

Houston Baptist 2019 Preview

The Houston Baptist football program is less than a decade old. The Huskies first season was back in 2013, and after going 7-22 in their first 3 years, they managed a 4-7 record in 2016. But in 2017 the Huskies fell back to 1-10 and last year repeated that mark in 2018. Vic Shealy returns for his 7th year as coach (13-49) and HBU will look to end their 19-game Southland Conference losing streak in 2019.

HBU's offense only put up 270 ypg and 14 ppg in 2017, and going into the '18 lost quite a bit of offensive talent. But despite the lack of returning talent, the Huskies managed to put up 394 ypg and 27 ppg, which was their best offensive numbers since joining the FCS. Returning for his junior season is QB Bailey Zappe, who threw for 2,812 yards (57.8%, 23-13) last year. Going into '18 HBU lost their top 2 RB's, but a new tandem of Dreshawn Minnieweather (5 starts, 528, 6.4, 5 TD) and LaDarius Dickens (5 starts, 497, 5.0) emerged. Both of those RB's return for HBU as well in 2019.

Before last year, HBU's offense had never averaged more than 170 pass ypg for a season. That changed last season though, as the Huskies offense passed for 271 ypg. This season HBU returns Jerreth Sterns, who led with 684 (9 starts, 4 TD) along with Terry Tillmon (8 starts, 379, 4 TD) and Nick Sexton (8 starts, 213). Overall, 7 of the top 8 receivers return, with the lone loss being David Racine (11 starts, 461, 5 TD). Last season the OL had to replace 3 starters, and while rush numbers improved to 124 ypg (3.8), the sacks allowed jumped up to 44. This season 4 starters are back on the OL and this unit should be able to pave the way for even better rush numbers & allow fewer sacks in 2019. The Huskies had 3 kickers combine to go 4-8 on FG's (L/44) last year, and will look elsewhere for better production this year.

Since 2013, the Huskies defense has given up over 400 ypg on defense every season. Last season the defense only brought back a handful of starters, and the numbers dipped to HBU allowing 474 ypg. Three of the top 6 DL were back for HBU last season, but allowed an increase in rush ypg (209, 4.5). Returning this year on the DL is DE Andre Walker (11 starts, #10 tackler, 5 sacks, 4.5 TFL) and NG Emmanuel Mann (7 starts, #15 tackler, 2 TFL). Overall, 5 of the top 6 DL are back this year with the lone loss being DT Johnavhon Graham (10 starts, #9 tackler, 5 TFL).

In 2014 HBU allowed 48 ppg, but would improve their ppg allowed over the next 3 seasons (36, 35, 28). However, that number jumped back up to 44 ppg in '18. The LB unit must replace 2 starters for the second year in a row as both Langston Tunson (9 starts, #1 tackler, 12.5 TFL, 3.5 sacks) and Kyle Bowling (11 starts, t-#3 tackler, 6 TFL, 2 INT) depart. The lone returning starter is Caleb Johnson (11 starts, #2 tackler, 10 TFL, 3 sacks, 3 PBU). HBU had to replace 4 of their 5 starters in the secondary last season, and their pass defense took a step back, allowing 265 ypg and a 61% completion rate. SS Colton Manning (6 starts, t-#3 tackler), NB Coi Miller (11 starts, #5 tackler, 4 TFL, 7 PBU) and FS Patrick Wolfe (6 starts, t-#7 tackler, 2 INT) are all back for HBU this year. The Huskies will have to replace both starting CB's in Raphael Lewis (9 starts, #6 tackler, 5 PBU) and Derek Broussard (9 starts, #12 tackler). HBU had 2 punters split time (40.5 average, 24 inside the 20) and they both depart this year, meaning HBU will need a new kicker and punter for 2019.

This is just year 7 for HBU as an FCS team, and the Huskies have yet to top 4 wins for a season. The Huskies do return 15 starters, this could be the best team they have fielded. Their 4 non-conference games are at UTEP and South Dakota (4-7 in '18) and they host Texas Wesleyan & Texas Southern. HBU played both Northwestern State and SE Louisiana close last season & get both of those games at home in '19. The SLC is better than in years past, but HBU will surely improve their win total this season.