THE GAME: Truman State University Bulldogs (Independent/NCAA DII) vs. Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville Cougars (Great Lakes Valley Conference/NCAA DII)
Date: Saturday, Aug. 30, 2003
Time: 5 p.m.
Location: Quincy, Ill.
Pitch (Cap.): North Campus Field (2,500)

THE GAME: Truman State University Bulldogs (Independent/NCAA DII) vs. Quincy University Hawks (Great Lakes Valley Conference/NCAA DII)
Date: Sunday, Aug. 31, 2003
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Location: Quincy, Ill.
Pitch (Cap.): North Campus Field (2,500)

TRUMAN (0-0 OVERALL): The Bulldogs, which are ranked 19th in the national preseason polls, will open up the year this weekend against SIU-Edwardsville and Quincy (Ill.) at the Quincy Soccer Bowl.

2003 SEASON PREVIEW: Very few faces have changed from the 2002 Bulldogs men’s soccer team, but expectations are raised this year for a program that is looking to end a three-year drought from postseason play. The team returns every starter and key reserve from last year’s squad that went 13-4-0 and just missed an NCAA tournament berth.

“Our experience will play a major factor,” said head coach Alf Bilbao. “We are still a young team, but the year of playing experience a lot of the players got last year will help.”

The biggest strength for the 2003 Bulldogs will be the overall depth of the team. At every position, Truman has a couple of players who are able to step in and compete at a high level.

One of the biggest competitions going into the season is at the goalkeeper position. Senior Adam Johnson started every game last year and had a 1.12 goals against average and four shutouts. He is being challenged by redshirt freshman Nate Gibson.

In the backfield, sophomores Jared Atwood and Mike Boyle and senior Bryan Defoe are the returning starting defenders. Junior Andy Lakers also saw action in 14 games as a back and junior Brent Rauch saw limited game time. This group combined to play a big role in the Bulldogs allowing just 18 goals in 17 games last year.

The top midfielder will be senior Brett Atwood who earned second-team all-region and Verizon first-team academic all-district honors in 2002. He scored one goal and had four assists while being one of the most solid performers in the midfield. Other returning starters at midfield include junior Brenton Freeman and sophomores Geoff Brengle, Nate Gaudreault and Martin Clayes. Clayes led the team with five assists and tied with Gaudreault (two goals, three assists) for fourth on the team with seven points. Other key returning midfielders are juniors Kevin Barry and Luke Bolar and sophomores Paul Link and Chad Baldwin. All four appeared in at least 13 matches in 2002 and Barry and Bolar each started seven times.

At the forward position, Bilbao has three playmakers to choose from for the two spots in the Bulldogs’ 3-5-2 alignment. Senior Ricky Vigil and sophomore Sean Birrell started all 17 games last year while sophomore Lars Pottgiesser came off the bench in 16 contests. Vigil led the team with nine goals, 21 points and five game-winning goals. Pottgiesser scored six times, four of them game-winners, and had four assists. Birrell had four goals and four assists and was the only freshman named to one of the all-central region teams as he received second-team honors.

Three Truman players, Gibson, Wes Frevert and Nathan Pearsall, return after redshirting last year. Five newcomers also join the mix in Ryan Cravens, Matt McCarthy, Andrew Pichee, Sam Phelps and Stan Gundersen.

“Like last year, we have no superstars on the roster,” said Bilbao. “We have to play together, have good team chemistry and compete at a high level.”

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2003 BULLDOG SCHEDULE

Aug. 30-31 at Quincy Soccer Bowl (III.)
Aug. 30 vs. SIU-Edwardsville, 5 p.m.
Aug. 31 @ Quincy (Ill.), 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 6 Lewis (Ill.), 12 p.m.
Sept. 7 Wisconsin-Parkside, 12 p.m.
Sept. 13 @ Northern Kentucky, 3 p.m.
Sept. 14 @ Indianapolis (Ind.), 12 p.m.
Sept. 20 @ Rockhurst, 2 p.m.
Sept. 21 William Penn (Iowa), 2 p.m.
Sept. 27 @ Missouri-Rolla, 12 p.m.
Oct. 3 @ Colorado School of Mines, 7 p.m.
Oct. 5 @ Colorado Christian, 12 p.m.
Oct. 10 @ Southern Indiana, 5 p.m.
Oct. 11 @ Oakland City (Ind.), 2 p.m.
Oct. 12 Indiana State, 12 p.m.
Oct. 18 Gannon (Pa.), 12 p.m.
Oct. 22 Missouri-St. Louis, 3 p.m.
Oct. 26 @ William Woods, 1 p.m.
Oct. 31 @ Christian Brothers (Tenn.), 7 p.m.
Nov. 2 vs. Harding (in Memphis, Tenn.), 12 p.m.
Nov. 8 Missouri Southern, 2 p.m.
Nov. 13-16 NCAA Tournament, 1st & 2nd Rounds
Nov. 22-23 NCAA Tournament, Quarterfinals
Dec. 4-7 NCAA Final Four
and be mentally tough. If we can accomplish that, we will have a successful season.”

Another key in the Bulldogs' success this year will be getting off to a fast start. Their first seven games are against Central region opponents, including the first four against teams that are expected to be in the hunt for the three Central region NCAA tournament berths. Truman opens up the year at the Quincy (Ill.) Soccer Bowl where they will face SIU-Edwardsville and the host school. The following weekend the team will be home against Lewis (III.) and Wisconsin-Parkside. Lewis is one of three teams ranked in the preseason top 25 that Truman will face during the year. Rockhurst opens the year ranked No. 13 and Colorado School of Mines is ranked No. 20.

The Bulldogs, which are an independent in men's soccer, will feel like part of the Great Lakes Conference as they play eight games against schools in that league, including the first six of the season. Truman plays 12 regional opponents during the year, including important matches against Rockhurst, Missouri-Rolla and Southern Indiana, three more teams that Bilbao sees as possible NCAA tournament squads. Those three contests are all on the road, a place the Bulldogs' need to excel in 2003 as 13 of their 19 games are away from Truman Soccer Park.

“Our goal this year is to reach the NCAA tournament,” said Bilbao. “If we improve each game throughout the year, I see us being right there by the end of the season.”

**SCOUTING SIU-EDWARDSVILLE:** The Cougars return just three starters off of last year’s team that went 13-4-2 overall and won the Great Lakes Valley conference tournament. Among the top returners is Tim Velten who earned co-freshman of the year honors last year in the conference. The head coach of the Cougars is Ed Huneke who has a 174-137-22 career record and is starting his 18th year at the school.

Last year, Truman claimed a 2-1 overtime victory over SIU-Edwardsville. Nate Gaudreault had the game-winning goal for the Bulldogs in the 99th minute and Ricky Vigil had an assist on both Truman goals.

That win gave Truman a 4-2-1 all-time series advantage over the Cougars. Under head coach Alf Bilbao, the Bulldogs are 3-0-1 against SIU-Edwardsville.

**SCOUTING QUINCY:** The Hawks went 10-6-2 overall last year and return eight starters and 14 letterwinners. Among the returners are first-team all-Great Lakes Valley Senad Hot and second-team selection Dave Musso.

Head coach of Quincy is Jack Mackenzie who is in his 35th season at the school. He has an all-time coaching record of 427-199-51.

Last season, Truman escaped with a 2-1 win over Quincy. After a scoreless first-half, Paul Link and Lars Pottgiesser each scored early in the second-half with Brett Coppage getting credited with an assist on both goals. The Hawks got one back in the 83rd minute but fell one goal short of tying the game.

The Bulldogs lead the all-time series by a 6-3-2 margin, including a 5-0-1 mark under Alf Bilbao.

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SEASON OPENERS: Truman is 13-9-2 in season openers, and has won its last six. Last season, the Bulldogs won 2-0 in the season opener against Southern Indiana.

A LOOK BACK AT 2002: The 2002 season opened with a lot of question marks for the Truman soccer team. The Bulldogs lost nine players from the year before and opened the year with no seniors and 13 freshmen on the roster.

In the end, however, the season had to be judged a success as Truman finished 13-4 overall and was ranked 23rd in the country in the final poll. The biggest disappointment came from a pair of 2-0 losses to regional foes Lewis (Ill.) and Rockhurst (Mo.) that kept the team from making its first appearance in the NCAA Tournament since 1999.

The young squad had a difficult schedule to deal with early on with eight of the first nine matches on the road. However, it opened the season strong with a 2-0 home shutout over Southern Indiana. The team moved to 2-0 with a 2-1 victory at Wisconsin-Parkside, but on the same weekend, fell in their meeting with Lewis.

The next week, Truman gained another split against Great Lakes Valley conference teams. The trip started with a 2-1 overtime win at SIU-Edwardsville, but the Bulldogs fell 1-0 to Missouri-St. Louis.

The team began to come together after that weekend, starting with a road trip to Pennsylvania to face Gannon and Mercyhurst. In the Gannon match, the Bulldogs put three shots in the back of the net in a 3-1 victory. They then gave Mercyhurst, an eventual Final Four team, all they could handle before coming up short by a 1-0 score.

The team bounced back the next weekend with 10 goals in two games against St. Joseph’s (Ind.) and Oakand City (Ind.) as Truman won both contests to move to 6-3 overall. The Bulldogs finally got to return to their home pitch and the offense kept rolling with a 4-1 win over Indianapolis (Ind.).

Rockhurst finally cooled off Truman with a 2-0 decision over the Bulldogs. That loss would be the final setback for the team as they swept the remaining six opponents, with five of the victories coming by just a single goal. The wins included home victories over Baker (Kan.) (2-0), Missouri-Rolla (1-0), Quincy (Ill.) (2-1), Northern Kentucky (3-2), and Christian Brothers (Tenn.) (1-0) and a road victory at Missouri Southern (2-1).

Truman finished the year by winning nine of the final ten matches and also had a record of 7-1 at the Truman Soccer Field. The team was ranked third in the final Central Region poll.

HEAD COACH ALF BILBAO: Alf Bilbao became the seventh coach in the 24-year history of Bulldog soccer prior to the 1998 season. His teams have compiled a five-year mark of 64-23-7 (.718), giving him the best winning percentage of any head coach in school history and the seventh-best among active Division II coaches. He needs 13 more wins to tie the Truman mark for most wins by a men’s soccer head coach.

2003 TRUMAN ROSTER

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<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pos.</th>
<th>Ht.</th>
<th>Wt.</th>
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Head Coach: Alf Bilbao
Student Assistant: David Salvatierra

* Letters Earned  % Previously Redshirted