

2008 Football Season Preview

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - After making its second appearance in the NCAA Postseason Playoffs a season ago, the UW-Eau Claire football team looks to build on last year's success with a lot of experience returning.

Head coach Todd Glaser enters his third season with the Blugolds. In his first season the team went 3-7 but finished 9-3 in 2007, to become the sixth most improved football team in NCAA Division III and the 13th most improved team in all of college football, according to a rating system by Somissports.com. Coach Glaser was also named the WIAC Coach of the Year and the WFCA Coach of the Year in 2007.

With 32 returning letterwinners and 19 players returning who started at least once last year, the Blugolds were selected to finish in second place in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, according to the leagues sports information directors. Eau Claire was also the only other team besides Whitewater to receive a first place vote in the poll. But Coach Glaser knows there is still work to do and acknowledges how tough the WIAC is and that any team on any weekend can pull off a victory. The Blugolds also found themselves ranked in three national preseason polls including D3football.com (14th), USA Today (15th) and Lindy's (12th).

The Offense

Quarterback: After a season ending injury in the second game of the season last year sidelined the Blugolds' starting quarterback, Kyle Paulson, he is back and ready to lead the team. Paulson has worked hard to get back to where he was a season ago and Coach Glaser believes he can still get the job. While Paulson played in only two games last year, he was 17-for-36 for 278 yards, threw two touchdowns and no interceptions. The Blugolds also have more depth at the quarterback position this year with two returners, Jason Mahn and Jordan Miller, and two newcomers, Steve Chapiewsky and Josh Metzger.

Running Back: Cory Sartorelli, an All-WIAC honorable mention selection a year ago, was a more consistent tailback a year ago and will look to improve even more this year. In 2007 Sartorelli carried the ball 335 times, accumulated 1,186 yards, and led the team with 12 touchdowns. Matt Olson also saw action in nine games a year ago, carrying the ball 27 times, but will likely carry the ball more this season. Scotty Osborn, who was injured in the Blugolds' 2007 preseason camp, enters his senior season as the starting fullback. Two seasons ago Osborn spent his time at tight end. Backing up Osborn will be returner Ethan Turriff.

Tight End: Brett Schreiner who started every game last season, will be the starting tight end this year. Schreiner caught seven passes for 105 yards last season and also returned four kickoffs for 43 yards. Drew Adamczak will serve as the backup tight end.

Wide Receiver: While the Blugolds lose All-WIAC member and team offensive MVP Tony Hull, four returners are ready to step up this year. Nils Dillon, who played in all 12 games in 2007, and Paul Mirr, who played in 10, will start at the wide receiver positions this year. Last year Dillon caught 12 passes for 207 yards and one touchdown, while Mirr caught six passes for 64 yards. Backing them up will be Tyler Moy, who played in all 12 games last season, and Eamon Flood.

Offensive Line: Four significant contributors a season ago will be back on the offensive line. Of the returners, Jim Schmidt started all 12 games, Dan Puls started 10 but saw action in all 12 games, Matt Day started eight and played in 10, and Al Wolf played in 11 games while he started in two. Zak Krueger is the other starter on the line for the Blugolds this year. He was part of the team in 2007 but did not play in a game.

The Defense

Linebacker: Tom Dohr and Nate Jahn, who both started all 12 games at the outside linebacker spots for the Blugolds last season, are back in the same roles. Dohr, a second team All-WIAC selection in 2007, was fourth on the team with 87 tackles (40 solos and 47 assists) and led the team with eight-and-a-half sacks. Jahn had

40 tackles, including two tackles for loss and an interception last year. Bryant Dorsey and Brad Nierenhausen will start at the inside linebacker spots. Nierenhausen played in every game last season, accumulating 31 tackles and one-and-a-half sacks, while Dorsey played in nine and started in the final three.

Defensive Line: On the defensive line, left end Matt Ebner and nose guard Andy Smisek will pick up where the left off last season. Both started in all 12 games and combined for 52 tackles, including seven for losses. Chris Below will be the other starter on the line at right end. Like the others, Below has also seen significant playing time. He competed in every game last season as a backup and had 27 tackles.

Secondary: The secondary also has a lot of experience returning. Dave Wicklund, a D3football.com third team All-American and first team All-WIAC selection a year ago, will start at safety just like he did in every game last year. Wicklund led the Blugolds in solo tackles with 73, accumulating 100 total tackles. He also had three interceptions, two tackles for losses and forced one fumble. The other safety spot will be filled by Paul Bielmeier, who saw action in every game last year. At the corner positions, Kyle Meulemans and Craig Polifka will be back. Both started a majority of the Blugolds' games and were significant contributors. Meulemans had 36 tackles and four interceptions, while Polifka accumulated 33 tackles and seven interceptions, which tied for second most in the WIAC last year.

Special Teams

While the Blugolds' lose All-Conference punter Mitch Schaeuble, the team still return a lot of experience on the special teams. Polifka, who earned second team All-WIAC honors as a return specialist and was the Blugolds' Special Teams MVP a season ago, should again have a significant performance this year. He led the WIAC in punt return and kick return average in 2007. Craig Kolb also enters his senior season with the Blugolds. Kolb has earned All-WIAC honors in the past and was the Blugolds' Special Teams MVP two seasons ago and the Special Teams Newcomer of the Year his freshman year. He holds multiple school records in both punting and kicking, and will serve as the team's punter and kicker this year. Matt Olson, last year's Special Teams Newcomer of the Year, is also back for the Blugolds. With the departure of assistant coach Matt Rice, Coach Glaser will lead the special teams this season.

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