

2001 PREVIEW

“Back With An Attitude” is the theme for the 2001 Ferris State University football team as the Bulldogs gear up in their quest for a seventh Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) Championship title and a potential NCAA Division II Playoff bid.

Ferris State, which was co-GLIAC champions in 1999, experienced growing pains a season ago as the inexperienced Bulldogs posted a 5-6 overall record, including a 5-5 conference ledger.

With 42 letterwinners returning from last season's squad, among them 16 starters, FSU head coach Jeff Pierce hopes his seventh year at the helm is a highly-successful one.

“This team has a winning attitude with the belief we're going to win football games this season,” Pierce said. “I'm highly encouraged based on the commitment which our players have made in the offseason. Our guys have shown to me that they want to win and that's a priority for them.”

“We were a young team last year and last season was a learning experience for us as we had to rely on many players to step into different roles,” said Pierce. “With that said, I believe the experience we gained from last year will be beneficial to us this season. Furthermore, we've also had strong recruiting classes the last few seasons and we now have the type of depth you need in order to be successful.”

While the Bulldogs still have a number of young players with exceptional talents, there's an old axiom that you'll only go as far as your seniors will take you.

“We do have a fine senior class, one that has put in a lot of time and played a lot of football for us,” said Pierce. “They will be the key members of our team. I really believe they have the leadership qualities necessary for us to be successful.”

OFFENSE

Quarterback – Senior **Kyle Park** (6-4, 200) returns as the Bulldogs' starter after throwing for 1,921 yards and 14 TD's in 10 contests last season. His passing output ranked 12th best in school history and the signal-caller currently ranks eighth among the school's all-time passing leaders with 2,226 career yards in 17 games. Park, who had four 200-yard plus passing performances a season ago, made key strides in the offseason and is hopeful of making the most of his final collegiate campaign. Promising redshirt frosh **Tom Marsan** (6-3, 180) will enter the fall as the backup, but the lefthander possesses the skills to challenge for the starting job throughout the season.

Running Backs – The Bulldogs have one of the conference's top young tailbacks in sophomore **Derek Fudge** (5-9, 189), the GLIAC's “Freshman of the Year” in '00. The second-team All-GLIAC back broke the conference freshman rushing record last season with 1,161 rushing yards on 246 carries in 10 league outings. Fudge, who was named FSU's Outstanding Offensive Rookie a year ago, ran for 1,227 yards and seven TD's overall as a starter in all 11 contests. He placed second among the GLIAC's rushing leaders with an 111.5 per game average and was 25th nationally. Battling Fudge for playing time are junior **Matt Otero** (5-10, 207), a 1997 second-team all-conference transfer from Ashland, and redshirt frosh speedster **Andrew Terry** (5-8, 194). All have big-play abilities and should be a cause of concern for the opposition's defensive unit. Junior fullback **Brad Newell** (6-2, 242) has earned the reputation of being a dominant blocker and thus will be counted upon once again to open holes for the tailbacks. Sophomore **Jim Bockheim** (6-1, 233) has proved to be a solid backup behind Newell.

Wide Receivers – All-American flanker **Clarence Coleman** (5-11, 182) headlines the list of returnees and certainly has the credentials worthy of being a top contender for the prestigious Harlon Hill Trophy as the nation's top NCAA Division II player. The senior wideout was honored last fall as a first-team All-American by the *Associated Press*, *Daktronics*, *Hansen's Football Gazette* and *D2Football.com* while also attaining first-team all-conference laurels for the second consecutive year. Coleman, who had a school single-season record 1,519 receiving yards and 15 TD's a season ago, is already both the GLIAC and FSU's all-time leader in receptions and receiving yards. Senior **Lamar Patterson** (6-0, 180) has also proved to be a productive receiver and is back in a starting role at split end. He placed second in team receiving last year with a personal season-best 45 receptions for 450 yards. **Doug Searles** (5-10, 168) and **Robert Giles** (5-10, 194), a pair of juniors, both missed spring practice due to injuries but are expected to be contributors once again. They will be joined by sophomore **Jesse Porter** (6-4, 202) and two talented redshirt freshmen – **Delano McKinney** (5-11, 159) and **Andy Thwaites** (6-2, 182).

Offensive Line – FSU has experience, size and strength to go with athleticism and mobility this time around. The Bulldogs faced a major rebuilding job entering last year's campaign, but with three starters back that fortunately won't be the case in 2001. Senior guard **Dan Spitzley** (6-4, 301), an All-GLIAC Honorable Mention pick last year, will occupy the right slot while senior guard **Curtis Compton** (6-6, 296) returns on the left side. Redshirt freshman **Matt Desmarais** (6-0, 252) was moved from defensive tackle in the spring and will

supply depth. Sophomore **Gino D'Agostino** (6-1, 287) will take over the starting duties at center and will be backed up by **Andy Szatkowski** (6-2, 264), a red-shirted frosh. On the outside, junior **Justin Giordano** (6-3, 282) is back as the starter at left tackle while redshirt frosh **Kevin Park** (6-7, 288), the younger brother of quarterback Kyle Park, will be the regular at right tackle. Sophomore **Bryan King** (6-2, 247), a converted center, could also see playing time at one of the tackle positions.

Tight Ends – Three-year starter Josh Heppner has graduated, leaving the position wide open. The leading candidates to fill the vacancy are sophomores **Matt McCoy** (6-7, 258), **David Clifford** (6-3, 236), **Jim Kuhl** (6-1, 219) and redshirt frosh **Austin Malloy** (6-5, 242). Clifford is the lone returnee with any game experience at the position. McCoy came over from the defense in the spring while Kuhl was switched from flanker in spring ball. Malloy was FSU Tomorrow's Team Offensive Player-of-the-Year last fall.

DEFENSE

Defensive Line – The graduation of a pair of All-GLIAC First Team linemen in end Dave Zuiderveen and tackle Ryan Morris creates a significant void, but the coaching staff remains optimistic as experience and athleticism still exist. Senior **William Foster** (6-2, 266), a solid run defender, returns as a three-year starter at right tackle and will provide invaluable leadership in the trenches. Manning the starting left tackle slot will be junior **Jason Feasel** (6-4, 279), who played in all 11 games last year as a reserve and appears ready to make the most of the frontline opportunity. Redshirt freshman **Whitney Bell** (6-2, 257) and sophomore **Patrick Smith** (6-1, 249) will see plenty of action in backup roles. Senior **Corey Rush** (6-2, 239) and junior **Bo Moore** (6-2, 235) are ticketed for starting jobs at defensive end. Rush is one of the strongest players on the team while Moore is regarded as the squad's top pass rusher. Pushing them for playing time will be junior **Michael King** (6-5, 264) and redshirt frosh **John Hazle** (6-2, 218), a converted linebacker.

Linebackers – Depth wise, Ferris State is in an enviable situation as a number of veterans return. Senior outside linebacker **Charlie Pierson** (6-0, 220) is a fixture as the Chuck backer and is one of the conference's top performers at his position. Last year, he notched a team-high 110 tackles en route to attaining All-GLIAC Second-Team and FSU Most Valuable Defensive Skill Player kudos. Senior **Adam Riley** (6-0, 214) and redshirt frosh **Brad Bigelow** (6-2, 199) are Pierson's understudies. Senior **Jason Wells** (5-10, 215) emerged as the other outside starter at the W backer slot following spring practice. **Rob Mida** (6-2, 215) and **Kevin Myers** (5-11, 203) were both redshirted last season and are anxious to make a contribution this campaign. Sophomore middle linebacker **Luke Piepkow** (6-3, 231) is in contention for the starting Sam backer job as is junior **Rudy Lopez** (5-11, 213). Lopez finished eighth in team tackles with 52 total a season ago while Piepkow's 51 tackles ranked ninth. **Brad Morris** (6-2, 229), a redshirt frosh, was the '00 FSU Tomorrow's Team Defensive Player-of-the-Year.

Secondary – This area has excellent depth and should be the cornerstone of FSU's defense as every defensive back who started a season ago returns. Senior cornerback **Ryan Hodges** (5-9, 192), a honorable mention all-conference pick last year, is back for his fourth season in a starting capacity while senior **Devin Hutchings** (6-0, 196) and junior **DeRen Ellis** (6-0, 168) will vie for the other starting cornerback assignment. Junior **Darius Alexander** (5-10, 179) and redshirt frosh **Bruce Cook Jr.** (5-8, 165) are the backups. Hutchings outperformed all corners in spring drills while Ellis picked off a single-season school record eight passes last season en route to earning All-GLIAC First-Team and FSU's Most Improved Defensive Player accolades. Joining them at free safety is senior and returning starter **Alvin Grier** (6-0, 207), a 2000 GLIAC Honorable Mention honoree, whose 80 tackles last year ranked third highest on the squad. Sophomore **Rich Dosh** (5-10, 188) and junior **Donahue Fulton** (5-11, 207) will add depth behind Grier. **J.J. Moreland** (6-2, 215) returns for his senior year as the starting strong safety after finishing sixth in team tackles last fall. Sophomore **Vito Ciaramellano** (6-1, 205), who was named the team's Outstanding Defensive Rookie in '00, will play considerably at strong safety. Redshirt frosh **Jason Machalak** (5-10, 184) could also figure.

Specialty Teams – FSU will be young at both the placekicker and punting positions as both of last year's starters have departed. Sophomore **Tim Gill** (5-9, 156) appears to have the inside track on the punting chores after averaging 35.4 yards per attempt with 17 punts for 601 yards in five contests last season. Fellow soph **Tom Perez** (5-8, 136) is expected to assume the placekicking duties following a solid performance in spring practice. Perez appeared in three games last year, but was used exclusively on kickoffs and hasn't attempted a PAT or field goal in his Bulldog career. **Justin Giordano** is back for his second season as the long snapper while **Doug Searles** will hold for placements again. **Clarence Coleman**, a '00 second-team all-GLIAC returner, is back and joins **Delano McKinney** to return kickoffs while **Coleman** will continue to serve as the Bulldogs' primary punt returner.

A winning attitude

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Running Backs – Fx.

Wide Receivers – Hx).

Offensive Line – Txxx.

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Linebackers – Fxxx.

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