

BASEBALL | After a trip to the NCAA Div. II College World Series last year, the Bulldogs prepare for the 2016 season with a number of new players.

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Larkin said despite this, it provides a great opportunity for the team to finish higher than the pre-season standings predict. Larkin said the pre-season standings serve as motivation going into the start of the season. He said Quincy is the team to beat in the GLVC West this season, and he thinks Truman has been overlooked as a top GLVC West contender.

Larkin said part of the reason the 'Dogs were chosen third is because they have so many new players who have yet to play in GLVC competition. He said because the team graduated hitters in the first, second, third and seventh positions, as well as its top pitcher, there is an opportunity for new players to step up and fill those gaps in the lineup.

BEWARE OF DOG



**Senior T.J. Wood
Outfielder
Preseason All-Region**

Source: Natl. Collegiate Baseball Writers Association

"We have four junior college transfers and two freshmen that are going to be vital to us," Larkin said. "They are going to be a big part of our team."

Larkin said he is most excited for the first pitch of the 2016 season and the opportunity to contribute to the Truman baseball program despite the fact that his playing days are behind him.

Senior outfielder T.J. Wood is expected to have a standout year. Wood was selected as a preseason All-Region candidate by the National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association going into his final season in a Truman uniform. Wood said this honor serves as an achievement he can work toward all season. He said more importantly than an All-Region award, he is going to do everything in his power to improve with his team.

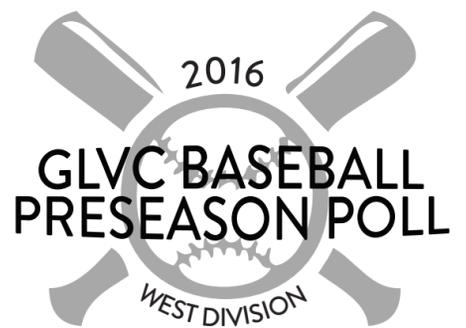
"I want to find a way to embrace [the selection] and play to the best of my abilities, but obviously the team comes first," Wood said. "I am going to do everything I possibly can for the team, and if it so happens that I get All-Region at the end of the year, I want it to be because I did what I could for my team."

Despite being the only Bulldog to receive pre-season accolades, Wood said he thinks the team has power in every facet of the game. Wood said he is excited about the team's hitting lineup — he said the team is full of players who are ready to step up to the plate, produce runs and run the bases well.

Davis, Larkin and Wood all agreed the pitching lineup has vastly improved from last season. Wood said the current group of hurlers are athletes who throw strikes and are ready to compete. He said despite graduating a key pitcher, Truman's starters and bullpen boast more depth and talent than during previous years.

"We lost a crucial guy in [alumnus] Cody Gardner last year," Wood said. "But our biggest strength from last year going into this year would be our pitching. Our pitching is going to be scary."

Wood said his goal is to get to another College World Series in Cary, North Carolina, this season. Coming from a team that finished with a 12-34 record his freshman year, Wood said he hopes to continue to grow the Truman baseball program so it competes for a national championship season after season.



POS.	TEAM
1.	Quincy
2.	Drury
3.	Truman State
4.	William Jewell
5.	Missouri-St. Louis
6.	Missouri S&T
7.	Rockhurst
8.	Maryville

Source: www.glvcsports.com

RECRUIT | Truman's fall sports welcome its signees for the 2016-17 season. Football signed 31 new players to report to campus in August, while men's soccer welcomes seven players and women's soccer brings four to the program.

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Feb. 3 was a day thousands of student-athletes will remember forever. For high school athletes, national signing day signified not only their commitment to a future school and athletic program, but also the attainment of their lifelong dream of playing collegiate sports. Truman State is no stranger to the excitement surrounding this day for future Bulldog athletes.

National signing day highlights athletes and their school selections, but perhaps more importantly, the day is a stepping stone for the future of collegiate athletic programs. For college coaching staffs, national signing day provides a vision of what is to come.

After countless hours spent recruiting, contacting athletes and finding the right fit, several Truman teams saw their work pay off as they received national letters of intent from the future athletes of their programs.

Signing Truman Athletics' biggest recruiting class of 2016, Head Coach Gregg Nesbitt and the Bulldog football team await next year's arrival of 31 student-athletes.

Nesbitt said this year's class is slightly larger than previous years, with 22 players signing national letters of intent and another nine athletes signing institutional letters, signifying they plan to become walk-on members of next year's squad.

With the team returning the majority of its members next season, Nesbitt said there was not as much pressure during this recruiting season because there were no pressing vacancies within the roster. Nesbitt said the main focus with this recruiting class was to replenish for future seasons. He said this proved to be an advantage because his staff was allowed to be very selective during the recruiting process.

With six years of recruiting under his belt, Nesbitt said he thinks his steady, close-knit staff has figured out what it takes to recruit for Truman. Nesbitt said his staff's recruiting success stems from developing relationships with high school coaches and figuring out exactly what kind of athletes they can attract. He said this year is by far the best the coaching staff has done from the recruiting aspect.

Although recruiting is a major part of the process, Nesbitt said he thinks it is only half of the equation. With roots in high school football, Nesbitt said he places a higher value on player development rather than the initial recruitment.

"As a college coach, I think there's two things in my opinion that are equally [important]," Nesbitt said. "One is player development once we get an athlete

here, and the second is recruiting. I think a lot of coaches once they see some flaws in a player, their philosophy is, 'Hey, I'm just going to recruit the next player.' Well I've never just thought that the recruits are the next best thing. I don't think there's quite enough time spent in player development."

Nesbitt said though it takes a special kind of student-athlete to play Truman football, recruiting is surprisingly easy.

When his current players host recruits, letting potential players stay with current players, Nesbitt said he tells his guys not to oversell but to show them who the football team is. He said it is always great when a potential recruit fits within the program's ideals and the school's requirements. At the same time, Nesbitt said it is also helpful to find out when a player does not fit at Truman.

This recruiting style has led Nesbitt and the Bulldogs to five consecutive years achieving a 70 percent commitment rate — meaning that seven out of 10 athletes who made official visits committed to the program. This year, the team achieved a 78 percent commitment rate.

"The reason for that, is one, we're recruiting ready students," Nesbitt said. "With the graduate and post-graduate opportunities that we have here, Truman recruits itself. Also when you have a tight locker room, and teammates that are pulling the rope together, it just becomes a natural fit for recruits."

Throughout the recruiting season, other Truman coaches were also looking to find new faces to add to their rosters. Duke Cochran, men's soccer head coach, said after graduating only four players last year, his team is adding seven young men to its roster.

Cochran said recruiting needs vary year to year, and said his program was in the same spot as Nesbitt's in that there were no real pressing needs for next season.

"We always look at what are we losing and what we need," Cochran said. "Do we need a goal-scorer, a goalkeeper? This year it was nice to just go after talented players who fit the style that we like to play. I think we got pretty lucky with this group, and I think it'll pan out for us."

Cochran said though his recruits show a lot of promise, it might be hard for a true freshman to break into the lineup. Cochran said he thinks they are talented enough to put in a good four years for the program even though the team will return veteran players who have talent and experience.

Cochran said he looks forward to having some experienced upperclassmen ready to step into leadership roles this spring, and is excited about his roster's talent breeding competition on the team.

On the women's side for Truman soccer, Head Coach Mike Cannon added four players to his roster for next year.

Graduating four seniors last season, three of whom were starters, Cannon said he is bringing in players who will compete for playing time, particularly in the midfield position.

"We just try to find kids that are good athletes and good students," Cannon said. "I always need to wait around and see if they'll be a good fit academically — checking GPAs and ACT scores. The better the student, the more academic money they can potentially get, and that's obviously a positive for our program."

Cannon said he looks to recruit athletes who challenge themselves academically. He said he thinks a strong work ethic in school will carry into effort on the playing field.

With recruiting complete, Cannon and his team have the opportunity at another winning season and the chance to protect their GLVC conference title.

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- Mike Cannon, women's soccer head coach

Cannon said this conference reign is not only a great goal to keep in mind, but also helps during the recruiting process for the next couple years.

"It's always good PR to have success, and winning the conference is a peak," Cannon said. "Our kids this year had already committed before our season ended, but for next year and the following, it definitely helps. It's always nice to say you're the best team in your conference."

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