2002 Schedule

Aug. 31   Southern Indiana, 12 p.m.
Sept. 7   @ Wisconsin-Parkside, 3:30 p.m
Sept. 8   @ Lewis, 12 p.m.
Sept. 13  @ SIU-Edwardsville, 7 pm
Sept. 15  @ Missouri-St. Louis, 12 pm
Sept. 22  Christian Brothers (Tenn.), 2 p.m.
Sept. 28  @ Gannon (Pa.), 1 pm
Sept. 29  @ Mercyhurst (Pa.), 1 pm
Oct. 5    @ St. Joseph’s (Ind.), 12 p.m.
Oct. 6    @ Oakland City (Ind.), 2 p.m.
Oct. 13   Indianapolis, 12 p.m.
Oct. 19   Rockhurst, 2 p.m.
Oct. 20   Baker (Kan.), 2 p.m.
Oct. 26   Missouri-Rolla, 2 p.m.
Oct. 30   Quincy (Ill.), 3 p.m.
Nov. 2    Northern Kentucky, 12 p.m.
Nov. 8    @ Missouri Southern, 7 p.m.
Nov. 16-17 NCAA Tournament, First Round
Nov. 23-24 NCAA Tournament, Quarterfinals
Dec. 5-7  NCAA Championship

Quick Facts
Location: Kirksville, Mo. 63501
Founded: 1867
Enrollment: 6,000
President: Dr. Jack Magruder
Director of Athletics: Jerry Wollmering
Affiliation: NCAA Division II
Conference: Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association
Nickname: Bulldogs
Colors: Purple & White
Head Coach: Alf Bilbao
Phone: (660) 785-4168
Facility (Cap.): Truman Soccer Park (250)
First Year of Soccer: 1984

Junior midfielder Bryan DeFoe tied for fourth on the team in goals last year, scoring three total, including the game-winner vs. Northern Kentucky in the season opener.

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The Bulldogs worked hard in the preseason to put together a new team, a team that will be looking to young veterans to lead the way after losing nine teammates. Coach Alf Bilbao knows it will be difficult to replace the nine members lost, but remains optimistic about the freshmen and sophomores’ abilities to fill the gaps.

Last season, the ‘Dogs finished 11-5-2 and, much to their dismay, failed to make an NCAA appearance, a disappointment they had not experienced since 1999. It was not due to lack of effort, however. Armed with forward Matt Byers, who was named first-team all-Central region and led the Truman side with 27 points and 11 assists, as well as several other leading seniors, the ‘Dogs had hoped to make it to the postseason.

“There were several rough games,” Bilbao said. “And several more they should have won. It was not all disappointment, though, considering we were still one of the top teams in the country.”

The team has gained several skilled freshmen that are willing to step-up and help fill the voids of those players that have left. With only a small hand full of players that have game time experience, Bilbao hopes that all of the freshman, and last year’s redshirts, will be able to contribute. The ‘Dogs were unranked in the NSCAA preseason poll, but hope to surprise everyone after the young team takes the pitch.

Returning to the squad are junior captains Brett Coppage and Ricky Vigil. Coppage, who saw playing time in 16 games last season, will serve as the stopper for the ‘Dogs. Last year, Vigil’s shots on goal percentage of .421 was the second highest on the team in all 18 games, and he will again be looked to for scoring power up top.

The ‘Dogs will also look for help from sophomores Luke Bolar, Jeremy Crenshaw, Bryan Defoe, Brenton Freeman and Andy Lakers who all saw playing time last season.

Bolar leads the returners this year after scoring five goals a year ago to finish tied for third on the team. However, Freeman started 15 games in 2001 and will push Bolar for a starting assignment in the central midfield, along with newcomer Martin Clayes from Scotland. Returning squadmember Chad Baldwin will also vie for time among the central midfielders.

Bilbao is glad to have depth in the midfield that gives him the ability to substitute without losing skill or momentum.

In the back field, the ‘Dogs are working on getting the right mix of guys to come through, however, they look to be solid at sweeper.

Defoe will be challenged for the starting left back job by freshman Mike Boyle. Lakers, who is likely to start on the right side, could also play the role of sweeper if needed, but is likely to turn the job over to freshman Jared Atwood. Returning squadmembers Dave Sodemann and Brent Rauch, along with freshman Nathan Pearsall, will see time on the right and left too.

Crenshaw will again be up top after starting 15 games last year, but could play a backup role. Freshman Sean Birrell, another Scotsman, may have secured a starting forward spot for himself with an outstanding preseason showing. Freshman forward Lars Pottgiesser, from Germany, is also a talented forward and looks to back up Birrell heading into the season, while freshman Kyle Ward provides plenty of depth up top.

“The forwards look strong, but the forwards, as well as the backs and wide players, may take some time to adjust to new teammates.”
In goal, the ‘Dogs will rely on Adam Johnson to replace the dynamic duo of David Wiebenga and T.J. Dube. Though Johnson red-shirted in 2000 and was injured last year, Bilbao has confidence in his abilities. Freshman Nate Gibson, though not slated to start the season, is likely to see time in goal as well.

“They (the team) play smart and simple with a great team atmosphere,” Bilbao said. “Mentally, the team understands the challenges it faces and is eager to show that they are physically ready as well. They worked hard over the summer and could surprise a lot of people. They’re already ahead of schedule and doing well.”

Only time will tell how this young team will be.

The schedule is full of key Central region games beginning with the home season-opener vs. Southern Indiana.

Wisconsin-Parkside and Lewis are next on the agenda and will be important games as well. The Bulldogs lost to both teams last year, games that ended up costing the ‘Dogs their postseason hopes.

Games at Missouri-St. Louis and Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville will cap-off the ‘Dogs’ first road trip. SIUE handed the Bulldogs one of their five losses in 2001 and advanced to the NCAA Division II semifinals before being knocked out of the tourney, while the UMSL rivalry is always hotly contested.

Truman will return home for a matchup against Christian Brothers (Tenn.) before another four-game road-trip that begins with a pair of games in Erie, Pa., vs. perennial powers Gannon and Mercyhurst. MC lost in the first round of the NCAA DII tournament last year.

The weekend of Oct. 5-6 has the Bulldogs on the road in Indiana with games against St. Joseph’s and Oakland City.

A six-game home stand will nearly see the ‘Dogs through the remainder of the regular season, except for the season finale at Missouri Southern. Indianapolis, Rockhurst, Baker (Kan.), Missouri-Rolla, Quincy (Ill.) and Northern Kentucky will travel to Kirksville for the six games. Truman lost to UMR a year ago and tied Quincy, 2-2.