

2009 CIS FOOTBALL TEAM PREVIEW: UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY DINOS

2008 regular season record: 5-3

2008 regular season standings: 2nd (Canada West)

2008 playoff record: 2-1

2008 playoff finish: *Canada West Champions; lost to Laval in Uteck Bowl*

General Write-Up:

No longer seeking to end a playoff drought of more than a decade, the University of Calgary Dinos football team finds itself in unfamiliar territory.

After a breakout 5-3 campaign in 2008 that led to the school's 10th Canada West title and a trip to the Uteck Bowl, the Dinos enter 2009 as defending conference champions for the first time since 1996. A two-week training camp, which includes an exhibition contest against the NAIA's Montana State-Northern on Aug. 29 in Medicine Hat, Alta., sets the team up for the season opener at Saskatchewan on Sept. 4 (7 p.m., The FAN 960, fan960.com, SHAW TV).

Though the team played well down the stretch in the conference playoffs a year ago, the 2008 season was bookended by a pair of big losses – a 25-0 season-opening defeat on the road in Saskatoon, and a 59-10 drubbing by eventual Vanier Cup champion Laval in the Uteck Bowl.

The team returns 18 starters from 2008, including 10 on the offence and eight on the defence. Offensive linemen Lindsey Stevens and Dylan Steenbergen are the only offensive starters who do not return, while defensive lineman Pat Callan along with defensive backs Jon Waldie, James Green, and Brett Ferguson have moved on from the defence.

The defensive line and the offensive backfield should be the strongest components of a team that remains largely intact from its conference championship squad from a year ago. Erik Glavic, the 2007 Hec Crighton Trophy winner with Saint Mary's, joins the fold and will battle it out with Deke Junior for the starting quarterback position after successfully recovering from the torn ACL he suffered in the 2007 Uteck Bowl against Laval. Running back recruits Storm Bartsoff and Steven Lumbala join returning conference MVP Matt Walter to bolster a powerful running game.

The D-line benefits from the return of three of four starters along with a bumper crop of recruits and transfers. Peace River, Alta. native Linden Gaydosh got significant interest from several NCAA schools, including Notre Dame, but signed with the Dinos and will likely see the field as a pure freshman. Deji Oduwole leads a veteran group of returnees, while transfer Carlos Guglielmi won a U.S. junior college national title in 2008 with Butte College.

Quotes from head coach: BLAKE NILL

On the team's chances in 2009:

"I wouldn't necessarily say we're a favourite, but I do think we have the reputation that we can compete. I still think we need to learn how to win on a consistent basis and to do the things that it takes to win, so we're still in a learning phase.

"There's no doubt we improved over 2007 last season, but we're not finished working to that level. We still have a lot of youth, and we have to learn how to win.

“My main thing is to have these kids understand that we’re still a work in progress, that nothing has been completed. We have to keep improving. I’ve coached in five national championships and we’re still a ways away from being able to seriously compete in one.

“We’ve taken a good first step, we have the right athletes in place, and if things work out we should be in a position where we can compete for a conference championship here.”

On the quarterback situation:

“Quarterback will be a strong point for us this year, especially with the addition of Erik Glavic. Deke Junior showed up in great shape and he’s ready to challenge, and I’ve really been impressed with his attitude so far.”

On the running game:

“We have two All-Canadians in Woodson and Walter coming back, but we also have three very talented recruits that can run the ball. With our depth in the backfield, we’re looking to run more of a hybrid offence there where the guys that can carry the ball can also receive. Woodson and Lumbala are the kind of athletes who could excel in that role, and I think you’re going to see a lot of that from us in the next few years.”

Head Coach: Blake Nill

- Number of seasons as head coach with team (including 2009): 4
- Number of seasons as head coach in CIS (including 2009): 12
- Career regular season record with team: 11-13
- Career regular season record in CIS: 60-28
- Career overall record with team (reg. season & playoffs only): 13-15
- Career overall record in CIS (reg. season & playoffs only): 74-35

Offence

Key returning players (about 4-5):

RB **Matt Walter**, the 2008 Canada West MVP and 2007 conference rookie of the year, returns for his third season after winning the CW rushing title with 906 yards and landing on the second All-Canadian team

QB **Deke Junior**, MVP of the 2008 Hardy Cup, returns for his second season with the Dinos after playing five years of junior. Completion percentage of 60.5% was the second-best in school history, and his 78.6% in the Hardy Cup game was the highest single game in school history.

WR **Nathan Coehoorn**, the team’s second-leading receiver in 2008 (33 catches, 363 yards), and a second team All-Canadian, is back for his third season

SB **Anthony Parker** led the team with 500 yards through the air in 2008 and returns for his third campaign.

RB **Anthony Woodson**, a 2007 second team All-Canadian, missed most of the 2008 season with a rib injury and will miss at least the first part of the 2009 campaign with shoulder and foot injuries.

Key recruits (or newcomers: transfers) (about 3):

QB **Erik Glavic**, the 2007 Hec Crighton Trophy winner, will join the Dinos this season after transferring from Saint Mary's, who he led to an appearance in the Vanier Cup in '07 before suffering a knee injury in the Uteck Bowl. The knee having healed, Glavic and Junior will battle it out for the starting pivot job.

RB **Storm Bartsoff** (Raymond HS, Raymond, Alta.) is a solid athlete from the Alberta Tier I provincial champion Raymond Comets who was named South MVP at the 2009 Alberta Senior Bowl

RB **Steven Lumbala** (St. Francis HS, Calgary), the younger brother of CFLer Rolly and former Saint Mary's star Jacques, suits up with the Dinos this year. He represented Canada at the 2009 World Junior Football Championship in Ohio, where he was named first-team All-World after Canada captured a silver medal.

Key losses (about 3-4):

OL **Dylan Steenbergen** was the Montreal Alouettes' first pick (1st round, 7th overall) of the 2009 CFL Canadian Draft after earning a conference all-star nod in 2008

OL **Lindsey Stevens**, a three-year starter, graduated.

Defence

Key returning players (about 4-5):

LB **Andrea Bonaventura** was the CW defensive player of the year in 2008 and the team's only first team All-Canadian. The fourth-year Saint Mary's transfer was drafted in the third round, 20th overall of the CFL Draft by Edmonton and was released by the Eskimos following camp. Led the Dinos with 51 tackles last season

DL **Deji Oduwole** was ranked in the top 15 of the CFL Draft class last November but remained undrafted and returns for this fourth season after a Canada West all-star selection last year. He led the team with five sacks in 2008, half the Dinos' total of 10.

LB **Chase Moore** is a former conference all-star who returns for his fifth year. Finished with 35.5 tackles (tied for third on the team) in 2008

DB **Matt Grohn** becomes the most veteran member of the secondary as he enters his fifth year. Grohn had 40 tackles in the 2008 season (second on the team), 35 of which were solos.

Key recruits (or newcomers: transfers) (about 3):

DL **Linden Gaydosh** (Ross Sheppard HS – Edmonton; Peace River, Alta) is a highly-touted recruit on the line and played for Canada at the World Juniors in Ohio in July. The 6-4, 315-pound Gaydosh was the North's most outstanding lineman at the 2009 Alberta Senior Bowl.

DL **Carlos Guglielmi** won a junior college national title with Butte College (California) last season after three seasons with the Okanagan Sun.

DL **Hughes-Martin Kalonji** makes the trip west after starring for Cégep Vieux Montreal for two seasons.

Key losses (about 3-4):

DB **James Green** was drafted in the third round, 18th overall by the Toronto Argonauts and is seeing significant field time on special teams with the Argos in 2009. Earned a conference all-star nod at free safety in 2008.

DB **Jon Waldie** completed his eligibility last season at halfback after moving from the corner – where he was an all-star in 2007 – midway through the season.

DB **Brett Ferguson** led the Dinos with four interceptions last season, including three in one game to tie a school record.

DL **Pat Callan** graduated after five seasons with the Dinos.