

2006-07 SEASON PREVIEW

The Ferris State University men's ice hockey team will likely go through the upcoming 2006-07 season with many labels attached to the Bulldogs, but united will be one that's unwavering.

"There's a sense of purpose here," aid FSU head coach **Bob Daniels**, who starts his 15th year at Ferris State this season and is the school's all-time winningest coach. "Everyone is on the same page and this is a close-knit group. I really like our team chemistry as a lot of these players are team oriented and I'm proud to be associated with them."

Daniels' desire is for the Bulldogs to mature together as a unified squad and success will follow.

"I believe this team has the potential to have an upper division finish in the CCHA," said Daniels. "I'm confident in our goaltending and defense this upcoming season. The greatest one challenge we face is the ability to generate offense."

On paper, Ferris returns nine of its top 10 scorers from a season ago although the Bulldogs' top points producer isn't one of them.

"We do have guys who are capable of being good offensive players and it's up to the coaching staff to bring that out of them," stated Daniels.

The Bulldogs are hoping to continue the success achieved last season in which the squad registered a 17-15-8 overall record and tied for sixth place in the CCHA standings with a 10-11-7 league mark. The 17 victories by Ferris were the most by the Bulldogs since the historic 2002-03 campaign (31-10-1 overall) and tied for the ninth most single-season wins in the program's history.

"Little was expected of us last season," said Daniels. "But, we achieved success because we had a solid group of hard-working individuals who had the consistent desire to come out and give it their all every night."

"I'm hoping we can pick right up where we left off as we've shown the ability to compete against some of the premiere teams in the nation. We want to carry that momentum forward," added Daniels.

Daniels realizes the task of finishing among the CCHA's upper echelon will be a challenging one.

"I believe the CCHA will emerge as one of the nation's top college hockey conferences this season," said Daniels, who presently ranks 16th among active NCAA Division I coaches in career victories. "The league is well-balanced from top to bottom."

FORWARDS

RETURNING: 10; LOST: 4; NEWCOMERS: 4

The graduation of leading scorer and Most Valuable Player from last season's squad in Greg Rallo (17-22=39) creates a void, but Daniels is confident someone will step up and become an intimidating force for the Bulldogs.

MARK BOMERSBACK

The likely "go-to" guy for Ferris should be senior center-left wing **Mark Bomersback** (5-10, 191), the squad's top returning scorer from last winter with a career season-best 32 points (16-16=32) while skating in all 40 contests. His eight multi-point games were second highest among team leaders. An accomplished scorer in his own right, Bomersback has developed into a leader by example on the ice and will serve as an assistant captain this season. A role model for hard work and conditioning, Bomersback is primed for a breakout season in 2006-07. Sophomore left wing **Dan Riedel** (5-9, 193) has loads of scoring potential which became apparent by his team third-best 31 (11-20=31) in 34 outings last season. A 2005-06 CCHA All-Rookie Team member, Riedel's average of .90 points per game was the 10th highest in the nation among rookie scorers. His season-points total was also near the top 10 in Ferris' all-time freshmen points leaders.

Joining the pair will be a trio of experienced two-way skaters in seniors **Zac Pearson** (5-10, 190), **Matt Verdone** (6-0, 200) and **Eric Vesely** (5-11, 174). All three increased their points production last winter from the previous campaign and enjoyed personal career bests. Pearson, one of the hardest checkers in the CCHA, generated 26 points (6-20=26) to place fourth in team scoring while his six multiple-point contests was third highest on the squad. The Bulldogs' fastest skater, Verdone accumulated 23 points (15-8=23) which placed him fifth among FSU's offensive output leaders. Verdone shared top team honors with three multi-goal game efforts. Vesely recorded the largest gain in points production from the prior season as he posted 15 more points (10-8=18) than in his sophomore year (2-1=3). Vesely is a two-time team Scholar-Athlete Award winner and had a squad-best 11 plus rating to earn Ferris' Plus/Minus Award. Both Vesely and Pearson saw action in every contest a season ago while Verdone only missed two games.

Sophomore right wing **Matt Frank** (6-0, 196) proved his worth last season by notching 12 points (4-8=12) in 34 games en route to receiving the team's Steve Banonis Most Improved Player Award. He had one point (0-1=1) in four 2004-05

games before suffering a season-ending injury. Another welcome return is junior center **Adam Miller** (6-0, 188), who matched his jersey number with a career-high 22 points (10-12=22) and five multi-point games in 40 2005-06 contests. Miller possesses the skills to be one of the league's top offensive performers and could be one to keep a watchful eye on.

Sophomores **Brendan Connolly** (5-6, 173), **Corey Couturier** (6-0, 179), **J.T. Dahlinger** (6-1, 192) and **Justin Lewandowski** (5-9, 175) are all returning forwards who will try and work their way into the lineup. All received ice time last season and provide the Bulldogs with quality depth. Connolly (1-6=7) should benefit from a having a season's experience under his belt and likewise for Couturier (8-7=15), a solid two-way player. Dahlinger (0-1=1) is an excellent skater and one of the team's hardest workers while Lewandowski (2-2=4) is an adept "defensive" forward who could emerge as a contributor this campaign.

Ferris State will be bringing in four freshmen – **Casey Haines** (5-10, 178), **Cody Chupp** (6-0, 192), **Aaron Lewicki** (6-0, 202), and **Blair Riley** (6-0, 222). Though not as highly-touted as last year's group, Daniels believes the four are better prepared to step in and contribute immediately. Haines (29-44=73) and Lewicki (34-22=56) were teammates at Texarkana last year. Haines finished his junior career as the Bandits' second all-time leading points getter. Riley led Nanaimo in scoring last season with 81 points (42-39=81) in 64 games while Chupp garnered 42 points (14-28=42) in 57 outings with Waterloo.



ADAM WELCH

DEFENSEMEN

RETURNING: 7; LOST: 1; NEWCOMERS: 1

College hockey analysts will tell you that good teams are solid defensively and Daniels believes Ferris will be so on the blueline. Junior **Adam Welch** (6-3, 214) returns for his second season wearing the captain's 'C' and is coming off his most productive season in a Bulldog jersey with 13 points (2-11=13) in 40 games. The 2004-05 CCHA All-Rookie Honorable Mention honoree is regarded by Daniels as one of the CCHA's most underrated defenseman. Senior **Joe Van Culin** (5-10, 176) had six points (1-5=6) in 36 contests, but more importantly emerged as one of the team's leaders. Another senior, **Jeremy Scherlinck** (6-3, 206) also provides leadership and experience and hopes to pick up where he left off last season. Scherlinck, who missed all of the 2004-05 campaign and then suffered an injury in last season's opener, returned to full strength in the second half of the 2005-06 season and finished with eight points (3-5=8) in 30 appearances. A bright spot for the Bulldogs last winter were a pair of juniors, **Jim Jorgensen** (5-11, 197) and **Alex Spezia** (5-10, 192). Jorgensen dispelled the "sophomore jinx" last season by pacing Ferris' defensemen in scoring with 16 points (1-15=16), which also was eighth-best on the squad. As a result of his offensive production, Jorgensen may also receive ice time at forward. Spezia is a capable stay-at-home type and played in 34 outings a season ago, totaling five points (1-4=5). Sophomore **Chris Zarb** (6-4, 215) is another talented blueliner who will be asked to contribute more this upcoming season. Zarb worked diligently in the offseason to improve his strength and conditioning, which should pay dividends and better his 10-points output (0-10=10) in 29 games from a season ago. He was a fifth-round draft pick of the Philadelphia Flyers in the 2004 NHL Entry Draft. Also figuring in the mix are sophomore **Evan Case** (6-1, 191) and freshman **Matt Case** (6-0, 190). Evan, no relation to Matt, is a former walk-on who didn't record a statistic in four 2005-06 games. Matt is also a solid "defensive" defenseman and compiled 12 points (3-9=12) in 2005-06 for Green Bay.

GOALTENDING

RETURNING: 2; LOST: 1; NEWCOMERS: 1

Ferris returns experience between the posts as sophomore **Mitch O'Keefe** (6-2, 229) and junior **Derek MacIntyre** (6-2, 214) are both back. O'Keefe turned in a solid freshman season last winter with a 14-12-7 record to go with a team-best 2.68 goals-against average and a .904 saves percentage in 33 appearances. O'Keefe's 14 victories tied for the sixth most single-season wins in school history while his 828 saves total represented the sixth highest total. He registered 18 25 or more single-game save performances last season, which included a season-high 44 saves against Ohio State in a CCHA Tournament First-Round contest. The 2005-06 FSU Rookie of the Year significantly improved his conditioning in the offseason and his numbers should do likewise. MacIntyre, a 2004-05 CCHA All-Rookie Honorable Mention Team member, went 3-3-1 with a 3.23 goals-against average and a .891 saves percentage in eight contests a season ago. The 2004 eighth-round draft pick of the San Jose Sharks will compete with O'Keefe for the starting assignment. Freshman **Jordan Barber** (6-2, 191) is a developing talent and a capable backup.

