

# FERRIS STATE HOCKEY

## 2007-08 SEASON PREVIEW

When the Ferris State University men's ice hockey team puts their skates on the ice for the first time in the 2007-08 season, a new challenge will await the Bulldogs.

Ferris State will strive to play each and every game with greater consistency in hopes of securing home ice for the Central Collegiate Hockey Association (CCHA) Tournament.

Performing consistently at a high level of productivity is a mindset which the Ferris State coaching staff has worked diligently on instilling in its 27-member group since the conclusion of last season.

The 19 returning letterwinners from last season's 14-22-3 team along with the incoming freshmen have bought into the greater the effort, the greater the reward philosophy.

"I really like the character and work ethic of this team," said FSU head coach Bob Daniels, who starts his 16th year at Ferris State this season and owns the distinction of being the school's all-time winningest coach. "They are similar to last season's close-knit group in their focus and dedication. They are all team-oriented individuals who have the desire to succeed and the will to do so now."

Although Daniels and the Bulldogs were far from satisfied with last season's performance, there were some rays of hope which shined through as the 2006-07 campaign progressed.

"We improved and matured a great deal as the season went along," said Daniels. "We made great strides in playing disciplined and I believe we can pick up from that point and build on that momentum."

"I'm confident we're more physically tough, mentally tough and more disciplined than we were at this time last year through the leadership of our upperclassmen," added Daniels.

Daniels realizes the task of placing among the CCHA's top teams this season will be challenging, but one the program relishes on an annual basis.

"I thought the CCHA would emerge as one of college hockey's top leagues last year and that came to fruition with Michigan State winning the national title," said Daniels, who ranked 16th among active NCAA Division I coaches in career victories prior to the 2007-08 season. "The quality of depth in the CCHA is exceptional which makes being a league member so special for our school and our players. We, as a program, know the expectations are high but we want to compete against the best every time."

### FORWARDS

**RETURNING: 10; LOST: 4; NEWCOMERS: 5**

For the second consecutive season, the question remains where's the scoring going to come from. Ferris State has a number of quality skaters returning to the fold, but none are proven big-time goal scorers. While the Bulldogs lack a bonafide scoring threat, Daniels hopes to compensate with strong depth on each of the four forward lines. FSU certainly has a number of players who are poised for breakout seasons and could register double-digit numbers in goals. Sophomore center-right wing **Cody Chupp** (6-0, 198) is the squad's top returning scorer from last season with 23 points (8-15=23) in 37 contests. The assistant captain produced the third-best points total on the team to go with a second-best tying five multiple point games. The 2006-07 FSU Rookie of the Year is regarded by Daniels as one of the CCHA's top up-and-coming forwards due to his combination of skill and excellent conditioning. A bright spot for Ferris last winter was the play of junior center **Brendan Connolly** (5-8, 170), who showed grit and determination has its rewards. Connolly enjoyed a banner season in 2006-07 as he set career highs in points (22), goals (11), assists (11), and power-play lamplighters (four) during a 38-game span. Connolly also had five multi-point game efforts last winter and wound up fifth on the team's points producers list. Senior center **Adam Miller** (6-0, 178) hopes to rebound from offseason surgery and make a greater contribution this season. Miller accumulated 15 points (9-6=15) in 31 outings last year which placed him tied for sixth among the Bulldogs' offensive output leaders. A solid two-way player, junior right wing **Corey Couturier** (6-1, 184) rejoined the team in the second-half of last season and put up eight points (3-5=8) in 22 games. Couturier is back for a full season now which should result in greater offensive numbers. Right wing **Matt Frank** (6-0, 185), an assistant captain, also has been hampered by injuries throughout his Ferris career. The fourth-year junior netted four points (1-3=4) in 33 contests a season ago after totaling a career single-season high 12 points (4-8=12) the previous campaign. A pair of juniors, left wing **J.T. Dahlinger** (6-0, 181) and right wing **Justin Lewandowski** (5-9, 177) provide a lot of energy and quickness to the lineup which could translate into a greater offensive punch. Dahlinger (1-6=7) is an excellent forechecking forward while Lewandowski's (1-4=5) speed is an asset to the team. Joining them is a talented trio of sophomores in right wingers **Aaron Lewicki** (6-0, 194) and **Blair Riley** (6-0, 212) along with left wing **Casey Haines** (5-10, 185). Lewicki displayed great improvement as the season progressed and showed a knack for scoring with a

team fifth-place tying 15 points (9-6=15) in 32 games. His nine markers tied for the third most on the squad. Riley (3-6=9) and Haines (3-2=5) both gained valuable on-ice experience and should play greater roles this campaign. The coaching staff believes at least two of the freshmen forward class of **Justin Menke** (5-11, 178), **Todd Pockocke** (6-1, 198), **Mike Embach** (5-10, 189), **Mike Fillinger** (6-0, 170), and **Nate Hennig** (6-0, 220) could work their way into the lineup.

### DEFENSEMEN

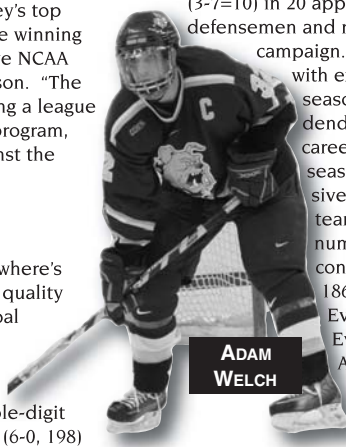
**RETURNING: 6; LOST: 2; NEWCOMERS: 2**

The foundation for building success according to most coaches usually starts at the blueline which should be good news for Ferris State as the Bulldogs return a number of quality, experienced skaters. Anchoring the group is senior **Adam Welch** (6-3, 216), who has provided invaluable leadership both on the ice and in the lockerroom the last two seasons. Welch will don the captain's 'C' on his jersey for the third consecutive season and in doing so becomes only the fourth skater in FSU history to serve as team captain for more than two seasons. Regarded by Daniels as one of the CCHA's most underrated defenseman, Welch posted eight points (2-6=8) in 39 2006-07 games. The former walk-on hopes to make his final season a productive one and wouldn't mind a repeat performance from his 2005-06 sophomore year in which he produced a career single-season best 13 points (2-11=13) in 40 contests. Joining the 2004-05 CCHA All-Rookie Honorable Mention selection in the leadership role will be senior **Alex Spezia** (5-10, 189). The assistant captain equaled his career high with five points (0-5=5) in 29 outings last year. Both Welch and Spezia are solid "defensive" defensemen and good decision makers. **Jim Jorgensen** (5-11, 200) is back for his senior year and will be counted upon for offensive production. Despite missing the last 19 games due to injury last winter, Jorgensen totaled 10 points (3-7=10) in 20 appearances which tied him for fourth highest among Ferris' defensemen and represented his second consecutive double-figure points campaign. Junior **Chris Zarb** (6-4, 204) is another talented defender with experience under his belt. Zarb worked diligently in the off-season prior to the 2006-07 season and the extra time paid dividends for the 2004 NHL fifth-round draft pick as he generated a career season-best 14 points (1-13=14) in 29 appearances. His season points total tied for the most within the Bulldogs' defensive corps and also tied for the eighth-highest points total on the team. The coaching staff is hopeful Zarb will produce similar numbers in 2007-08 although inconsistency and effort level are a concern. Ferris also has welcomes back junior **Evan Case** (6-1, 186) and sophomore **Matt Case** (6-0, 191), who's no relation to Evan. Both turned in notable performances a season ago as Evan received the team's Steve Banonis Most Improved Player Award and the Plus/Minus Award after tallying four points (1-3=4) in 28 games to go with a squad-leading +12 efficiency rating. His namesake, Matt, performed well in his initial collegiate season as his 10-points (4-6=10) total was fourth among FSU's defenders. Case also garnered CCHA Rookie of the Week (Feb. 5) kudos along the way. Both have positioned themselves to make a good case for increased ice time this season. Talented newcomers **Scott Wietecha** (6-1, 201) and **Zach Redmond** (6-1, 191) are both capable of pushing the upperclassmen for playing time.

### GOALTENDING

**RETURNING: 3; LOST: 0; NEWCOMERS: 1**

The area could be one of Ferris State's most competitive as two veterans in junior **Mitch O'Keefe** (6-2, 218) and senior **Derek MacIntyre** (6-2, 212) are both back in the crease. They will contend for one of the top two assignments as will freshman **Pat Nagle** (6-2, 169). O'Keefe started the majority of the 2006-07 season and finished with a 7-19-3 record to go with a team-best 3.03 goals-against average and an .885 saves percentage in 29 appearances. He recorded 10 25 or more single-game save performances last season. O'Keefe, FSU's 2005-06 Rookie of the Year, enters this season ranked third on the program's all-time leaders list in goals-against average (2.84), fourth in save percentage (.895) and 11th in career saves (1,482). MacIntyre came on strong in the latter part of last season, going 4-2-0 in net with a 2.01 goals-against average and a .937 save percentage in his last six outings. For his efforts, MacIntyre was chosen as the RBC Financial Group CCHA Player of the Month for February and also received a weekly league award. The 2004 NHL eighth-round draft pick concluded the 2006-07 season with a 7-3-0 mark while notching a 3.43 goals-against average and an .889 save percentage in 13 encounters. Nagle brings impressive junior-level credentials and will challenge for the starting job. Inconsistency was a detriment to the Bulldogs' progress a season ago and Daniels vowed in the off-season to make this critical area more performance driven. Sophomore **Jordan Barber** (6-2, 218) continues to improve and provides quality backstop depth.



ADAM WELCH

