

2009 Football Season Preview

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. (UWECBlugolds.com) - After finishing third in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) a season ago, the Blugolds will look to duplicate that success this season.

The Blugolds were recently picked to finish third once again in the WIAC according to the league sports information directors. Eau Claire also received some national poll consideration after receiving votes in the preseason version of the D3football.com Top 25 poll. Just four schools from the WIAC appeared on the poll, with UW-Whitewater and UW-Stevens Point in the top 25 while UW-La Crosse also received votes.

Under fourth-year head coach Todd Glaser, the Blugolds return 32 letterwinners from last season, including 18 on defense and 14 on offense. On the offensive side, the Blugolds return a number of players who have logged significant time on the field. In all, seven starters return on offense. However, the defense has a lot of gaps to fill as it returns just three starters from a season ago.

The Offense

Quarterback: Kyle Paulson will once again lead the attack for the Blugolds on the offensive side of the ball. After sitting out the majority of the 2007 season, Paulson earned honorable mention All-WIAC recognition last year while finishing fourth in the conference in passing yards per game with 168.1. Overall, Paulson was 157-for-277 for 1,681 yards and threw 12 touchdowns. Coming into the 2009 season, Paulson ranks seventh on the Blugolds' all-time career passing yards list with 3,755 yards. Junior Jason Mahn will play the backup role for the Blugolds. Last year he played in five games and went 3-for-6 for 33 yards.

Running Back: Anchoring the backfield will be 2008 All-WIAC first team unanimous selection Cory Sartorelli. With 1,288 yards and 263 rushing attempts a season ago, Sartorelli led the conference in rushing yards per game with 128.8. He scored a team-best 14 rushing touchdowns, while accumulating 16 overall. Currently, Sartorelli is eighth on the Blugolds all-time career rushing yards list with 2,622. He needs just 641 yards to break into the top three on the list. Returners Matt Olson, Brett Schreiner and Ethan Turriff will also see time in the backfield this year. Olson will play tailback behind Sartorelli, while Schreiner, a first team All-WIAC selection a season ago, and Turriff will be in the h-back spot.

Tight End: With Schreiner moving to the backfield, Ryan Moertel is set to start at tight end this season. Moertel competed in five games last season. Drew Adamczak, who also played in five games last year, will also see time on the field.

Wide Receiver: The Blugolds have a solid core of returning wide receivers, led by Spencer Kehoe. Last year he was second on the team with 380 yards and 30 receptions while leading the Blugolds with four touchdown catches. David Goodman is also back along with Nils Dillon. Goodman was third on the team with 284 yards and 25 catches last year while Dillon was sixth. As a group last season, the Blugolds were fifth in the conference with 1,714 receiving yards but will look to improve this season.

Offensive Line: The biggest hit on the offensive side is on the line. The Blugolds return just two starters from last season on the line, Matt Withrow and Al Wolf. Withrow, who started all 10 games last year at left tackle, will once again be in the position, while Wolf will move to center after starting 10 games last year at right guard. New to the starting rotation this year will be returners Abe Ward and Brandon Dressel, while newcomer Nick Brousseau, who transferred from the Division I University of Wyoming, will also start on the line.

The Defense

Linebacker: While the Blugolds lose first team All-WIAC selection Tom Dohr, they return a good group of three regular starters from a season ago. Ryan Leis and Bryant Dorsey both started nine games last year and will play at outside and inside linebacker spots, respectively. Leis, an All-WIAC honorable mention selection last year, was second on the team with 48 tackles. Dorsey finished sixth with 32. Brad Nierenhausen, who started seven games last year, will be at the other outside linebacker position while Andy Neumann will be on the inside. Neumann started one game last year while he saw action in all 10.

Defensive Line: Like the offensive line, the defensive line will see a number of new regulars. Returners Andrew Evanoff will be at left end while Dan Mahaffey will be at nose guard. Last season, Evanoff saw action in nine games and recorded 19 tackles, and Mahaffey played in all 10. He finished the season with 18 tackles and a blocked kick. At right end, Dan Kinsella, a University of Minnesota transfer, will lead for the Blugolds.

Secondary: The secondary will also see a number of new starters this year. Kevin Currie and Luke Hoyord will be in the cornerback positions while Chad Samuelson and Ryan Maher will be safeties. The entire group, with the exception of Currie, played in all 10 games last season. Currie saw time on the field in nine games. However, between all of them, Hoyord was the only one who started a game last season.

Special Teams

The Blugold kickers this year will be sophomore Ryan Petersen and freshman Spencer Jacobson. Petersen will handle the punting duties while Jacobson will kick field goals and PAT's. Last year Petersen punted seven times for the Blugolds and averaged 34.4 yards each time. Returning punts this year will be David Goodman while Chris Olson will be the primary kickoff returner.