

2004-05 SEASON PREVIEW

The Ferris State University men's basketball team has won more Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) Championships (10) than any other league member throughout its impressive history. None came as more of a surprise than last season's title run.

Despite dropping their initial five contests and compiling an 0-10 non-conference slate in 2003-04, the Bulldogs made an improbable run in league play culminating in a 14-4 conference record and the GLIAC North Division crown.

The unlikely league title capped an even more surprising turnaround after the Bulldogs had won only 19 conference games in the previous five seasons combined.

"Last year was extremely surprising and we had the benefit of sneaking up on a few teams," said third-year FSU head coach **Bill Sall**. "We won't have the same luxury this season.

"It will be hard to stay in the race with the elite teams in our league."

Although the Bulldogs must replace leading scorer Willie Thomas and veteran leader Nathan Wruble, the cupboard is far from empty and should enable FSU to remain among the league's title contenders. FSU returns eight letterwinners and three starters from last season's championship team highlighted by a returning All-GLIAC First-Team pick in senior guard **Carlton Epps** and a second-team honoree in junior guard **Dennis Springs** on the perimeter.

The 6-2 Epps tallied personal career-highs in points (413), steals (66) and three-pointers (72) a season ago. He also attained GLIAC North Division All-Defensive Team accolades along with recording 18 double-figure scoring games and nine 20-plus point contests in 2003-04.

An outstanding outside shooter and aggressive defensive stopper, Epps will be asked to become the Bulldogs' go-to-guy this season on the offensive end after ranking second only to Thomas among the squad's scoring leaders last year.

"Carlton was tremendous for us last season in all facets of the game," Sall said. "We're expecting him to step into the role of our go-to-guy."

If Epps is to lead the Bulldogs back to the top of the league standings this campaign, Springs will most likely serve as his primary running mate. The 5-6 Springs currently ranks fifth in career assists at Ferris with 322 in two seasons. The quick and heady point guard also garnered GLIAC

North Division All-Defensive Team kudos in 2003-04 while ranking as FSU's third-leading scorer (10.8 ppg).

"Dennis is the quarterback of our team and capable of becoming one of the top point guards in our league," said Sall. "We're looking for him to develop more of a leadership role this year."

The Bulldogs' returning nucleus also includes senior guard **Corey Epps**, who received the squad's Sixth Man Award last year. The twin brother of Carlton Epps, Corey registered 176 points and 62 rebounds in 28 appearances last campaign. An experienced and veteran player, he'll be expected to assume more of a scoring role this season.

Ferris added a capable and experienced perimeter guard to help offset Thomas' loss in Northern Michigan transfer **Antwuan Holt**. The 6-3

Holt ranked as the Wildcats' third-leading scorer (10.1 ppg) in 2003-04 and will help fill a potential void outside.

The Bulldogs also return two-sport athlete **C.J. Van Wieren** in the backcourt. One of the squad's most physical players, Van Wieren appears poised to contribute more this season with an added year of experience under his belt. Junior guard/forward **Michael Anderson** returns to provide spot duty this campaign after sitting out last season.

Sall welcomes back four frontcourt players who all received significant playing time last year. The group includes sophomores **Michael Daniels** and **Terrance Shaw**, junior **Jeffery Shanahan** along with senior **Willie Burrel**. While the group doesn't have tremendous size, they do form one of the GLIAC's most athletic and talented frontcourt combinations.

As a freshman, Daniels stepped into the Bulldog lineup and scored 226 points while starting 22 contests. He was also Ferris' leading rebounder (4.9 rpg) and became a legitimate scoring threat down the stretch. His continued development and low post presence will be critical if the Bulldogs are to add interior balance to the offensive attack.

One of the squad's three seniors along with the Epps' brothers, Burrel proved to be a productive player late last season. The 6-6 Burrel averaged 6.3 points and 3.7 rebounds per contest in 26 outings after spending two seasons in the junior college ranks. Burrel's ability to run the floor and focused leadership should remain assets in the Ferris arsenal.

The 6-5 Shaw displayed tremendous talent in 26 games as a freshman. His athleticism and reach provide FSU with a solid shot blocker up front. Shaw's continued improvement and added strength will be a key if he is to become a viable option inside.

Shanahan became one of Ferris State's top role players a year ago after making 11 starts early in the campaign. The 6-6 Shanahan has shown a knack for the ball in his two collegiate seasons of action. He'll be expected to become an effective scorer and rebounder this year after averaging 5.1 points and 3.7 rebounds in 2003-04.

Freshman forward/center **Adam Veltkamp**, who red-shirted last season, will add additional frontcourt depth.

In addition to Holt, Sall and his staff also inked two talented prep guards in Muskegon Heights' **Jesse York** and **Tyler Wolfe** of Cedar Springs. York garnered both *Detroit News* and *Associated Press* Class B All-State First Team recognition after guiding the Tigers to a 25-2 overall mark and a state semifinal appearance as a senior.

The 6-3 Wolfe averaged 25.4 points, seven assists and four rebounds per game as Cedar Springs posted a 22-1 overall record and won its fifth district crown in six seasons during the 2003-04 season. Wolfe's squad also tallied the Red Hawks' first-ever unbeaten regular-season.

Both York and Wolfe could supply valuable depth in a deep and talented backcourt and wing rotation.

Freshman walk-on **Mike Runstrom** adds size inside after totaling 15 points and 10 rebounds per contest for Traverse City Central High School in 2003-04. Hillsdale transfer **Chris Northcross** is also on the roster, but must redshirt this campaign.

"We have a solid core of returnees, but the schedule provides many challenges ahead of us," said Sall. "Our goal is to repeat and make the NCAA Tournament, but we're going to get everybody's best shot."

If the Bulldogs are to cut down the Wink Arena nets again as they did following last season's regular-season finale triumph (2/28/04) over three-time defending division champion Michigan Tech, the road won't be easy.

Although Ferris will play 16 regular-season home games, the non-conference schedule includes perennial national contenders Southern Indiana, Indianapolis, Lewis (Ill.) and California (Pa.) in addition to West Michigan counterparts Cornerstone, Aquinas, Calvin and Alma.

"It'll be great to play at home in front of our own crowds, but we'll be facing a lot of high quality teams and well-coached squads," Sall said. "Of course, the GLIAC will be as tough as ever which should make for an interesting season."

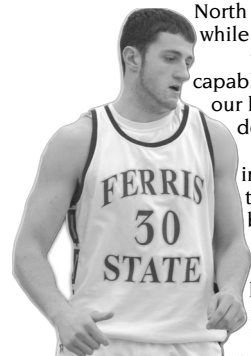
While Ferris won't be this season's surprise team, the Bulldogs do return enough firepower and ingredients to rank among the league's elite once again. Whether they're able to capture an unprecedented 11th conference championship or garner the school's first NCAA Tournament berth in seven seasons remains to be seen.

"We're hopeful we continue to see improvement from our team this season," said Sall. "If that happens, we have the tools to have another successful campaign."



"LEADING THE WAY"

Senior players (left to right) Corey Epps, Willie Burrel and Carlton Epps will attempt to lead the Bulldogs to their second consecutive GLIAC North Division Championship this season.



JEFFERY SHANAHAN

Returns

No.	Player	Pos.	Yr.	Ht.	Exp.
3	Dennis Springs	G	Jr.	5-6	2L
12	Terrance Shaw	F	So.	6-5	1L
20	Corey Epps	G	Sr.	6-2	3L
22	Carlton Epps	G	Sr.	6-2	3L
23	Michael Daniels	F	So.	6-6	1L
30	Jeffery Shanahan	F	Jr.	6-6	2L
32	Willie Burrel	F	Sr.	6-6	1L
33	C.J. Van Wieren	G/F	So.	6-4	1L
34	Michael Anderson	G/F	Jr.	6-3	2L

Newcomers

No.	Player	Pos.	Yr.	Ht.	Exp.
4	Jesse York	G	Fr.	6-1	HS
10	Antwuan Holt	G	Jr.	6-3	T
21	Tyler Wolfe	G	Fr.	6-3	HS
42	Mike Runstrom	F	Fr.	6-6	HS
54	Adam Veltkamp	F/C	Fr.	6-8	R

G – Guard
HS – High School

F – Forward
T – Transfer

C – Center
R – Redshirt