

2005-06 SEASON PREVIEW

With a solid nucleus of experienced skaters returning coupled with one of the nation's top recruiting classes, the Ferris State University men's ice hockey team enters the 2005-06 season with renewed focus and optimism.

The "new look" Bulldogs will be exactly that as high-scoring forwards Jeff Legue and Derek Nesbitt have graduated as have defenseman and last year's team captain Matt York along with Mike Brown, the school's all-time winningest goaltender. All played integral roles in Ferris' 2002-03 Central Collegiate Hockey Association (CCHA) Championship season.

"We will be starting this season with a lot of unknowns," said FSU head coach **Bob Daniels**, who starts his 14th year at Ferris State this season and is the school's all-time winningest coach. "We lost some core players who had been a part of our program for a number of years. Their departures will create a number of opportunities and certainly changes the identity of our team."

While Ferris State will go through a transformation to a degree, the Bulldog coaching staff is excited about the possibilities which may be in store for the campaign.

"We have a solid group of guys who have experience under their belts and are eager to achieve a higher level of success," said Daniels. "You combine that with a large talented freshmen class which brings positive enthusiasm and you can't help but be optimistic."

"Our primary task will be exploring options as to who fits in where the best," added Daniels.

The incoming Bulldog freshmen class is a notable one as *Inside College Hockey* has selected the group as the 10th best among the nation's top 15 classes in its recruiting rankings.

Ferris State welcomes back 18 letterwinners from last season's 13-22-4 team, which tied for 10th place with a 7-17-4 league mark. Despite the loss of last season's top two scorers in Legue (44) and Nesbitt (40), the Bulldogs return eight of their top 11 points leaders. Those eight skaters accounted for 46.3% of the team's points output and 42.1% of the goal-scoring production last season.

FORWARDS

RETURNING: 10; LOST: 5; NEWCOMERS: 5

The departure of Legue and Nesbitt creates an offensive void as Ferris State's offense will now center around scoring by committee. With offensive production being a question mark, the Bulldogs will concentrate on buckling down defensively and waiting for the goal scoring to come around.

Junior left wing **Mark Bomersback** (5-10, 187) and senior center **Greg Rallo** (5-11, 192) are the top returning scoring leaders. Bomersback is quietly progressing into becoming one of the CCHA's offensive players and exceeded his previous season's point total by five with a 23-points total (7-16-23) in 39 games last winter. Rallo, who was selected as a team assistant captain this campaign, placed fourth among the team's scoring

leaders with 22 points (7-15-22) in 33 outings and is primed to make his last season in a Bulldog uniform a memorable one. Another skater who

should emerge as a scoring threat is sophomore right wing **Matt Stefanishon** (6-2, 222), who paced all Ferris' newcomers in points (12-9-21) last season en route to achieving CCHA All-Rookie Honorable Mention plaudits. Joining the threesome is a trio of dependable two-way forwards who can score in juniors **Matt Verdone** (6-0, 200), **Zac Pearson** (5-10, 185), and **Eric Vesely** (5-11, 170).

Verdone (7-8-15) along with Pearson (7-9-16) and Vesely (2-1-3) were all honored with FSU's Most Improved Player Award last season as the first two are coming off their most productive campaign

ever. Sophomore center **Adam Miller** (6-0, 179) could be the next Bulldog skater in line to have a breakout season. Miller, who was a co-winner of the team's Plus/Minus Award at plus six, had 12 points (2-10-12) in 36 contests as a freshman. Seniors **Nick Scheible** (5-11, 192) and **Matt Rutkowski** (5-10, 160) along with sophomore **Chad Haacke** (5-11, 207) and redshirt frosh **Matt Frank** (6-0, 185) provide steady play at both ends of the ice. Scheible, a two-year assistant captain, garnered a career-high seven points (4-3-7) in 31 games last season while Rutkowski compiled a career-best 10 points (3-7-10) in the same amount of action. Haacke and Frank were hampered by injuries last winter. A talented group of freshmen could be contributors as the season progresses. Headlining the list is right wing **Dan Riedel** (5-9, 177), the 2004-05 United States Hockey League's (USHL) Forward of the Year after registering a league-best 81 points (30-51-81) with the Lincoln Stars. Riedel was listed seventh on *Inside College Hockey's* Top 20 Incoming Forward Rankings chart. **Brendan Connolly** (5-6, 160), a proven scorer at every level like Riedel, is joined by **Corey Couturier** (6-

0, 181), **Justin Lewandowski** (5-9, 180) and walk-on **J.T. Dahlinger** (6-1, 175). The five freshman should add speed to the lineup while the last three individuals named are capable of developing into strong two-way players.

DEFENSEMEN

RETURNING: 6; LOST: 2; NEWCOMERS: 2

With the bulk of last season's unit returning, this area signifies the greatest amount of depth and experience for Ferris State. In fact, the Bulldogs have the most experience on the blueline in quite some time. Part of the challenge for Daniels will be deciding who dresses and finds ice time as the squad features a good mix of offensive and "defensive" defensemen. Sophomore **Adam Welch** (6-3, 209) has been selected to captain the Bulldogs this campaign due to his leadership abilities. He turned out to be a pleasant surprise last season as he garnered CCHA All-Rookie Honorable Mention Team accolades and also was bestowed with Ferris' Rookie of the Year Award after totaling six points (1-5-6) in 36 outings. His season's point total tied him for top team scoring honors among the squad's freshmen defensemen. **Andrew Winnik** (6-4, 224), the lone senior on the blueline, had two points (2-0-2) in 34 games last season and figures to continue logging quality minutes. Junior **Joe Van Culin** (5-10, 171), one of the team's best skating defenders, has the tools to generate offense as indicated by his 11 points (3-8-11) in 39 contests a season ago. **Alex Spezia** (5-10, 187) is considered one of the Bulldogs' "unsung

heroes" by Daniels and is regarded as an excellent "defensive" defenseman. The sophomore will be posted four points (0-4-4) in

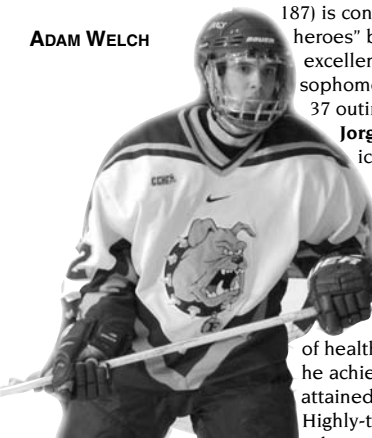
37 outings last year. Fellow sophomore **Jim Jorgensen** (5-11, 198) saw a great deal of

ice time in 2004-05 and benefitted from the experience. Last season, he recorded six points (2-4-6) in 34

contests. A welcome sight will be junior **Jeremy Scherlinck** (6-3, 205), who missed last season due to an

injury. The stay-at-home defender has been given a clean bill of health and hopes to recapture the success

he achieved in the 2002-03 campaign when he attained honorable mention all-league kudos. Highly-touted **Chris Zarb** (6-4, 197) is expected to step in and contribute immediately.



ADAM WELCH

Zarb, who was selected as the 11th-best incoming defenseman by *Inside College Hockey* and is a fifth-round draft pick by the Philadelphia Flyers in the 2004 NHL Entry Draft, earned All-USHL All-Star honors the last two seasons. He generated 24 points on four goals and 20 assists in 43 games for the Tri-City Storm last winter. Frosh walk-on **Evan Case** (6-1, 174) is a developing prospect.

GOALTENDING

RETURNING: 2; LOST: 1; NEWCOMERS: 1

For the first time in four years, the Bulldogs will be without the services of Mike Brown, who graduated as the program's all-time leader in victories (63), saves (3,409), shutouts (10) and games played (130) while ranking second in both goals against average (2.82) and save percentage (.907). Despite the loss, Daniels is confident about his goaltending situation for the 2005-06 season.

Ferris does return some experience in the net as sophomore **Derek MacIntyre** (6-2, 211) is back between the pipes after receiving an invaluable amount of experience at the collegiate level a season ago. MacIntyre posted a 5-8-1 record with a team-best 3.19 goals against average and an .888 saves percentage in 17 appearances. MacIntyre, who was named to the 2004-05 CCHA All-Rookie Honorable Mention Team, turned aside 25 or more shots on goal in eight encounters last season. He was tabbed as the CCHA's Goaltender of the Week (Dec. 13) with a season-high 34-save performance at Miami. MacIntyre was an eighth-round draft pick of the San Jose Sharks in the 2004 NHL Entry Draft. Factoring into Ferris' goaltending equation and pushing hard for significant ice time will be freshman **Mitch O'Keefe** (6-2, 229), who holds the record for the most shutouts (nine) in the Central Junior 'A' Hockey League after playing for the Hawkesbury Hawks last season. O'Keefe played a key role in helping the Hawks capture a league championship title and was named the league's MVP in 2003-04 as a member of the Gloucester Rangers where he compiled a 29-16-5 record and a league-leading .917 saves percentage in 53 outings.

O'Keefe was recently chosen as the nation's eighth-best incoming freshman net-minder for this campaign by *Inside College Hockey*. Providing depth will be senior **Tom Mueller** (6-2, 166), an experienced goaltender who didn't receive action last season but has shown to be more than capable of performing at this level if called upon.

