

2009 CIS FOOTBALL TEAM PREVIEW: Western Mustangs

2008 Regular Season Record: 7-1

2008 Regular Season Standing: 2nd in OUA

2008 Playoff Record: 3-1 (Lost in Vanier Cup, Won Mitchell Bowl and Yates Cup)

2008 Playoff Finish: Lost in Vanier Cup to Laval 44-21

General Write-Up:

The Monday after losing the Vanier Cup 44-21 to the Laval Rouge et Or, fifth-year quarterback Michael Faulds was in the video room, determined to learn from the experience. The Eden Mills, Ont., native says he and his teammates have worked harder this off-season with strength and conditioning coach Jeff Watson and will look to earn their third straight Yates Cup OUA title and have their sights set on a return to the Vanier Cup.

The offence will look to give better protection to Faulds with a solid offensive line led by fifth-year tackle Zach Pollari and centre/guard Andy Rady and sophomores Ahmad Jaradat and Matt Norman. Newcomer Shane Bergman (Waterford, Ont.), who stands at 6'6, 360 lbs., is expected to fight for a starting spot. The Mustangs have also added depth at skilled positions. Da'shawn Thomas, a former member of the Toronto Argonauts practice roster, comes to Western at running back, while Jerimy Hipperson (St. Catharines, Ont.) and Ben Roberts (London, Ont.) return from injury. Nathan Riva (Lasalle, Ont.), Ryan Tremblay (London, Ont.) and John Leckie (Georgetown, Ont.) carried the bulk of the running game last year. This gives head coach and offensive coordinator Greg Marshall more options – likely moving some of the running backs with good hands to the slot. Kicker/punter Darryl Wheeler returns to the fold as well giving Western consistency for field goals and extra points.

On defence, the Mustangs lose Vaughn Martin to the San Diego Chargers of the NFL (4th round selection has started the first two pre-season games). But a strong recruiting class – Scott Fournier (Ottawa) and Mitchell Bec (Chestermere, Alta.) and returning veterans – Chris Greaves (Mississauga, Ont.), Mike Van Praet (London, Ont.) and David Lee (London, Ont.) – will move more speed to the line. Craig Butler (London, Ont.) will move to safety to replace Matt Carapella, who graduated, at safety. The Mitchell Bowl MVP is also a top kick returner.

Quote from head coach:

"Michael Faulds is - and this is not just my opinion - the top quarterback in the country," said head coach Greg Marshall. "I am very surprised he was not a first-team all-star last year."

"Our running game will be much better this year. We relied too much on the passing game last year and losing (running back Ben) Roberts early and (running back Jerimy) Hipperson, we lost a lot of depth," Marshall said. "We had to go with the trial-and-error approach."

"The loss of Vaughn Martin leaves a big hole," Marshall said. "Truthfully we don't have a lot of depth at the defensive end spot. We may have to move some guys out there and try them out there and see (what happens). We'll be tested at this position right away this season. We have two quarterbacks in Week 1 and Week 2 who can run with (Brad) Sinopoli in Ottawa and Luke Thompson with Laurier. We have to contain them or it's gonna be a long day."

Head Coach: Greg Marshall

- Number of seasons as head coach with team (including 2009): 3
- Number of seasons as head coach in CIS (including 2009): 10 (seven with McMaster)
- Career regular season record with team: 11-5

- Career regular season record in CIS: 53-17-2
- Career overall record with team (reg. season & playoffs only): 17-7
- Career overall record in CIS (reg. season & playoffs only): 70-25-2

Offence

Key returning players:

Quarterback Michael Faulds (Eden Mills, Ont.), a second-team OUA all-star in 2008 and winner of two consecutive Dalt White Trophy awards as the Yates Cup MVP, returns for his fifth and final season after leading the nation in passing yards in 2008. Receivers Jesse Bellamy (Guelph, Ont.), Nick Trevail (London, Ont.), Zach Bull (Port Colborne, Ont.) and Nick Pasic (London, Ont.) are back, while Nick Riva (Lasalle, Ont.) and John Leckie (Georgetown, Ont.) will both vie for starting spots at running back.

Key recruits (or newcomers: transfers):

Da'shawn Thomas (Conyers, Georgia, USA) spent 2008 on the practice roster of the CFL's Toronto Argonauts and will contend for the starting running back spot. Receivers Ryan McCarthy (Burlington, Ont.), who sat out 2008 with an injury, and Waterloo transfer Joshua Svec (Blenheim, Ont.) add depth, while offensive lineman Shane Bergman (Waterford, Ont.) is a 6'6, 360-lb, prospect who ran the forty in 5.4.

Key losses:

Tackle Richard Zulys (Toronto) is with the Toronto Argonauts system.

Defence

Key returning players:

Linebacker John Surla (Niagara Falls, Ont.) and defensive back Craig Butler (London, Ont.), who will move in to replace graduate Matt Carapella (London, Ont.) at safety, will anchor the Mustangs defence in 2009. Linebacker Adrian Kaiser (London, Ont.) played very well down the stretch for the Mustangs, while cornerback Josh Foster (London, Ont.) was a big-game performer, especially in the playoff run. Defensive linemen Mike Van Praet (London, Ont.) and Chris Greaves (Mississauga, Ont.) will look to fill the void left by San Diego Chargers fourth-round draft pick Vaughn Martin.

Key recruits (or newcomers: transfers):

Jamie Symianick, a highly touted cornerback from Montreal CEGEP Vanier College, join defensive lineman Scott Fournier (Ottawa) and linebacker Jerod McCrory (Burlington, Ont.) on the watch list. Mitchell Bec (Chestermere, Alta.)

Key losses:

Vaughn Martin (London, Ont.) was drafted in the 2009 NFL Draft in the fourth round by the San Diego Chargers, becoming the first CIS underclassman to be drafted in history. Safety Matt Carapella (London, Ont.), defensive back Corey McNair, defensive back Andrew Bain (Sarnia, Ont.) and twin defenders Adam and Andrew Hrytzak (Barrie, Ont.) have all graduated.