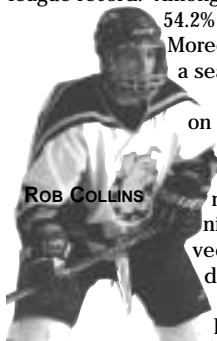


2001-02 PREVIEW

Ask Ferris State University head coach Bob Daniels about the prognosis for the 2001-02 Bulldog hockey team and the answer could likely be one of uncertainty.

"I'm hesitant to put a label on this team or list expectations due to the fact that we have a large turnover in personnel," said Daniels, who lost eight letterwinners from last season's squad. "We're just going to see how the guys fit in together before we start determining what our goals for the season will be."

Ferris State will feature a mixture of experience and youth as 17 letterwinners return from last season's 13-20-5 team, which placed eighth in the Central Collegiate Hockey Association (CCHA) standings with a 9-15-4 league record. Among the group are 12 upperclassmen who combined for 54.2% of the squad's total points production in 2000-01.



ROB COLLINS

Moreover, six of the team's top nine scoring leaders from a season ago are back in the fold.

With a talented group of veterans and newcomers on the offensive end, Ferris hopes to improve upon last season's 2.39 goals per game average

"We're going to explore opportunities of creating more offense," said Daniels, FSU's all-time winningest coach. "However, at no time do I want us to veer from our philosophy of playing strong team defense."

Defensively, the team's strength lies on the blue-line where the Bulldogs have considerable depth with a number of capable defensemen on the roster. That's vital to Ferris' success this season considering the goaltending position presents numerous questions to be answered. The departure of Phil Osaer, FSU's 2000-01 Most Valuable Player, is a loss which Daniels knows the Bulldogs will eventually have to overcome. The question is how soon it will be before someone can step into the crease and play at a level on par with the CCHA's top goaltenders. A pair of freshmen are expected to contend for the starting duties and are among a nine-member group of first-year players.

"There's a bit of an unknown from the standpoint we have the goaltending situation which needs to be answered," stated Daniels. "I'm excited about the freshmen we have coming in and I believe they will have a positive impact throughout their four years."

GOALTENDING

RETURNING: 1; LOST: 2; NEWCOMERS: 2

Following the 2000-01 season, Ferris State's goaltending situation appeared to be in fine shape with the expected return of senior-to-be and 2000-01 All-CCHA Second-Team goalie Phil Osaer, the school's all-time leader in goals against average (2.18) and save percentage (.916). But those plans changed late this summer as a result of Osaer's signing with the National Hockey League's St. Louis Blue. Unfortunately, those duties now rest upon the shoulders of three netminders who haven't played a minute in a collegiate contest. Daniels will now have to reply upon a pair of freshmen, Mike Brown and John DeCaro, to step in and shoulder the burden.

"Losing someone like Osaer hurts, but I'm pleased with the two freshmen we've brought in," said Daniels. "Both have good size and athleticism, were successful at the junior level and possess the competitive personalities to excel. They also have an opportunity to step in and play immediately, which isn't afforded to many first-year players."

Brown compiled a 20-12-3 record to go with a 3.77 goals against average and a .894 save percentage in 35 appearances for the Crownest Pass Timberwolves last season. DeCaro was 16-19-4 while posting a 3.59 goals against average and an .888 save percentage in 43 contests a year ago as a member of the Langley Hornets.

Matt Swanson returns for his junior campaign and could challenge for playing time.

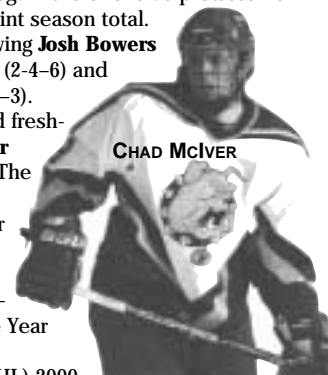
FORWARDS

RETURNING: 11; LOST: 3; NEWCOMERS: 5

Ferris State has a number of experienced skaters back although last season's top scoring leader, Kevin Swider isn't one of them. A graduation casualty, Swider's team-leading 34-point output last season will be difficult to replace given the number of standout goaltenders throughout college hockey and the increased emphasis placed on defense. Despite the loss of Swider, there are still some familiar faces on the line chart that will

thwart opposing netminders around the league. Two of the CCHA's premier forwards, senior center Rob Collins (15-17-32) and junior left wing Chris Kunitz (16-13-29), will lead the way with their skills and multi-year's worth of experience. Collins is coming off his second straight 30-point plus season after recording a personal career-best 32 points, including 15 goals, to rank second in team scoring. Collins, who also posted a team-best +4 plus/minus efficiency rating, was elected assistant captain for this campaign and his playmaking abilities should help set the tone. As with Collins, the Bulldogs will rely heavily on Kunitz for production. A '99-00 CCHA All-Rookie Honorable Mention honoree, Kunitz remains a key cog in the Ferris offense since his freshman year and already has tallied 36 career goals to go along with 58 career points in his first two seasons. Kunitz enjoyed another productive campaign last winter as his 29 points matched his scoring total of the previous campaign. He notched 16 goals, including a team-best four game winners, and tied Rob Collins for second place in multi-point game performances with eight total. Sophomore right wing Derrick McIver (4-5-9), Chad's younger brother, turned out to be a pleasant surprise and was selected the team's Rookie-of-the-Year as a result of being the top frosh scorer last winter. Junior left wing Phil Lewandowski (3-9-12) is hoping to bounce back and regain the offensive prowess he showed two campaigns ago with a 22-point season total.

Expected to contribute are junior right wing Josh Bowers (6-6-12), sophomore center Brett Smith (2-4-6) and sophomore right wing Trevor Large (2-1-3). Supporting the cast are a trio of talented freshmen - center Jeff Legue, left wing Carter Thomson and left wing Derek Nesbitt. The highly-touted Legue starred for the Cornwall Colts and earned Central Junior A Hockey League's (CJHL) MVP laurels with a league-leading 125 points on 54 goals and 71 assists. He also was a finalist for the Royal Bank/CJHL Player-of-the-Year Award. The fast-skating Thomson, the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League (SJHL) 2000-01 All-Star Game MVP, totaled 66 points with 33 goals and assists apiece for the Melville Millionaires. Nesbitt totaled 60 points with 22 markers and 38 assists last winter while playing for the Samia Steeplejack Bees. All three have the ability to step in this season and become contributors right away.



CHAD MCIVER

DEFENSEMEN

RETURNING: 5; LOST: 3; NEWCOMERS: 2

With the bulk of last season's unit returning, this is the Bulldogs' strength. The graduation of last season's top two scoring defensemen - three-time Academic All-American Jim Dube and Scott Lewis will be difficult to replace, but Daniels has a lot of depth with which to draw from.

"We have some holes to fill, but I'm happy with the depth we have," Daniels said.

Anchoring the line will be senior Chad McIver (0-6-6) and junior Troy Milam (4-7-11). McIver, the 2001-02 team captain, provides a strong, physical presence on the ice and is arguably one of the CCHA's top "defensive" defenseman. Milam, a 1999-00 CCHA All-Rookie Honorable Mention Team selection, was the third highest scorer among last year's blueliners and can contribute at both ends. Joining him will be seniors Jason Basile (2-4-6) and Kristian Schroder (1-2-3), a pair of experienced skaters who hope to benefit from a return to their natural positions this season after receiving some ice time at the forward slot last winter. Sophomore Simon Mangos (2-2-4) should become a solid contributor with continued growth and development. Also figuring to log quality time is junior Phil Meyer (2-4-6), the 2000-01 recipient of the team's Most Improved Player Award. Meyer went from receiving no playing time in the 1999-00 campaign to finishing tied for 10th place in team scoring with six points in 36 outings last year.

Two new faces entering into the picture are freshmen Matt York and Skip Renaud. York is an exceptionally gifted "offensive" defenseman and one Daniels believes will become one of the CCHA's best in time. He recorded 52 points in 47 games for the Springfield Jr. Blues this past season. Renaud reminds Daniels of Jim Dube because of his fundamental-sound skills and knowledge of the game. Renaud, who totaled 30 points for the Ft. McMurray Oil Barons last winter, should strengthen the blueline.

