

Football Looking to Bounce Back in 2011

By: Kevin Meinholz, Sports Information Director

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. (Blugolds.com) - With a lot of experience returning in 2011, the UW-Eau Claire football team is looking to move up in the conference standings this season.

The Blugolds are coming off a season in which they finished in seventh place in the WIAC. This season, despite being picked to finish seventh again by the conference sports information directors, the team has a positive outlook.

On the offensive side of the ball, all 11 starters from last season return. Second-year starter **Austin Neu** (*Jr.-Iron Ridge, Wis./Hustisford*) will lead the Blugolds on offense at quarterback. While he played in six games his freshman year, he started all 10 last year and ranked fifth in the league in passing average and pass efficiency. Neu threw for 1,766 yards last season and completed 56 percent of his passes.

Back at wide receiver this season is **David Goodman** (*Sr.-Neenah, Wis.*), who earned second team All-WIAC honors in 2009 and was honorably mentioned last year. He finished 2010 with 684 yards and 47 receptions, scoring three times. Goodman needs just five touchdown receptions to break the Blugolds' career record.

In the back field, **Joel Sweeney** (*So.-Tomah, Wis.*) returns at tailback. As a freshman last year, he accumulated 1,028 yards and ranked third in the WIAC in yards per game. He also scored 13 touchdowns, 12 on the ground and one receiving, a mark that tied for second best in the WIAC. Sweeney earned second team All-WIAC honors last season.

On defense, the Blugolds also have good experience returning. Eight of last year's starters are on this year's squad, including last year's leading tackler **Andy Neumann** (*Sr.-Germantown, Wis.*). He finished with 77 tackles (60 solo, 17 assists) including a team-high three sacks, ranking sixth best in the WIAC. Neumann was a second team All-WIAC pick last year.

Including Neumann, the Blugolds return four of the top five tacklers from 2010. **Kyle Thorpe** (*Jr.-Stanley, Wis./Stanley-Boyd/Moorhead St.*), **Chad Samuelson** (*Sr.-St. Paul, Minn./Cretin-Derham Hall*) and **Kalan Stittleburg** (*Sr.-Neillsville, Wis.*) finished third, fourth and fifth on the team last year as each accumulated more than 40 tackles.

On special teams, last year's punter **Scott Burzynski** (*So.-Stanley, Wis./Stanley-Boyd*) returns. He had the fifth best average of any punter in the league last year, averaging 35.2 yards per punt. At kicker, the Blugolds will turn to newcomer **Josh Albrecht** (*Fr.-Eau Claire, Wis./North*).

Eau Claire kicks off the season Sept. 3 at Bethel University (Tenn.). The Blugolds' first home game is Sept. 24 against UW-River Falls in a non-conference game. Eau Claire will be at home a total of four times this year.