

2006-07 SEASON PREVIEW

There's an old sports adage that notes "great programs don't rebuild, they reload."

After back-to-back trips to the NCAA Division II Tournament and three consecutive top two finishes in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) North Division standings, the Ferris State University men's basketball squad certainly hopes its established success fuels the reloading process this season.

The Bulldogs enter the 2006-07 campaign fresh off a second-straight trip to the Great Lakes Regional Tournament and an 18-13 overall mark a season ago, which resulted in both a GLIAC North Division regular-season and GLIAC Tournament runner-up finish.

While three starters and six letterwinners return from a year ago, however, the Bulldogs are faced with the daunting task of not only replacing three key performers but also developing chemistry and cohesiveness with the addition of eight newcomers to the program.

"We have a nice nucleus of players back who've been through the battles and helped us win a number of important games," said fifth-year head coach **Bill Sall**. "The question will be whether those guys can go from being more of a role player to being the main cogs on our wheel."

"In addition, with eight newcomers, it will really be a process and take time to build that cohesion in our squad."

Sall certainly has shown a knack for getting cohesion and more out of his players during his four-year stint at the Bulldog helm. The program had posted only a 21-82 (.204) mark in the four years prior to his arrival, but has since tallied a 67-49 (.578) ledger along with two league championships, two national tournament bids and a NCAA-II Sweet Sixteen showing two seasons ago.

For FSU to duplicate its recent success in 2006-07, the Bulldogs must find a way to reload minus perhaps one of the program's top players ever in four-year starting point guard and the school's all-time career assists leader Dennis Springs. Four-year letterwinner Jeffery Shanahan along with All-GLIAC Second Team guard Antwan Holt also were lost to graduation.

"We've had a lot of success over the last three years, but we've also graduated a number of very good players," Sall said. "The good thing about it is the returning players understand what it takes to get to that level and will hopefully be able to guide the other players along in the process."

While much of the Bulldog scoring punch over the last couple of seasons has come from players like Springs, Holt and former all-region selection Carlton Epps in the backcourt, the focus this season should shift to the frontcourt at least initially where Ferris welcomes back the senior combination of **Terrance Shaw** and **Michael Daniels**.

The talented and athletic Shaw came into his own last campaign, especially during FSU's late postseason push. He ranks as the squad's top returning statistical leader in both scoring and rebounding after averaging 13 points and nearly seven boards a game in 2005-06. The 6-5 Shaw also claimed All-GLIAC Second Team honors along with GLIAC All-Tournament Team kudos last campaign.

"If we're going to be successful, Terrance will have to take over the reigns on both ends of the floor," said Sall. "He really developed into one of our premier players over the course of last year and will be asked to step up again this season."

Daniels, too, will be called upon to increase his workload this season. The three-year letterwinner, who's seen significant playing time since his arrival as a freshman, chipped in eight points and almost five rebounds per contest in the post last year.

"We're expecting Mike to play like a senior and be a consistent scorer along with rebounder this season," Sall said. "He's in the best shape of his career and put a lot of work in over the summer to come out and be a dominant force."

The squad's third senior, guard **Julius Vines**, joins Shaw and Daniels as a team captain this year. The former Muskegon Community College standout was a regular member of the squad's eight-man playing rotation in his initial Bulldog season a year ago. While he averaged only 4.5 points and 3.1 rebounds last year, Vines played an important role as one of the team's top defenders.

"Julius really came on toward the end of last year and he's a great defender," said Sall. "We hope he can increase his scoring output this year and be a consistent force on the offensive end."

Besides the three seniors, two other returning Bulldog players also earned significant minutes last year in sophomore guard **Jessie York** along with junior guard/forward **C.J. Van Wieren**. York totaled nine points a game as a freshman while Van Wieren started 27 of 31 outings on the wing.

York's ability to score from the outside combined with Van Wieren's toughness and knack for the ball will likely make both regular contributors in the lineup again this year.

Sophomore forward **Mark Gildersleeve** picked up his first varsity letter as a walk-on reserve last season and figures to possibly see additional duty this year with added experience under his belt.

The task of replacing Springs as the squad's primary ball handler this year will most likely fall in the hands of freshman guards **Anthony Sydnor** and **Clyde McKinney**. Sydnor, one of four former Muskegon Heights products on this year's roster, served as Springs' understudy as a redshirt last year. A former Lansing Everett High School star, McKinney sat out last season while attending prep school.

Both have made tremendous strides in the Bulldog program and have shown the ability to direct the squad's attack, according to Sall.

A pair of transfers should help provide the squad with additional depth, which became a cause for concern when Shanahan went down with an injury late last year. In fact, the Bulldogs went with only a seven-player rotation during their post-season push last campaign.

Junior guard **Courtney Blackmore** ranked as one of the nation's top junior college scorers at Lake Michigan College last year, averaging over 19 points per contest. Junior forward **Jason Holder**, a transfer from NCAA Division I Cleveland State, was a prep standout at Saginaw's Arthur Hill High School. Both are expected to see significant minutes and play a valuable role heading into the 2006-07 season.

"We're cautiously optimistic and hope to be playing our best ball come late January and early February," said Sall. "We've made great strides from the beginning and will continue to seek improvement especially in our consistency and effort."

Ample depth in the frontcourt will also be supplied by **Josh Theobald**, a 6-6 post player from Iron Mountain High School.

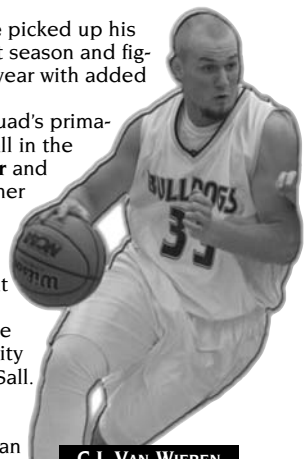
Newcomers **Gerald Busby**, **Lou Williams** and **Elzie Bibbs** are all expected to redshirt while learning the Bulldog system this campaign.

The Bulldogs, who won only four games the year before Sall arrived in 2001-02, have built an impressive basketball tradition over the years as evidenced by the program's 11 conference titles and eight NCAA-II Tournament bids. With that tradition, however, also comes increased expectations.

Despite a rigorous schedule that includes 14 regular-season contests away from home, two exhibitions at NCAA Division I programs and six outings against squads that qualified for the Great Lakes Regional last season, the Bulldogs were picked to finish second in the league's preseason poll.

"We've set the mark pretty high with what we've been able to do here," Sall said. "The goal is to build on that tradition and continue to get players to buy into our system."

"The schedule's tough so we'll get a good feel for where we're at right from the get-go."



C.J. VAN WIENEN



JULIUS VINES

Returns

No.	Player	Pos.	Yr.	Ht.	Exp.
4	Julius Vines	G	Sr.	6-3	1L
12	Terrance Shaw	F	Sr.	6-5	3L
23	Michael Daniels	F	Sr.	6-6	3L
32	Jessie York	G	So.	6-1	1L
33	C.J. Van Wieren	G/F	Jr.	6-4	2L
42	Mark Gildersleeve	F	So.	6-5	1L

Newcomers

No.	Player	Pos.	Yr.	Ht.	Exp.
3	Anthony Sydnor	G	Fr.	6-0	R
10	Courtney Blackmore	G	Jr.	6-2	T
20	Elzie Bibbs	G/F	Jr.	6-4	T
21	Lou Williams	G/F	Fr.	6-6	HS
22	Clyde McKinney	G	Fr.	5-11	HS
30	Gerald Busby	F/C	Fr.	6-7	HS
34	Jason Holder	F	Jr.	6-4	T
50	Josh Theobald	F/C	Fr.	6-6	HS

G – Guard
HS – High School

F – Forward
T – Transfer

C – Center
R – Redshirt

