

Blackhawks add five

The Iowa Blackhawks, Council Bluffs' indoor professional football team, announce the signing of five players.

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The Iowa Blackhawks, Council Bluffs' indoor professional football team, announce the signing of five players, all whom have had a hand in Blackhawks history.

Receivers Ryan Kauffman, Mike Stuart, Kurt Ferguson as well as running backs Elijah Simmons and Eric Johnson are back, and will be counted on heavily for the upcoming season.

Kauffman (6-foot-1, 195 pounds) returns for his fifth and final season with the Blackhawks, and holds team records in career receiving yardage (899) and career touchdown receptions (19), and is one catch away from Yano Jones' career reception mark of 79.

Last season, Kauffman caught 24 passes for 305 yards and seven scores, being named to the American Professional Football League's second team at receiver.

"I would love to have a great final season with the Blackhawks," said Kauffman, "besides winning the championship, I would love to finish my career with 100 catches and 1,000 yards; both I think are pretty achievable."

Simmons (5-10, 235) is a perennial all-star at fullback for the Blackhawks, leading the APFL in scoring the past two seasons. In 2007 he scored 24 touchdowns and added a two-point conversion, scoring 146 yards. Since joining the Blackhawks in 2006, Simmons has rushed for 619 yards and 35 touchdowns in 144 attempts. He has also caught 15 passes for 159 yards and six touchdowns.

Ferguson (5-10, 220), an Abraham Lincoln and Dana College star, was recently moved to receiver after being listed at linebacker. He is one of the Blackhawks unsung threats.

"Fergie" has played receiver, fullback, and linebacker, quarterback, as well as holds for the kicking game.

Over the course of three seasons, Ferguson has caught 16 passes for 243 yards with six touchdowns, rushed for 39 yards and a score, and has thrown for one touchdown.

In 2006 he recorded 28 tackles at the linebacker position.

Being a veteran he realizes his importance to the team and that his career is getting closer to the finish line.

"I am very excited about the 2008 season, and looking to contribute in any way possible," said Ferguson. "I know that I am near the end of my playing career and look forward to mentoring some of the young players."

Johnson (5-6, 170) returns after sitting out the 2007 season. The speed back adds an element to the offensive backfield. His moves and agility will work well with Simmons' power running. A longtime member of the organization, Johnson has rushed for 224 yards and 10 touchdowns.

Stuart (5-11, 190) has seen his production increase since 2006, and is expected to carry more of a receiving load this season as well; a fine athlete, Stuart can play receiver, defensive back and return kicks.

Last year, in a regular season ending victory over Missouri, Stuart caught four passes for 57 yards and two touchdowns. He added a third on a 46-yard kickoff return.

During the season, he caught 12 passes for 137 yards and two scores. Since 2006, Stuart has been on the receiving end of 16 passes for 215 yards and three touchdowns.

The Blackhawks open their 2008 season at the Mid-America Center on Saturday, May 3.

Single game tickets are on sale at the MAC box office.