

2005 SEASON PREVIEW

Achieving its third winning season in the last four years would be a cause for celebration to most programs, but the Ferris State Bulldogs aren't among the majority.

The Bulldogs managed to register a 6-5 overall record which included a fifth-place 6-4 mark in the highly-competitive Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC). However, Ferris dropped four of its season's final five decisions which left an unsatisfactory impression in the minds of the coaching staff and players.

"It was a disappointing and frustrating season for us," said Ferris State head coach **Jeff Pierce**, who enters his 11th year at the helm. "Nobody was satisfied and at this point, you've got to learn from the experience and move forward. We came away knowing we must stay together as a team and that we're going to face challenges no matter what happens."

Ferris is hopeful of getting back on track and returning to the form of the past decade in which the Bulldogs won or shared six conference championship titles. The 2005 squad welcomes back 39 letterwinners from last season's squad with 23 on offense, including eight starters. Defensively, FSU returns only four regulars and must find replacements for two All-Americans in outside linebacker Kevin Myers and tackle Whitney Bell. That is a reversal from a season ago when Ferris fielded an experienced defensive unit which consisted of seven starters. Changes have also been implemented on the coaching staff and in the offensive system which will feature a blend of passing and running plays.

"We're excited about this upcoming season," said Pierce, who became the school's all-time winningest coach last fall. "Offensively, we have a good foundation and a considerable amount of experience returning. Defensively, there's a good nucleus intact and I believe we have some talented young guys who are eager to emerge and make a difference.

"The work ethic has also been tremendous as our off-season conditioning program has had the most numbers in several years. This team is committed to erasing the disappointment of past seasons and is taking the necessary steps to do so," added Pierce.

"I believe we have a team that is talented enough to be a legitimate conference contender," stated Pierce. "The question is are we going to be competitive enough every Saturday and is everyone associated with this program prepared to take their game to the next level?" As the 2005 season unfolds, those answers will be given.

OFFENSE

Quarterback – Senior **Ryan Kaul** (6-0, 208) returns as the Bulldogs' starter after throwing for 1,375 yards and nine TD's in 10 outings a season ago, including eight in a starting capacity. Kaul, who completed 48.4% (107-221) of his passes and recorded seven 120-yard plus single-game passing efforts last fall, adds alot to the offense with his mobility. Supplying competitive depth are junior **Steve Fusee** (6-2, 209) and sophomore **C.J. Van Wieren** (6-4, 225), who also competes on FSU's basketball team. Both have displayed continued improvement while gaining more familiarity with the team's offensive schemes.

Running Backs – When analyzing the Bulldog rushing game, what may jump out is that the team lost its top rusher from last season in second-team All-GLIAC performer Andrew Terry. There's little doubt the loss of Terry, who rushed for the school's sixth-best single-season total of 1,293 yards last fall, will have an impact but what may not be as obvious is the talent level which exists at the spot. Junior **Shawn Grigg** (5-9, 211) and sophomore **Devon Mitchell** (6-2, 226) both are every down backs who have power and speed. Grigg has fully recovered from an injury which forced him to miss all of last season. A big, physical back, Mitchell is eager to prove his worth after not receiving action last season. Sophomores **Kirk Covey** (5-10, 209) and **Jermaine Jones** (5-9, 180) provide quality depth. Junior **John Vandenberg** (5-11, 257) returns as the starting fullback.

Wide Receivers – Ferris State returns almost its entire receiving corps from a year ago, including senior flanker and All-America candidate **Carlton Brewster** (5-11, 214). The big-play threat earned All-America Honorable Mention plaudits from D2Football.com and *Hansen's Football Gazette* last season following a career-best 81 receptions for 1,230 yards and eight TD's. His receiving yardage represented the third-highest season output in the program's all-time annals. Brewster, a first-team All-GLIAC honoree last fall, currently ranks fifth among the school's all-time receiving leaders with 2,263 career yards and 18 TD's on 174 catches. Senior **Brandis Bowie** (5-10, 191) should start at split end and is being counted upon to make the most of his final collegiate season. Bowie's 21 receptions for 229 yards was third best on team last year. Senior **Larry Burton** (5-8, 189) along with sophomores **Nate Fricke** (5-8, 165) and **Charles Pickett** (5-6, 190) are the backups. Burton had four catches for 42 yards as a reserve last fall.

Offensive Line – While Ferris loses second team all-conference right tackle Kevin Park, the Bulldogs do return their other four regular linemen which is good news. Senior **Jeff Williams** (6-2, 300), an All-GLIAC Honorable Mention

pick in 2002, anchors the line and will start at right guard for the third consecutive year. Junior **Allen Feigel** (6-5, 338) remains a fixture at left guard after starting all 11 outings there last fall and is considered one of the squad's best. Junior **Kevin Teeple** (6-7, 308) will play alongside Feigel at left tackle for the second straight campaign and could be primed for a highly-productive season. At center, junior **Rob Lukofsky** (6-2, 285) and senior **Jamie Bretl** (6-3, 295) are competing for the starting assignment. Lukofsky emerged as the biggest surprise in spring drills but will face a stiff challenge from Bretl, who has two-plus years of starting experience under his belt. The leading candidate to replace Park at right tackle is junior **Chris Putra** (6-2, 262), who has been a key reserve the past two seasons. Teeple's older brother, **Phil Teeple** (6-4, 275) is the backup. Putra is Ferris' most athletic lineman and has the versatility to play all positions in the trenches. Juniors **Mitch DeVries** (6-2, 310), who turned in an impressive spring, and **Tim Pickens** (6-3, 283) enter fall camp as the primary reserves.

Tight Ends – The tight end position will remain ably filled with the return of seniors **Ryan Fritz** (6-3, 263) and **Nate Wruble** (6-7, 255). Both combine size, hands and blocking ability to create matchup problems for the opposition as Ferris could feature double-tight end sets. Fritz started all 11 games last season and caught six passes for 53 yards and a TD. Wruble, a four-year FSU basketball letterwinner, utilized his height to grab four aerials for 45 yards and a TD last fall in his initial collegiate campaign.

DEFENSE

Defensive Line – The situation on the FSU defensive line isn't as dire as it appears. Although starters are gone at three positions – All-America tackle Whitney Bell along with ends John Hazle and Jesse Schnitker – the Bulldogs have some capable bodies to fill the voids. Junior right tackle **Jerold Sawyer** (6-0, 285) is the lone returning starter as he finished tied for seventh in team tackles with 32 total. Ticketed for the starting nod at left and right end, respectively are sophomore **Erik Schumacher** (6-3, 249) and junior **Nate Pranger** (6-4, 265). Schumacher appeared in all 11 games a year ago and made seven tackles while Pranger missed all of last season due to injury but has all the tools to be one of the conference's best defenders. Lining up at left tackle going into fall camp is sophomore **Bill Bourdlais** (6-4, 281), who garnered nine stops in eight contests last season. Redshirt frosh **Jake Visser** (6-2, 254) will push for playing time at the tackle positions and is expected to receive considerable action.

Linebackers – An influx of youth will exist as a result of the graduation losses of all-conference outside linebackers Kevin Myers and Rob Mida. Myers was a two-time consensus All-American and one of the program's best ever at his position while Mida garnered honorable mention all-league kudos the last two years. The one constant is in the middle as junior and preseason All-America candidate **Mike Klobucher** (6-2, 245) made the most of his starting "sam" backer role last season with a team-high 134 tackles to go with seven tackles for a loss of 23 yards en route to attaining All-GLIAC Honorable Mention accolades. Klobucher, who racked up eight double-digit tackle game performances in 2004, ranked 19th in total tackles (11.4) and 20th in solo stops (6.0) among last year's national leaders. Promising sophomore **Jordan Moore** (6-0, 242), who tallied 15 tackles as an 11-game reserve last fall, secured the starting "chuck" outside spot in the spring and his fiery competitiveness should have a positive influence. Sophomore **Nick Maeder** (5-10, 210) emerged as the starter at the "will" position and hopes to remain healthy after suffering a season-ending injury in last season's opener. Maeder netted 22 stops in a reserve capacity two seasons ago. Redshirt freshmen **Jeff Hollandsworth** (6-0, 232), **Nick Henne** (6-1, 213), and **Kevin Noe** (6-3, 224) all performed well in spring practice and are worth keeping an eye on.

Secondary – Returning starters in senior cornerback **Jim Skodak** (6-0, 201), a 2004 all-league honorable mention pick, and junior free safety **Nick Beaudry** (5-10, 202) give Ferris a nucleus of proven defenders. Skodak, the Bulldogs' top cover guy, placed ninth on last year's squad with 31 tackles to go along with three interceptions while Beaudry was 10th with a 26-tackles total. Junior **Chris Machalak** (6-1, 217) gets his opportunity to shine after winning the starting strong safety job with an excellent spring. Redshirt frosh **Zach Wadsworth** (6-1, 180) and sophomore **Daniel McKinney** (5-7, 155) will vie for the other starting cornerback position.

Specialty Teams – Sophomore punter **Levi Slager** (5-11, 178) averaged 37.2 yards per attempt last season, but will be challenged by the powerful leg of redshirt frosh **James Yates** (6-1, 244) this time around. Junior **Justin Rudy** (5-11, 175) faces the same situation at placekicker thanks to Yates. **Carlton Brewster** and **Jim Skodak** present a double-threat on kickoff returns as the two combined for 621 yards on 30 returns a season ago. Brewster also recorded 137 yards on 25 punt returns.



Carlton Brewster



Jim Skodak

