. Following the completion of conference play, league coaches had the opportunity to cast their votes for the players they thought made the biggest impacts throughout the season. The 'Dogs were awarded two first-team selections, four second-team selections and two honorable-mention awards.

Redshirt junior offensive lineman Ethan Decker and junior defensive back Austin Zoda led the way for Truman State by earning first-team All-Conference recognition.

This selection marked Decker's debut as a member of an All-Conference team, and it continued Truman's streak of three years with an offensive lineman on the first team.

Decker started 21 consecutive games as a Bulldog. Zoda earned the third all-conference honor of his career after being selected as a second-team member the past two seasons.

Zoda finished seventh in the GLVC in tackles and led the Truman defense in tackles for the second year in a row. Zoda tallied 75 tackles during the 2014 season and improved upon this number, recording 95 tackles this year while also nabbing two interceptions, one recovered fumble and five forced fumbles. Zoda's season high tackles for 2015 came during the season opener against Midwestern State University when he completed 13 tackles. Zoda will return next year for his senior season with the Bulldogs.

The Truman defense received more recognition with four other members picking up All-Conference attention. Sophomore defensive back Jordan Brown and linebacker Ben Wellman were selected to the second team, as well as senior defensive lineman Nick Reichert. Sophomore defensive lineman Brian Craft also received credit as an honorable mention member.

As sophomores, Brown, Wellman and Craft made their first appearances on the All-Conference teams.

Brown registered 57 total tackles on the year, six of those going for loss. Brown also collected two pick-six interceptions on the season, one of which went on to be the game-winning touchdown during the Bulldogs' Oct. 17 win against the University of St. Francis.

Brown said committing himself to pregame preparation was the key to his personal improvement during the course of the year.

"I felt like taking time to watch film really helped me out," Brown said. "It slowed the game down, and I was able to make the plays that I did because I didn't feel rushed and I knew I did enough preparation throughout the week to trust myself out there."

Brown said he thinks the overall success of the defense came from the ability of each team member to fulfill their role. He said his teammates hold each other accountable, and everyone does what is asked of them each week. Brown said last season's senior leadership influenced this season's leaders, some of whom are underclassmen. He said because everyone trusts each other, many players aren't afraid to take responsibility and lead. Brown said because no one tries to stand out, the job always gets done.

Brown said though the team learned and gained experience this year, he is not fully satisfied. He said after receiving a preseason ranking of second place in the GLVC but finishing the season in fourth, he feels a chip on his shoulder and a greater understanding that his team needs

First Team

Austin Zoda, Jr. Defensive Back
Ethan Decker, R.Jr.* Offensive Line

Second Team

Jordan Brown, So. Defensive Back
Ben Wellman, So. Linebacker
Joey Schenck, Jr. Wide Receiver
Nick Reichert, Sr. Defensive Line

Honorable Mention

Brian Craft, So. Defensive Line
Derek Hammann, Jr. Wide Receiver

* Indicates Redshirt Year Status

to be better if it wants to achieve its ultimate goal of winning a conference championship.

Wellman said he agreed with Brown and said the results of this season will motivate him.

"We just have to keep doing what we're doing and not take anything for granted," Wellman said. "We need to improve little things but mostly just work on taking one game at a time. This past season is definitely motivation going forward because we lost a lot of close games, and that feeling will motivate anybody."

Wellman's second team selection was the result of a total of 61 tackles, four of which were for a loss. Wellman also recorded one sack, and recovered two fourth quarter fumbles to seal Truman's conference win against St. Joseph's College.

Wellman said he had similar thoughts as Brown because he thought his preparation and growth

in experience over the course of the season allowed the game to come more naturally to him.

"Coach [Kellen Nesbitt's] defensive scheme works for us," Wellman said. "He simplifies it enough so that we can just play fast, and the whole defense buys in. For me, and I think a lot of the other young guys, the speed of the game just kind of slowed down after gaining some experience. I think the main difference between this year and last year, along with getting the nerves out, was just knowing how to prepare for games and being more comfortable in knowing what I was doing."

The final sophomore honoree, Craft, earned honorable mention status as a defensive lineman. Craft collected 31 tackles with four of them going for loss. Craft also made 1.5 sacks and forced a fumble and a quarterback hurry this season. Craft also was credited with a blocked field goal

during Truman's Homecoming win against Southwest Baptist University.

On the offensive side, junior wide receiver Joey Schenck also earned his first All-Conference honors as he finished second in the GLVC with 6.5 receptions per game and landed a spot on the second team. Schenck recorded 71 receptions during 2015, tying for seventh place in single-season catches at Truman. Schenck totaled 693 yards on the year, averaging 63 yards per game — eighth in the GLVC in this category. Schenck had two games this season with double-digit receptions.

Schenck said success as a receiver comes from the top down, starting with the coaches.

"The coaches called plays that put the ball in my hands, and we developed a game with short passes that allowed me to be a bigger part of the offense and make plays," Schenck said. "I think I just got bigger over the offseason and ran crisper on routes that allowed for me to get more touches, but anytime any offense is created, it is [only possible with] the collaboration of the team. It starts on the O-line, and we'll be losing two guys in that area so those will be spots we'll have to fill before next season," Schenck said.

The offensive line will be graduating three seniors — consisting of Decker, offensive linemen Brad Hardin and Charlie Brynac. Schenck said he believes in the Truman offense and sees opportunity for improvement during the upcoming off-season months.

"At a critical point in the year, our offense really exploded against William Jewell [College]," Schenck said. "It was encouraging to see the kind of game we are capable of putting together offensively, and that's something I think we can do more consistently. You know, offseason is one of the most important times of the year for us because with everyone returning straight off the season we know what to expect and how to practice with each other and can get a lot out of that."

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- Sophomore linebacker Ben Wellman

The final honoree, junior wide receiver Derek Hammann, was the lone award winner for Truman's special teams. Hammann received honorable mention for the second year in a row, averaging 7.5 yards on 17 punt returns, with his longest return of 21 yards occurring during the Bulldogs' win against William Jewell. Hammann also averaged 22.3 yards on 13 kickoff returns, with the longest at 38 yards against Quincy University.

Bulldog football now heads into the offseason returning five of its eight All-Conference honorees, as well as a relatively young lineup across the board. Offseason training starts soon, and fans will have one chance to see the 'Dogs progress in the annual purple vs. white scrimmage during the spring semester.

Cory Myers

Junior guard Cory Myers scored a career-high 26 points and grabbed 10 rebounds Saturday during the Drury Thanksgiving Classic against Cameron University. Myers leads the Bulldogs in scoring with 14.8 points per game and shooting with 58 percent from the floor this season.

PLAYER of the WEEK