John Ware has guided the 'Dogs to a 44-32 (.579) record over the last seven seasons and is 41-22 (.651) in the Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association during that span.

Last season, Ware's team charted the best record of his tenure with eight wins as the Bulldogs finished 6-3 in the conference, tying for third-place overall.

Ware began as head coach in 1995 as the Bulldogs' 19th taskmaster.

In addition to his duties as head coach, Ware's focus on the field has been as Truman's offensive line coach, a job he has enjoyed for nearly two decades.

"My dad would say, 'that's where the game is played', and as an offensive lineman during my career and now as a coach, I understand the truth of those words," Ware said.

"We had success running the ball in the past and our O-lines were some of the best in the history of Truman football. "We went to throwing the ball a few years ago and that gave me the chance to add a new dimension to the way I was coaching. 

"We feel good about the upcoming season and the experience we have returning on both sides of the ball," Ware said. "I think games will still be exciting to watch for Bulldog fans as we continue to throw the ball."

Six years ago, Ware's efforts as O-line coach paid off when Jarrett Anderson received the Harlon Hill Trophy, awarded to the NCAA Division II Player of the Year. Anderson rode Truman's offensive line to an NCAA DII record-setting 2,140 yards in 1996, leading the nation in rushing (194.5 ypg) and scoring (15.3 ppg).

Ware served as assistant head coach in charge of the offensive line for eight years at Truman before taking the head job in '95. During his tenure as assistant head coach, Truman compiled a 38-19 record from 1990-94, including three postseason games.

In addition to his duties as assistant head coach, Ware served as offensive line coach and strength and conditioning coordinator. He is a certified strength and conditioning specialist and a member of the National Strength Coaches Association.

He came to the University in 1985 as a graduate assistant in charge of strength training and the defensive line. Ware became full-time in '86.

He has coached four offensive linemen to all-America status and recruited four other all-America Bulldogs, including another great running back, Chad Guthrie, who topped the Bulldogs' single season rushing list with 1,649 yards until Anderson took the honor in '96.

Ware played football at Drake University (Iowa), where he was an all-America and first-team all-conference offensive lineman for the Bulldogs. He also collected academic all-America and all-league honors and performed in the 1981 Blue-Gray All-Star Classic.

In 1981, Ware signed with the San Francisco Forty Niners as a free agent and played in four exhibition games before getting cut.

He received a bachelor's degree in 1981 from Drake and a master's degree in '87 from Truman, both in psychology.

Before coming to Truman, Ware served as line coach and strength and conditioning coach for a season in Ottumwa, Iowa, his hometown. He was also an all-state lineman for the Ottumwa High School Bulldogs.

Ware was a five-time U.S. Senior National Powerlifting champion. He was the 1989 world record-holder, lifting a total of 2,427 pounds, and the 1991 world powerlifting champion. His best lifts in the three powerlifting events were 1,000 lbs. in the squat, 630 lbs. in the bench press and 840 lbs. in the deadlift.

He is married to the former Melissa Thomas ('87) who is the Director of Athletics Media Relations at Truman.
Full-Time Coaches

Matt Copeland, Associate Head Coach & Offensive Coordinator

Matt Copeland is entering his sixth season as a coach for the Bulldogs, but his first as the team’s offensive coordinator. He spent the last two years as defensive line coach, in addition to serving as associate head coach. Prior to his two-year stint on defense, Copeland served as an offensive assistant at Truman for three seasons.

He coached football and basketball and taught English at Highland (Mo.) High School for a year before joining the staff.

Copeland performed as a tight end for Truman from 1991-95, earning second-team all-America recognition in 1995. He led the team in receiving in ‘94 and ‘95 and caught 107 career passes for 1,354 yards to rank eighth in receptions and 13th in yardage among Bulldog career leaders.

Copeland was an unanimous first-team all-MIAA pick in ‘95 and a second-team pick in ‘94. He was also a second-team Verizon academic all-America, as well as earned academic all-MIAA honors in 1994 and 1995.

Copeland was a member of two national playoff teams in ‘92 and ‘94 and served as a team captain in 1995. He was named to the Truman 1900-1999 all-century football team.

Copeland earned a bachelor’s degree in English in 1995 from Truman, and completed his master’s in education at the University of Missouri-Rolla, Rock Island High School, he is married to the former Suzann Sellon (’02). They have an 11-year-old daughter, Paige, a son, Thomas, who will be 5-years-old in January, and welcomed a son, Noah, last January.

Office: (660) 785-4233

Matt Nelson, Defensive Coordinator/Special Teams & Defensive Backs

Matt Nelson began as a Bulldog coach in 1999 after two years as a graduate assistant coach for the Bulldogs. Nelson took over as co-defensive coordinator last season, but will assume the sole responsibility of coordinator for the defense this year after the departure of his counterpart, Mat Steinberg.

Previously coach of the linebackers, Nelson will now focus on the defensive backs, as well as serve as special teams coach. He is also the advisor for the Purple Pride spirit group.

As a graduate assistant at Truman, he worked with the linebackers and defensive tackles.

Nelson finished a four-year career as a linebacker for Truman in 1995. He was second in tackles in ’95 with 81 for the year and posted a career total of 185 stops and five quarterback sacks. Nelson was a member of two NCAA playoff teams in ’92 and ’94 and was voted a team captain in 1995.

Jeff Jacques, Defensive Line

Jeff Jacques joined the staff this past summer after serving as a volunteer coach in 2001. Prior to the ’01 campaign, he spent two seasons as a member of the University of Missouri-Rolla Miners coaching staff.

Jacques is no stranger to Truman. Prior to his stint at UMR, he spent a year as the defensive coordinator at Kemper Military Junior College in Boonville, Mo., but was a member of the Truman defensive coaching staff for three seasons as a volunteer assistant before going to Boonville. He also helped coach football for a season at Kirksville High School.

Though he coached running backs at Missouri-Rolla, Jacques shifted to assisting with the tight ends last year and will move back over to defense in 2002 to coach the linemen. Jacques will also serve as strength and conditioning coordinator for the Bulldogs.

He earned a bachelor of science degree in teaching from Buena Vista (Iowa) in 2001. Jacques and his wife, Krista (’89), both Kirksville natives, have a 9-year-old daughter, Kelsey, and a son, Jarrett, who is 3-years-old.

Office: (660) 785-4262

Erik Kruppe, Linebackers

Erik Kruppe begins his first season as a full-time coach on the Bulldog staff, but volunteered last year while teaching special education at Kirksville High School.

He will now serve as linebacker coach after helping with the inside linebackers a year ago. Kruppe will also serve as film coordinator, in charge of state of the art digital film breakdown.

Kruppe earned a bachelor’s degree from Illinois Wesleyan University in 1999, and completed a master’s degree in special education at Northeastern Illinois University in 2001.

He coached at North Park University in Chicago from 1999-2000, and helped coach at Maine East High School in the summer of 1999.

Kruppe was a linebacker at Illinois Wesleyan from 1995-98, and is a native of Niles, Ill.

Office: (660) 785-4012
Tight Ends

Mike Harris
Student Assistant Coach

Mike Harris came to Truman after earning second-team all-conference recognition as a member of the Phoenix College football team. In 2000, he played in six games as a tackle and started seven of nine games in 2001, but sustained a career-ending injury prior to the final two games of the season. Harris is a business administration major from Chandler, Ariz. He attended Dobson high school where he was an all-state performer.

Assistant Athletics Trainer

Troy Garrett

Troy Garrett will serve as the main athletic trainer for football.

He is entering his third season as a full-time trainer at Truman, after a two-year stint as the head trainer at Southeastern Oklahoma State from 1998-2000.

Garrett earned a bachelor’s degree in exercise science in December of 1995 from Truman and a master's degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1998.

He is a native of South English, Iowa.

Head Athletics Trainer

Michelle Boyd

Michelle Boyd is in her ninth year as an athletic trainer at Truman, but enters her second as the head athletics trainer after serving as an assistant under Clint Thompson for the seven years prior to taking over.

From 1992-94, she was the head athletics trainer at Quaker Valley High School in Leetsdale, Pa.

Boyd was an athletics trainer for wheelchair athletics at the University of Illinois Rehabilitation Education Center in 1992.

She received a bachelor’s degree in kinesiology in 1992 from the University of Illinois (Champaign) and a master's degree in exercise physiology from the University of Pittsburgh (Pa.) in 1994.

Team Physician

John Bailey, D.O.

Dr. Bailey earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Truman and a Doctor of Osteopathy degree from the Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1990.

He was an orthopedic resident in Rockaway, N.Y., before entering an orthopedic and neurosurgical spine fellowship at the University of Missouri-Columbia. His specialty training includes sports medicine.

Assistant Athletics Trainer

Student Assistant Trainers: Nicole Summers, Jeremy Schmidt, Catriona Swift & Jon Zimny

Purple Pride

Purple Pride is a spirit and support organization for the football team, Purple Pride members host recruits on campus visits, as well as perform many other support services for the team. Members decorate locker rooms, serve as ball persons at games, chalk sidewalks promoting Bulldog football games and sell chair backs, programs and Bulldog apparel at home games. They are also a valuable resource to the football office, helping to coordinate mailings as well as performing other office tasks. Purple Pride is advised by assistant coach Matt Nelson.

Pictured above are the members of 2002-03 Purple Pride: (front row, left to right): Allie May, Katie Arnold, Marty Glen, Whitney Noteis, Stephanie Tice and Courtnie Wilson. Middle row: Nicole Kriegshauser, Theresa Martinez, Jenny Comrie, Nicole Harris, Katie Funk, Tracy Davidson and Mel Gipson. Back row: Liz O'Neil, Malissa Reihl, Carrie Vahldeick, Tessa Schertz, Jessie Gildehaus, Katie Stoverink and Emily Barfoot. Not pictured are Karen Bohack, Katie Chierek, Robin Durick, Emily Kallal, Micaela Laverenz, April Owens & Sara Rhoad.