THE GAME: Truman State University Bulldogs (Independent/NCAA II) vs. University of Missouri-Rolla Miners (Independent/NCAA II)

Date: Saturday, Sept. 27, 2003
Time: 12 p.m.
Location: Rolla, Mo.

TRUMAN (7-0-0 OVERALL): Truman will put its perfect record and a five-match shutout streak on the line on Saturday when the team travels to Missouri-Rolla for a 12 p.m. game. The Bulldogs are the top team in the central region at this time, but the Miners are one of many teams right below looking to change that.

The Bulldogs moved up one spot in the national poll this week to No. 7 after a pair of wins last weekend. On Saturday, the team went on the road and recorded an important regional victory with a 2-0 shutout over Rockhurst. The following day, Truman took care of business at home, defeating NAIA William Penn by a 2-0 margin.

The soccer squad begins an important stretch in their 2003 schedule as the Bulldogs go on the road for the next five matches, two against teams who have been ranked in the top 25 this year and another against a squad in this week’s region top five poll.

MISSOURI-ROLLA (4-1-2): The Miners are unbeaten in their last six after opening the year with a 3-2 loss at St. Joseph’s. Since then, they have knocked off Southern Indiana (3-2), Columbia College (3-2 ot), Lewis (1-0) and Ouachita Baptist (4-1) and have tied Indianapolis (3-3 ot) and Quincy (1-1 ot).

Last week, Missouri-Rolla was ranked 24th in the country but fell out of the poll this week despite a convincing win in its only game. Last Saturday, the Miners outshot Ouachita Baptist by a 23-4 margin and scored three times in the second-half in an easy 4-1 win. Justin Lightner had two goals, including the game-winner, and E.J. Klapperich and Ryan Coates each added a goal and an assist.

The Miners like to put points up on the board, averaging 2.4 goals a game. Coates is the top threat with eight goals and two assists on the year for a team-high 18 points. Klapperich has three goals and Lightner and Chris Shaw have each struck twice.

Dan Larson has been in goal all seven games for Missouri-Rolla. He has allowed 12 goals, has a 1.39 goals against average and one shutout.

TRUMAN VS. ROCKHURST: The Bulldogs recorded one of their top victories on the year with a 2-0 win over Rockhurst on Saturday.

Shots were pretty even in a physical game that saw the two teams combine for 38 fouls and nine yellow cards. The difference was the goalkeeping as Nate Gibson made saves on all four Rockhurst shots on goal as he recorded his fourth straight shutout.

The score was tied at half and remained that way until the 67th minute when Martin Clayes scored unassisted. Six minutes later, Ricky Vigil put another tally on the board with an assist from Sean Birrell.
TRUMAN VS. WILLIAM PENN: On a wet and soggy field in Kirksville, the Bulldogs struck twice early and defeated William Penn by a 2-0 score.

Truman outshot the Statesmen by a 24-11 margin, although it had just eight shots on goals compared to seven for the visitors.

Chad Baldwin got credit for the game-winning goal after scoring unassisted less than four minutes into the game. Ricky Vigil scored the game’s final goal in the 13th minute with the help of assists from Sean Birrell and Ryan Cravens.

Goalkeeper Adam Johnson and the Bulldogs defense did the rest of the work from there. In his first playing time of the season, Johnson made seven saves and earned the shutout, the fifth of his career, which ties him for seventh on Truman’s career list.

BULLDOGS DEFENSE: The reason for Truman’s great start has been a defense that has allowed just two goals in seven games, has six shutouts and a 0.28 goals against average. The Bulldogs are one shutout away from tying the school record for consecutive shutouts (7).

Individually, goalie Nate Gibson has held team’s scoreless for the last 473 minutes and Adam Johnson has added 90 minutes to that scoreless streak. Gibson has a 0.33 goals against average on the year and five shutouts while Johnson has not allowed a goal in his one start.

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 mark of 71-23-7 (.738), giving him the best winning percentage of any head coach in school history. Prior to the season, he ranked seven among active Division II coaches in winning percentage. He needs six more wins to tie the Truman mark for most wins by a men’s soccer head coach.

UP NEXT: The Bulldogs travel to Colorado where they will take on the Colorado School of Mines on Oct. 3 in Golden and Colorado Christian on Oct. 5 in Lakewood.