

ALBANY GREAT DANES



POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS-In 2019 the Great Danes lost former Miami transfer QB Vincent Testaverde (1714, 53.4%, 11-12), who started the first 8 games in '18 before being injured (OFY) vs Maine, along with bkp QB Will Brunson (160, 38.7%, 0-1). They returned QB Jeff Undercuffer, who took over vs Maine, starting the last 3 in '18. For the season he threw for 526 (47.7%, 4-5). In '19, Undercuffer outplayed expectations throwing for 3,543 yards (56.5%) with a super 41-10 ratio! Keep in mind in 2018 Albany's QB's had a combined 16-18 ratio! In the spring season of 2021, Undercuffer was banged up, as was the receiving corps and he only threw for 556 (54.4%) with a 6-3 ratio and he missed the Stony Brook game. Braeden Zenelovic threw for 69 (45%, 0-2) and Joey Carino threw for 64 (55%, 1-0) split time in that game. All 3 returned last year. Undercuffer started 10 (out vs W Mich) but threw for just 1,781 (55.1%, 8-7, -94 rush). Carino started vs W Mich & for the season threw for 530 (60.3%, 3-0) and was the #2 rusher (97, 2.0, 1 td). Zenelovic was just 1-1-28 (-22 rush) for the season. This year they lose Undercuffer & Zenelovic. Carino returns & they add QB Reese Poffenbarger (PS#204) who RS at ODU last year & former Boston College transfer QB Matt Valecic, who was out with injury last season at Colorado St. They also bring in a new OC, so everyone was leaning a new system in the spring. While they lose a 3 year starter, he under-performed last year, which means no matter who wins the starting job they have a chance to improve on last year's numbers.

RUNNING BACKS - In '19 the Great Dane's running game looked to take a big hit when leading rusher 3rd tm CAA RB Elijah Ibitokun-Hanks (10 st, 767, 4.8, 4 td) transferred in January. They returned Karl Mofo (2 st, 595, 5.7, 5 td, 198 rec) and their #3 RB Josh Garvin (2, 2.0). They also added Coastal Carolina transfer Alex James (475 rush L/2 yrs). Mofo rushed for 1,290 (4.9) with 10 TD's and was #3 receiver with 319 (10.0). James proved a very effective backup with 628 (6.6). Jah Dabney was #3 with just 45 (4.5). In the spring season of 2021 the unit lost James but Mofo returned & led again with 458 (4.1). Joey Carino only had carries in 1 game (Stony Brook) rushing for 58 (4.8). Last year they added Dartmouth transfer Caylin Parker, 63 all-purp yards in 3 games in '19, and Connecticut transfer Lavarey Barton (0 yd). Mofo started all 11 & led with 962 (#2 CAA, 4.0, 12 td, 211 rec) earning 1st Tm CAA. Parker was the #2 RB (#4 rusher) with just 7-16 rush & 1 td, Barton played in 3 (9-0 rush). Only Barton returns. They add Sacred Heart transfer Conrad Perry (DNP LY) & Pitt transfer Todd Sibley (PS#24) who had 3 starts & 322 rush yds (4.7) the last 3 years at Pitt. Replacing their top rusher for each of the last 3 years is made tougher as the only other player to have 10 or more rushes besides Mofo was QB Carino (49). This is a very inexperienced unit & that will likely have to depend on Sibley to lead the way.

RECEIVERS - In '19 the receiving corps lost 2 TE's who combined for 3 sts & 15 yds. They returned their top 5 receivers, who combined for 37 sts, 2,222 rec yds and 14 rec td's led by WR's Dev Holmes (11 st, 734, 14.7, 5 td) & Jerah Reeves (9 st, 581, 16.1, 3 td) and Juwan Green (429, 18.7). They also added Rutgers transfer TE Max Anthony (4 st at FB). Green took control and led with 1,386 (16.7) & 17 TD's. Reeves was #2 with 958 (12.6). LJ Wesneski was #4 (RB #3) with 277 (13.2) and Tyler Oedekoven was #5 with 256 (15.1). In their 4 game spring season, they had to replace Green & Reeves (comb 2344 yds). Tyler Oedekovan had 10 rec's in the opener but was then OFY early vs Maine still finishing #3 with 127 (9.8). The receiver corps was banged up with Wesneski having just 2 catches (15 yd) as Mike Gray led with 187 (11.7). Rutgers transfer Mohammed Jabbie had 8 catches vs Rhode Island but finished with just 11 for 71 yds (#5). Last year they returned their top 6 receivers but True frosh Roy Alexander burst onto the scene & led with 37 rec & 560 rec yds (15.1) & 3 rec td's earning 4th Tm CAA despite starting just 5 games. Parker was #2 with 461 (14.4) & others had 200+ rec yds. This year they lose #3 Jabbie (9 st, 262, 11.9), #4 Gray (6 st, 238, 14.0), #6 Oedekovan (7 st, 218, 15.6). & #9 TE Wesneski (4

st, 49, 8.2). They return 3 of their top 5 in Alexander, Parker & TE Thomas Greaney (10 st, 234, 11.8). They also add two Div-III transfers who both have 1,100+ career rec yds in Quinn Zinobile (Clarion) & Brevin Easton (Assumption). despite the losses this is a solid & experienced group that should do well, no matter who wins the starting QB job

OFFENSIVE LINE - In '19 the OLine lost 2 yr starting LT Luke Ritter (11 st) and RG Jack Dudzinski (6 st). They returned three 11 gm starters along with RG Micah Royster (5 st) who missed 5 gms after starting all 11 in '17. The veteran unit improved from 106 ypg rush (3.6) with 10.2% sacks in '18 to 132 (4.1) with 7.6% sacks in '19. In the spring of '21's 4 game season, they had to replace Clancy Griffin, Niko Culnan, Sean Kennedy (CAA 3rd team) & Micah Royster. They returned Kassy Desir and Kobe Thomas, who both started 3 of their 4 games. They also added Maryland transfer OL Parris Heath, who would start 1 & VMI transfer Critt Johnson, who started 3. Albany's numbers slipped to 119 ypg rush (3.3) but they did allow just 5.5% sacks. They all returned in the Fall last year. RG Desir started 7 of the first 8 before being OFY. Albany put up just 91 ypg rush (2.8) and allowed 30 sacks (9.2%) for 180 yds (16.3 ypg). This year they lose Desir (7 st), RT Critt Johnson (10 st) & RG Jahkele Bascome (3 st). They return 6 OL who combined for 35 starts last year including C Thomas (11 st), LT Ozzie Hutchenson (9 st) & LG Scott Houseman (9 st). While they have a solid core they are under a new OC & may not improve much despite under performing last year.

DEFENSIVE LINE - The DLine lost two 11 gm starters in 2019, in former Penn St transfer DT Antoine White (37 tkl, 3.5 sk, 3 tfl) & DE Brian Dolce (39 tkl, 2.5 sk). They returned 4 DL who combined for the other 22 sts led by former 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). After finishing #10 in the CAA in both rushing defense (152 ypg, 4.1) & sacks (20) in 2018, they again allowed 152 ypg (3.9) but improved to #5 CAA while also improving to #3 in sacks (31). In the spring of 2021 they had to replace 2nd Tm AA DE Eli Mencer (#6 tkl'r), who led the team with an Albany record 14.5 sacks in '19 & DL Nick Griffin (#11, 3.5 sk). In their 4 game spring of '21 season they remained #5 CAA but allowed just 128 ypg rush (3.4) & had 11 sacks (#4). They returned 3 of 4 starters (lost #11 tkl'r) in DE Jared Verse (#3, 4 sk, 6 tfl), DOG Anthony Lang (#8, 3 tfl) & DT Mazon Walker (#10, 2.5 sk). Shockingly they plummeted to last in the CAA allowing 185 ypg rush (5.0) & were #9 CAA in sacks with 19. This year the losses are massive as they lose DT Mazon Walker (10 st, #10 tkl'r, 7 tfl), NG Ibn Foster (11 st, #12, 7 tfl) & 3rd Tm frosh AA DE Verse (11 st, #4), who led with 9.5 sacks but transferred to Florida St. They return 3rd Tm CAA DOG Lang (#6 tkl'r, 9 tfl) & DT Eli Hills (1 st, 8 tkl, 1 sk). While they lose 3 starters, after last year's poor performance, they may not have their numbers get much worse.

LINEBACKERS - The LB unit only lost their top bkp (3 st, 35 tkl, 1 int) in 2019. They returned 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) but he moved full time to DE. They improved from allowing 30.6 ppg (#11 CAA) & 371 ypg (#10) in 2018 to just 24.7 ppg (#5) & 358 ypg (#3). In the spring of 2021, they returned 2nd Tm CAA LB Metheny (6.5 tfl), who led with 120 tkl & #2 tkl'r Damico (109 tkl, 8 tfl), while moving in #4 tkl'r S AJ Mistler (9 tfl). They improved to allowing 24.0 ppg (#5) & just 273 ypg (#4). Last year they lost Metheny (#6 tkl'r, 1 sk) who was injured & OFY in game 3. They returned 2nd Tm CAA LB Damico (34 tkl, 1.5 tfl, 1 int), LB Mistler (#4, 3 tfl) & LB Jackson Ambush (#7). Thanks to in big part allowing 62 pts & 623 yds to FBS Syracuse, they allowed 26.2 ppg (#9 CAA) & 348 ypg (#5). This year they must replace 4th Tm CAA LB Damico (9 st, #2 tkl'r, 3.5 tfl, 1 int) and backup LB's Joe Casale (2 st, #11, 2 tfl) & Damon Burton (12 tkl, 1 sk). They will again be led by 1st Tm Frosh AA Ambush (11 st, 97 tkl, 5 tfl) & #3 tkl'r LB Mistler (11 st, 61 tkl, 6 tfl, 1 int). With their top 2 back they are capable of improving on last year's numbers.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - In 2018 Albany was #10 CAA, in pass defense allowing 219 ypg passing (60.1%) with a poor 19-7 ratio. In 2019, the secondary only lost CB Kareem Brown (11 st, 52 tkl, 10 pbu). They returned 6 DB's who combined for 33 sts, 201 tkl, 16 pbu 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). They improved to #5 despite only improving to 214 ypg (58.8%, 20-10). In the spring of 2021 they lost 5 Josh Wynn (#4 tkl'r, 4 int, 3 pbu) along with CB's Jarren Williams (#8, 6 pbu, 1 int) & Donte Mount (#9, 7 pbu) while moving S AJ Mistler to LB. They returned S Carswell (#5 tkl'r, 6 pbu, 2 int) & S Hayden Specht (#10, 3 pbu, 1 int). They again improved to #3 CAA allowing 144 ypg passing (54.1%) despite allowing an 8-1 ratio in their 4 games. Last year they had to replace S Specht (#2 tkl'r, 1 tfl). They returned S Carswell (#5 tkl'r, 3 pbu), CB Christian Lewis (#9, 1 pbu) & DB Larry Walker (#12, 1.5 tfl). They moved up to #2 CAA allowing 163 ypg pass (58.9) allowing a very good 9-8 ratio. This year they only lose CB DJ McConnell (2 st, 7 tkl, 1 pbu). They return their top 4 in 2nd Tm

CAA FS Walker (11 st, #5 tkl'r, 8 pbu, 1 int), SS Semaj Brown (7 st, #7, 3 pbu), CB Isaac Duffy (11 st, #8, 1 int) & CB Lewis (F/9 st, #9, 6 pbu, 1 int). While this unit is the strength of the defense, their numbers may slip if the rebuilt DLine can not get pressure.

SPECIAL TEAMS - In '19 the ST Unit had to replace both kickers including 2nd tm CAA K Ethan Stark (14-17, L/51), who was 1 FG short of tying Albany's career record. Joey Mitchell hit 36.4 on punts & Dylan Burns hit 10-16 FG (L/43). In the spring they had their 3rd punter in 3 years and ECU transfer Sean Ralls avg a poor 30.7 with 2 blocks and the teams net was an ugly 25.3!! Burns hit 4-5 FG (L/37). Last year Ralls improved to 39.0 ypp but the team net was just 31.8. Burns hit 10-12 (L/45). This year both depart & they also must replace 2 year STC Damion Mincey. They return backup P John Opalko who avg'd 37.0 on 8 punts. This unit must be rebuilt.

COACHES - HC Greg Gattuso is 35-52 in his 8 years leading the Great Danes. That includes 3 winning seasons ('14, '16 & '19) and 1 playoff appearance in 2019. He was formally the HC at Duquesne going 97-32 from 1993-2004. He was an offensive cch at Pitt ('05-'10) & Maryland ('12-'14). Their new OC is Jared Ambrose, who spent the last 3 years as OC at Delaware. He will be joined by newly promoted co-OC/Asst HC Nate Byham, who enters his 9th season here & was the run game coordinator last year. They return DC Joe Bernard, who enters his 9th year at Albany. He was the OC here from 2014 to 2017. He became the co-DC/STC in 2018, before being the DC in 2019. The new STC is LB cch Bill Nessel, who enters his 6th season here.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - In '19 Albany returned 8 starters to the CAA's #10 scoring (27.1 ppg) & #9 Total Offense (335 ypg). They made a big jump to #3 in scoring (31.3 ppg) & #7 in Total Offense (391 ypg). In the spring of 2021 they played just 4 games & had to replace 4 starting OL, while their QB & WR's were banged up. They plummeted to just 18.8 ppg (#9 CAA) & 291 ypg (#9). Last year they returned most of their offense including their QB, RB & top 6 receivers but shockingly underperformed with just 18.9 ppg (#11) & 303 ypg (#10). This year they bring in a new OC but have to replace their 3 year starting QB, their RB who led them in rushing each of the last 3 years, 2 of their top 4 receivers & 2 OL starters. They return 6 starters and their top 2 receivers, but their returning rusher is QB Carino (1 st, 97 rush, 530 pass). They will be learning a new offense but add some transfers to try to fill some holes and after struggling last year should still be able to improve some overall.

DEFENSE - In '19 the Great Danes returned 8 starters to the CAA's #11 scoring (30.6 ppg) & #10 total defense (371 ypg). They took a big step up, which helped them make the playoffs as they improved to #5 in scoring (24.7 ppg) & #3 in total defense (358 ypg). In their four game spring of 2021 season they remained #5 in scoring (24.0 ppg) but slipped to #4 in total defense despite allowing just 273 ypg. The defense returned 8 starters last year while they only slipped to #6 in total defense (348 ypg) they dropped to #9 in scoring (26.2 ppg). Part of the reason for those performance was their blowout loss 62-24 loss to Syracuse as they allowed 623 yds including 286 rush yards (6.8 ypc). This year they return 7 starters including all four starters from the CAA's #2 pass defense secondary. They lose 3 of their 4 DL starters & how much pressure the rebuilt DLine produces will likely determine the defenses direction this year.

2022 - In 2019 with 16 starters back, the Great Danes made the playoffs for the first time since 2011, when they were a member of the NEC. They won their first playoff game since 1977, when they were in D-III, beating Central Conn 42-14. However they lost in the 2nd round to Montana St 47-21. Much was expected for the 2020 season but Covid & injuries had them finish 1-3 in the spring of '21 "season". Last year they opened the season against eventual FCS Champion NDSU. They faced three top 10 teams & Syracuse in their first 6 games and started the season 0-8 & finishing just 2-9. This year they return 13 starters as they lose their top QB, RB, 3 of 4 starters on the DLine & their K & P and have a new OC. After opening with Baylor, four of their next 5 games are against teams that finished with a losing record last season, so they have a good shot to be above .500 at that point. Unfortunately four of the teams they face in their last 5 regular season games had winning season last year. While we expect the Great Danes to improve on their 2 wins from last year, they may be a year or two away from a winning season.