

2003 PREVIEW

A diversity makes the heart grow stronger.

Those words took on significant meaning a season ago for the Ferris State football team as the Bulldogs were forced to deal with a tragedy early in the 2002 campaign along with a slew of injuries to key personnel throughout the season. As a result, FSU posted a 5-5 overall record while compiling a sixth-place 4-5 Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) mark.

"To say the least, we experienced a difficult, challenging season last year," said FSU head coach Jeff Pierce. "As a result, we grew together as a team and the unity is noticeably stronger because of it. The guys came into this spring focused on doing all the little but important things it takes to win. I told them not to dwell on last year's tragedy but also not to forget how valuable each day in life is."

The Bulldogs welcome back 39 letterwinners from last fall, which includes a senior-dominated group.

"Our senior leadership is extremely active and one of the best I've seen in a long time," Pierce stated. "We have a large group of upperclassmen who have an unwilling desire to succeed and hopefully that will result in us winning a significant amount of football games this season."

"I believe we have the athletes and attitude to make a legitimate run at the (GLIAC) title," said Pierce. "Obviously, a lot of things have to fall into place to be there at the end. The disappointment of last season should only make this team more focused than ever before to play their best every week."

OFFENSE

Quarterback – Junior **Tom Marsan** (6-3, 183) returns as the Bulldogs' starter for the third straight season after throwing for a career-high 2,350 yards a season ago, which ranked sixth best on the school's single-season passing leaders list. Marsan had 10 aerial TD's last fall on 199-of-387 passing (51.4) and compiled six 200-yard plus passing game performances. The left-handed passer, who placed 29th nationally in total offense (238.8 ypg.) in '02, currently ranks fifth among Ferris' all-time passing leaders with 3,887 career yards. Behind Marsan are redshirt freshman **Steve Fusee** (6-2, 208) and sophomore **Ryan Kaul** (6-0, 186).

Running Backs – The Bulldogs' rushing attack should be a primary strength, considering the talent level and depth present at the two backfield slots. Senior **Derek Fudge** (5-9, 191), a two-time All-GLIAC Second Team tailback, headlines the list. Fudge returned to form last fall by gaining 1,016 yards and scoring 10 TD's after running for 549 yards and three TD's in the previous campaign. He also compiled six 100-yard plus rushing efforts in 2002, including four straight to close out the season and was selected the squad's Most Valuable Offensive Skill Player. The 2000 GLIAC Freshman of the Year ranked 28th among the nation's rushing leaders (101.6 ypg.) and was 29th in all-purpose yards (142.0 ypg.) in 2002. Backing him up will be junior **Andrew Terry** (5-8, 192), who was FSU's second-leading rusher with 106 yards and two TD's in eight games. Sophomore **Shawn Grigg** (5-9, 190) is also in reserve. At fullback, senior **Jim Bockheim** (6-1, 248) has the inside track on the starting job after playing as a reserve the last two seasons. Sophomore **Ryan Fritz** (6-3, 245), like Bockheim, is also an effective blocker and figures to receive action.

Wide Receivers – Ferris State returns almost its entire receiving corps from a year ago, including five of its six top receivers. In fact, FSU welcomes back 78 percent (159-204) of its receptions and 69 percent (1,679-2,429) of its receiving yardage from last season. Headlining the list of returnees is **Derek Fudge**, who's the Bulldogs' top returning receiver for the second consecutive year after catching a career-best 44 passes for 386 yards last fall. Sophomore **Carlton Brewster** (5-11, 192), the team's big play threat, is the projected starter at flanker. Brewster made his presence known in 2002 with 27 grabs for 288 yards and two TD's. **Brandis Bowie** (5-9, 181) is expected to compete with Brewster for the starting job. As a true freshman, Bowie finished fourth in team receiving with 31 catches for 306 yards and two TD's in nine outings. Junior **Delano McKinney** (5-11, 157) and senior **Avery Hicks** (5-10, 181) add quality depth. Junior **Andy Thwaites** (6-2, 191) is back as the starter at split end following a campaign in which he placed third in team receptions (32) and yardage (411). Thwaites averaged 12.8 yards per catch to go with a team-high three receiving TD's. Seniors **Jesse Porter** (6-4, 195) and **Rob Giles** (5-9, 195), who returns after a year's absence, are the backups.

Offensive Line – A major factor in the Bulldogs' success this campaign will be establishing a dominant running game. With that being a major point of emphasis, the FSU coaching staff is optimistic considering this unit has experience, size and strength to go with athleticism and mobility. Ferris State was beset by a rash of injuries last season to several linemen which severely hampered their cohesion and effectiveness. Right tackle and solid pro prospect **Matt McCoy** (6-

8, 290) returns for his senior year to anchor the line. A honorable mention All-GLIAC pick last season, McCoy was forced to move from tight end to tackle early in the campaign due to injuries. At center, sophomore **Jamie Bretl** (6-3, 276) started all 10 contests there last year and will continue to do so. Junior **Jeff Williams** (6-2, 293) was impressive in his initial season as the starter at right guard – enough so to earn all-conference honorable mention and team Most Improved Offensive Player honors. Junior **Matt Desmarais** (6-1, 277), who started in six games last year, is a solid backup at right guard. Vying for the starting left guard duties are junior **Andy Szatkowski** (6-2, 284) and senior **Gino D'Agostino** (6-2, 327), both of whom suffered injuries which forced them to miss most of last fall. Junior **Kevin Park** (6-8, 285) returns as the starting left tackle with hopes of staying healthy for a full season. Park competed in only two games thanks to injuries after starting all 11 outings in the previous campaign.

Tight Ends – A question mark exists as McCoy is now entrenched at tackle and last year's regular Austin Malloy has departed. Junior **Tyler Schuberg** (6-3, 203) was moved from split end in spring ball and is the leading candidate to start. He snared three aerials for 62 yards in limited action a year ago. Redshirt frosh **Jim Bourdlais** (6-5, 244) will be the backup.

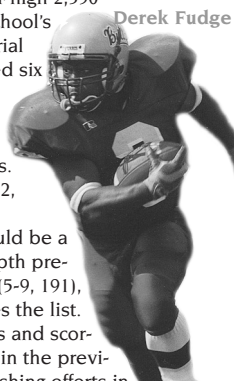
DEFENSE

Defensive Line – This area presents the biggest challenge on defense as three starters, including a pair of all-conference linemen in Bo Moore and Jason Feasel, were lost to graduation. The lone starting holdover from a season ago is junior **Whitney Bell** (6-2, 265) at right tackle. The team's strongest player, Bell earned team Most Improved Defensive Player accolades as a result of accumulating 62 tackles, including 10 for minus 35 yards. His season tackle output ranked sixth highest on the squad and was second best among the defensive linemen. Lining up alongside Bell on the four-man front at the left tackle slot will likely be redshirt frosh **Bob Cain** (6-1, 281). Senior **Pat Smith** (6-2, 268) has some experience and could challenge Cain for playing time. Unfortunately, Smith has been plagued by injuries which forced him to miss most of last season and all of spring camp due to surgery. Juniors **John Hazle** (6-2, 226) and **Jesse Schnitker** (6-2, 248) are ticketed for both the defensive end starting jobs. Hazle will man the right side with Schnitker stationed at the opposite end. The duo each received sufficient time in the trenches last season but in a reserve role. Junior **Brad Morris** (6-3, 230) was moved from linebacker to end in spring drills to fortify the left end spot.

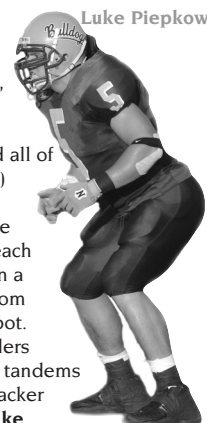
Linebackers – With last season's top three tackle leaders returning, Ferris will field one of the GLIAC's top starting tandems in recent years. Tops on the list are junior outside linebacker **Kevin Myers** (5-11, 210) and senior middle linebacker **Luke Piepkow** (6-3, 225). Both garnered All-GLIAC Second-Team recognition last season while finishing one-two in team tackles with 112 and 110 stops, respectively. Myers, the starter at WILL, ranked tied for 12th nationally in tackles (11.1 tpg.). Junior **Rob Mida** (6-2, 235), FSU's Outstanding Defensive Rookie, is coming off from his best season ever with 92 hits and is the returning CHUCK starter.

Secondary – One of the team's biggest challenges will be in the defensive backfield as only one starter is back although the Bulldogs do feature a good mix of athletes and talent to make the competition for starting jobs tough. Senior **Vito Ciaramellano** (6-1, 214) is the glue in the secondary and is among the league's top strong safeties. The hard-hitting defender registered a career-high 41 tackles while attaining honorable mention all-conference accolades. Another senior, **Rich Dosh** (5-10, 194) gets his opportunity to shine this fall after securing the starting free safety post in spring camp. Dosh notched 39 stops a season ago and has been a steady player since his arrival. While the safety positions are brimming with experience, a lack there of is evident on the corners. Sophomore **Justin Sherrod** (5-9, 171) came out of spring ball as the starter at left corner, but will be pushed by junior **Ryan Carruthers** (5-8, 171). Sherrod showed promise with 15 tackles and a pass theft in three games last fall as a first-year freshman before suffering a season-ending injury. Senior **Corey Scheick** (5-8, 170) and junior **Bruce Cook** (5-9, 161) will vie for the right corner starting assignment. Scheick produced 19 stops a season ago.

Specialty Teams – The kicking game has remained intact the last two seasons and will continue to be so as placekicker **Tom Perez** (5-9, 151) and punter **Tim Gill** (5-9, 190) both return for their senior year. Perez connected on eight-of-15 field goals last season and is among the school's all-time top 10 field goal leaders. Gill averaged 34.6 yards while establishing career highs in punt attempts (60) and yards (2,076). **Matt Desmarais** is back for the second straight season to handle the long snapping chores. The return game should be productive with **Carlton Brewster** back in the fold. Brewster, FSU's Special Teams Player of the Year, averaged 16.6 yards per return on kickoffs and 9.0 yards in punt returns.



Derek Fudge



Luke Piepkow

