BULLDOG BARK

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HOWE, BLAKLEY AND RUUD RECEIVE FIRST-TEAM ALL-MIAA HONORS;
11 OTHER BULLDOGS NAMED TO ALL-CONFERENCE LIST

The Truman football team completed its season on Saturday with a 42-35 win at Missouri Western State College. The Bulldogs finished the season with an 8-3 record and were 6-3 in Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association action, tying for third-place in the conference.

A total of 14 Bulldogs earned all-MIAA honors on the football field for 2001, including three first-team picks.

Senior quarterback Eric Howe (West Des Moines, Iowa/Dowling), junior slot receiver Andrew Blakley (St. Joseph, Mo./Central) and junior offensive center Nick Ruud (Moline, Ill.) were all voted first-team all-MIAA by the league coaches.

Howe, a candidate for the NCAA Division II player of the year award, the Harlon Hill Trophy, led the MIAA with 258.0 passing yards a game and a 145.5 efficiency rating, and was second with 259.5 total offensive yards a game. Going into the last week of the season, his pass efficiency rating came in at 15th among NCAA Division II leaders this year. He completed his career as a Bulldog in 1998. Howe broke Truman records for career passing yards, pass attempts (1,203), pass completions (687) and passing touchdowns (70).

He charted the second-best season ever in the MIAA as a sophomore with 2,966 passing yards and had the third-best season ever in the league the following year with 2,945 yards. In 2001, Howe added his name to the top-10 MIAA single-season passing leaders list again with the sixth-best season ever with 2,838 yards through the airways. He played in just five games as a reserve his freshman season and had 348 passing yards that year.

Howe was an honorable mention all-MIAA quarterback the last two seasons.

He was named MIAA offensive player of the week for his performance in the upset of Northwest Missouri this year. It was his second such honors of the season, and the fifth of his career. Howe was also named MIAA offensive player of the week this year after moving into second-place on the MIAA’s career passing chart and passing for 310 yards and four touchdowns in Truman’s 43-14 win at Southwest Baptist. He is the first Truman quarterback to pass for more than 8,000 career yards.

He threw for 200 or more yards in 28 games, and surpassed the 300 yards mark 11 times. Howe threw for three or more touchdowns in 13 career games and has seven games with four passing TDs.

He contributed to five touchdowns when he threw for four and kept the ball on another vs. Quincy this year. Howe has thrown 18 passes for 50 yards or more, scoring touchdowns on 16 of those tosses. He had a career long 93-yard TD pass vs. Washburn in 2000 that was the longest pass reception for a touchdown in school history.

Ruud played nearly every down and anchored an offensive line that ranked among the top 20 in the nation for the year, clearing the way for 431.0 yards of total offense a game and averaging 278.3 passing yards a game. He was a second-team all-MIAA selection a year ago and has been a three-year starter. As center, Ruud was key to the success of one of the best quarterbacks to ever play in the MIAA, Eric Howe.

Blakley, an honorable mention all-MIAA pick in 1999 and 2000, broke the school record for career receptions in the last game of the year when he caught a career-high 13 passes for 133 yards. He now has 204 catches and 2,493 yards, and is 328 yards among reception leaders heading into the final week of the season, his pass efficiency rating came in at 15th among NCAA Division II leaders this year. He completed his career as a Bulldog in 1998. Howe broke Truman records for career passing yards, pass attempts (1,203), pass completions (687) and passing touchdowns (70).

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SECOND-TEAM ALL-MIAA HONORS WENT TO junior kicker Austin Lepper (Ames, Iowa/Gilbert), sophomore defensive back Derek Kent (Lucas, Iowa/Chariton), senior tight end Jason Riney (Byron, Ill.), junior split end Alfonso Pugh (Galesburg, Ill.), and junior inside linebacker Jake Willrich (Grimes, Iowa/Dallas Center Grimes).

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ...

TRUMAN 2001 RESULTS

Sept. 1 Drake (Iowa) $, W 40-29
Sept. 8 @ Quincy (Ill.) #, W 51-7
Sept. 15 Emporia (Kan.) *, L 34-14
Sept. 22 Missouri-Rolla * (Family Day), W 61-0
Sept. 29 @ Southwest Baptist *, W 43-14
Oct. 6 @ Washburn *, W 27-26
Oct. 13 Missouri Southern * (Homecoming), W 37-9
Oct. 20 @ Northwest Missouri *, W 24-23
Oct. 27 @ Pittsburg (Kan.) *, L 28-0
Nov. 3 Central Missouri *, L 58-27
Nov. 10 @ Missouri Western *, W 42-35
$ NCAA Division I-AA game.
# NCAA Division II game.
* Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association, NCAA DII game.
Lepper led the team and finished fifth in the league in scoring with 7.1 points a game (78). He was second in the league in field goals (12.7 pg) and field goal percentage (77.8, 14 of 18), and ranked among the top six in the nation in field goal percentage heading into the final week of the season. He made good on two game-winning kicks this year when he booted a 46-yard field goal with six-tenths of a second remaining in the 27-26 win over Washburn, and with a PAT kick in the closing seconds of the game with Northwest Missouri that Truman won, 24-23.

Kent led the team in total tackles with 119, including 61 solo stops, and finished fourth in the conference in total tackles. He also charted nine tackles for losses this year, 2.5 sacks, one interception and three forced fumbles and pass deflections. His three forces tied him for second among MIAA leaders, while he was 22nd in the nation among tackle leaders heading into the final week of the season. Kent posted double-digit tackles in six of his 11 starts this year, including career-highs of 19 total stops and 12 solo tackles vs. Washburn on Oct. 6. He was named MIAA defensive player of the week for his efforts in the Washburn game that also included a PAT block with 40 seconds remaining that turned out to be the ‘Dogs margin of victory.

Riney finished fourth on the team in receiving as the ‘Dogs starting tight end. He caught 17 passes for 229 yards and a touchdown, averaging 13.5 yards per catch. He joined the team in 1997, redshirting that season, but playing in five games the following year as a tight end and on special teams. He suffered a season-ending injury during preseason camp in 1999, but came back last season playing in every game and making seven starts. For his career, Riney has made 31 catches for 422 yards and two touchdowns. Riney had a career high with six catches for 68 yards vs. Pittsburg three weeks ago, leading the team in receiving yards for the game.

Pugh led the team with 124.9 all-purpose yards a game and was third in the league. He was also eighth in receiving yards per game (58.8), sixth in receptions (4.40 pg) and was fifth in punt returns (10.2 ypr) and kickoff returns (27.4 ypr). Pugh was ranked tied for 29th in NCAA DII with 10.9 yards per punt return heading into the final game. He is now 17th among Truman all-time receiving yards leaders and ranks tied for fifth with 16 career receiving TDs. Pugh has returned three kickoffs for touchdowns since 1999, including an 89-yard return in the season finale this year. He also returned a punt for a touchdown as a freshman and was an honorable mention all-MIAA pick last year.

Willrich was second on the team with 90 total tackles, including 46 solo stops, eight tackles for losses, two sacks, two forced fumbles, two pass breakups, three fumble recoveries and one blocked kick. He finished 10th in the league in total tackles as a full-time starter. For his career, Willrich has 251 total tackles, 130 of those were solo stops. He was an honorable mention all-MIAA pick last year.

HONORABLE MENTION ALL-MIAA STATUS WAS CONFERRED ON junior wide receiver Geoff Jensen (Grinnell, Iowa), senior linebacker Bryan Johnson (Byron, Ill.), junior linebacker Judd Lienhard (Lousiana, Mo.), senior offensive tackle Brandon Montgomery (St. Louis/SLUH), junior defensive back Justin Walter (Chillicothe, Mo.) and junior defensive tackle Nick Weite (Ottumwa, Iowa).

Jensen was second on the team in receiving yards (615) and third in receptions (42), while ranking ninth and 10th, respectively, in those categories among conference leaders for the year. He moved into 14th-place among Truman career receiving yards leaders, finishing the year with 1,319 yards since 1999. He also has 84 receptions and 13 receiving touchdowns for his career. Jensen was second on the team in kickoff returns with 13 for 263 yards (20.2 ypr), and finished third in all-purpose yards (82.9 pg).

Johnson has played in every game the last three years and has been a starting linebacker the last two seasons. He finished the year with 51 total tackles for fifth-place on the team. Johnson has made 104 career tackles, including 57 solo stops, 11 for a loss, and one fumble recovery. He has picked off three passes, two this season. Johnson had a career high with eight total tackles vs. Emporia last year.

Lienhard has started every game the last two years and was third on the team in total tackles again this season with 68, including 31 solo stops. He led the team with 10 tackles for losses this season. Lienhard also earned honorable mention all-league status last year and has a career total of 211 total tackles and 19 tackles for losses.

Montgomery was an honorable mention all-MIAA pick last year as well, and has also been an integral part of the Truman offensive line that has helped the Bulldogs produce 431.0 yards of total offense a game. He began his career at Truman as a redshirt in 1997 and played in 32 career games.

Walter led the team with four interceptions and 16 pass breakups, and ranked third in the conference among pass deflection leaders. He made 40 tackles in 2001, 27 solo stops, and now has 90 total tackles, 20 pass breakups and seven interceptions for his career.

Weite led the defensive line with 36 total tackles, 15 solo stops and eight tackles for losses. He finished eighth on the team in total tackles after starting every game at tackle. Weite also had 1.5 sacks, an interception, five pass deflections and one forced fumble this past season.

THE BULLDOGS COMPLETED THEIR SIXTH WINNING SEASON in the seven-year tenure of head coach John Ware and have enjoyed winning seasons 10 of the last 12 years. Ware’s team registered eight wins for the first time since 1994. In the 94-year history of Truman football, the ‘Dogs have now had just 14 campaigns with eight or more wins.

COACH’S RECORD: Truman head coach John Ware has been a member of the Truman coaching staff since 1985. He has a career record of 44-32 (.579) as head coach of the Bulldogs, and is 41-17 (.707) in MIAA games. Ware is a 1981 graduate of Drake University and received a masters degree from Truman in 1987.