

## ALBANY 2019 PREVIEW

After going 7-5 in HC Greg Gattuso's first season in 2014 the Great Danes had a disappointing 3-8 season. In 2016 they started the season with a 22-16 upset of FBS Buffalo and finished 7-4 just missing the playoffs. Hopes were high in 2017, as they started 3-1 (only loss to ODU) but then loss 6 straight including 2 in OT and finished just 4-7.

Last year the Great Danes started with an expected 33-7 loss at Pitt. They trailed Rhode Island 31-7 at HT & 45-7 into the 4Q before scoring 19 unanswered. They needed an 88 yd TD pass w/6:54 left for the come from behind 30-27 win over Morgan St. They again needed a 4Q TD to get past Saint Francis 35-28. Despite having an RB rush for 221 yds and leading 22-10 w/7:03 left, Albany collapsed against William & Mary, allowing a GW TD w/:50 left. Hosting Richmond, they again lost late allowing a 25 yd GW FG with :06 left. They trailed #13 Towson 38-21 at HT and lost 56-28, scoring a TD w/:22 left. Against #24 Maine they trailed 21-0 at HT and lost 28-9. After trailing #13 Delaware 12-0 2Q, Albany took a 16-15 lead w/11:44 left but allowed a GW TD w/:18 left. They only trailed New Hampshire 17-10 early 4Q but after being pinned inside their own 10, threw an IR TD and lost 24-10. Against #10 Stony Brook, they ended the season on a high note winning the "Golden Apple" Trophy with a final play GW 48 yd FG by SR K Ethan Stark.

HC Greg Gattuso will have 16 returning starters to work with in his 6th ssn here. OC Joe Davis, DC Keith Dudzinski & co-DC Joe Bernard all return for their 2nd season.

Albany returns 8 starters to the CAA's #10 scoring (27.1 ppg) & #9 Total Offense (335 ypg). They lose Miami transfer QB Vincent Testaverde (1714, 53.4%, 11-12), who started the F/8 gm last year before being injured (OFY) vs Maine & bkp QB Will Brunson (160, 38.7%, 0-1). They return QB Jeff Undercuffler, who took over vs Maine, starting the L/3. For the season he threw for 526 (47.7%.4-5). He will be joined by Nevada transfer Griffin Dahn (PS#455JC). The running game took a big hit when leading rusher 3rd tm CAA RB Elijah Ibitokun-Hanks (10 st, 767, 4.8, 4 td) decided to transfer in January. While they return Karl Mofo (2 st, 595, 5.7, 5 td, 198 rec), their #3 RB, who also returns was Josh Garvin (2, 2.0). They add Coastal Carolina transfer Alex James (475 rush L/2 yrs). The receiving corps loses 2 TE's who combined for 3 sts & 15 yds. They return their top 5, who combined for 37 sts, 2222 yds and 14 rec td's. They will be led by WR's Dev Holmes (11 st, 734, 14.7, 5 td) & Jerah Reeves (9 st, 581, 16.1, 3 td). They also add Rutgers transfer TE Max Anthony (4 st @ FB). The OLine loses 2 yr starting LT Luke Ritter (11 st) and RG Jack Dudzinski (6 st). They return three 11 gm starters along with RG Micah Royster (5 st) who missed 5 gms after starting all 11 in '17. A solid returning OLine should give whoever wins the QB job, time to adjust and hopefully improve team's ratio (16-18). Despite the losses the returning talent with the infusion of FBS transfers could see the Great Danes offense improving.

The Great Danes return 8 starters to the CAA's #11 scoring (30.6 ppg) & #10 Total Defense (371 ypg). The DLine loses two 11 gm starters in former Penn St transfer DT Antoine White (37 tkl, 3.5 sk, 3 tfl) & DE Brian Dolce (39 tkl, 2.5 sk). They return 4 DL who combined for the other 22 sts led by E Mich transfer DT Nick Dillion (11 st, 22 tkl, 1.5 sk, 1.5 tfl) & DE Anthony Lang (6 st, 49 tkl, 4 sk, 1 tfl). The LB unit only loses their top bkp (3 st, 35 tkl, 1 int). They return 5 of their top 6 LB including their top 3 in Levi Metheny (11 st, 92 tkl, 9.5 tfl, 2 int), Danny Damico (81 tkl, 4 tfl, 1 int) & Eli Mencer (58 tkl, 4.5 sk, 4 tfl, 1 int). The secondary only loses CB Kareem Brown (11 st, 52 tkl, 10 pbu). They return 6 DB who combined for 33 sts, 201 tkl, 16 pd led by S AJ Mistler (6 st, 58 tkl, 4 pd), SS Tyler Carswell (6 st, 43 tkl, 1 pbu) & CB Kareem Gibson (8 st, 42 tkl, 9 pd). While they lose 4 of their top 10 tkl'rs, they return 6 of their top 7 and can only improve.

The ST Unit must replace both kickers in 2nd tm CAA K Ethan Stark (14-17, L/51), who split punting duties (35.8) with P Neven Sussman (35.8) but return their top returnman Donovan McDonald (17.8 KR, 6.9 PR, 1 td). The loss of Stark is big as he was 1 FG short of tying Albany's career record.

The Great Danes open against FBS foe Central Michigan with a new HC that was just 1-11 last year, with just 11 returning starters. Even if they can not pull the upset a close game could give the confidence heading into 3 winnable non-conf games. They avoid both James Madison & Elon in CAA play and should improve on their 1 CAA win last year. Now in the 2nd year of their systems with 8 returning starters on both sides of the ball, Albany should be able to show a sizable improvement with a winning season in their reach, but will likely miss the playoffs.