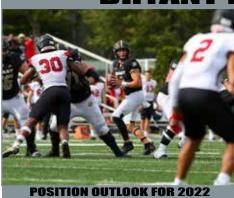# BRYANT BULLDOGS

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - In '19 Chris Hindle started the first 3 games but only threw for 353 (54.2%, 1-4) and was replaced. Kory Curtis started the last 9 and led with 1,700 passing (57.8%, 7-6). Curtis started the first 2 in spring, throwing for just 153 (47.7%, 1-2). Frosh Ryan Clark played in all 4 and wasn't more effective, throwing for just 259 (54%, 0-2). Curtis departed last year but Clark returned and they added JMU grad transfer Gage Moloney and true frosh Zevi Eckhaus. Moloney suffered a season ending injury in the opener so they went with the youngster in Eckhaus who went on to start the final 10 games. He had back-to-back 300 yard games vs Brown (335, 3 td's) & Duquesne (311, 2 td's) then repeated the feat in the final 2 games vs LIU (356, 2 td's) and Merrimack (317, 4 td's). He became the first player in NEC history to be named NEC Offensive Rookie of the Year and 1st Tm All-NEC in the same season. He finished with 2,392 (62.8%, 21-3 and added 242 rush (3.4). Eckhaus was a finalist for the Jerry Rice (FCS Frosh POY), finishing 4th in the votiing. He returns as the clear starter while Moloney (92, 60%, 1-1) adds depth.

RUNNING BACKS - . In '19 Bryant returned their #2 and #3 rushers. Daniel Adeboboye led with 665 (4.4). Harrison Easton was #2 with 232 (3.7). '18's #2 rusher, Alfred Dorbor dipped to 160 (3.5). Adeboboye was excellent in spring, rushing for 181 vs Duquesne, 141 vs Merrimack and finishing with 445 (5.9). Shai Young added 123 (4.4). Last year they only lost Dorbor but added Charlotte transfer Ishod Finger in spring. Adeboboye returned as one of the best RB's in the NEC. True frosh Fabrice Mukendi was a huge surprise, taking the starting role in the 3rd game and leading with 652 (5.9). Adeboboye was #2 with 509 (4.4) and had 171 receiving (17.1). Shai Young added 100 (4.2). This year they lose Adeboboye. Mukendi had the most yards by a Bryant true frosh in school history and he is back so this is another strong unit.

RECEIVERS - Anthony Frederick led with 451 (14.1) in '19. Hunter Hill was #2 with 432 (9.8). '18's leader, Vincent Nisivoccia was #3 with 390 (7.5). Hill and Nisivoccia were gone in spring. David Zorrilla led with just 98 yards (8.9). Last year they lost 2 of their top 4 from '19 but 3 of their top 4 from spring were back along with Frederick. Zorrilla only had 3 catches for 25 yards in the first 4 games then became Eckhaus' most reliable target. He had 11 catches vs St. Francis and 147 vs LIU. Zorilla led with a much more respectable 623 (13.3). Frederick was #2 with 516 (16.1) and a team high 8 td's. TE Jihad Edmond was #3 with 213 (19.4). They had 6 others top 100 yards. This year they lose Macklin Kortebein (4 st, 146, 13.3) and Psaveon Reaves (2 st, 166, 27.7). Six of their top 9 return plus they add LIU transfer Derrick Eugene who had 371 on

37 catches last year and ODU TE Anthony White. They have a talented QB throwing their way so this could be a huge season for the WR unit.

OFFENSIVE LINE - Bryant rushed for just 99 ypg (2.9, 28 sk) in '19. Four of their starters were gone in the spring yet they improved to 180 (4.0) ypg. Four more with starting experience from spring departed. They had just 3 with starting experience entering last year. Bryant only dipped to 152 rush ypg and ypc actually went up to 4.4 while they allowed 19 sacks. Their sack percentage went from 13.5 to 5.6. This year Bryant only loses 1st Tm All NEC LT Mike Andrejco (11 st). 4 starters return, they have 5 that started at least 8 games and 3 return that were All-NEC last year. This goes from their biggest weakness to their most improved unit.

DEFENSIVE LINE - In '19 the Bulldogs gave up 203 (4.9) rush ypg and sacks dropped to 19. They lost DE Tomas Wright (12 st, #3 tkl'r, 9 sk '19), DE Kodi Ojukwu (10 st, #14 tkl'r '19) and DT Greg Wood (9 st, 12 tkl '19) but the inexperienced Dline only gave up 117 (3.1) with 10 sacks in spring. The only additional loss was DE Andrew Wallace (4 st, 6 tkl spg). 4 of their top 5 DL from '19 were gone but 5 of their top 6 from spring are back. They allowed just 120 (3,9) and 102 (3.4) vs conference foes. This year Bryant loses DT Connor Payne (11 st, #10 tkl'r). Three starters return including 1st Tm All NEC Kenny Dyson (#7 tkl'r, 7 sk) and they have 5 Seniors in their top 6 that came back. They've got top notch experience and should be one of the best in the Big South.

LINEBACKERS - LB's made up their #1, #2, #8, #10 and #12 tkl'rs in '19. Their #1, #2 and #10 tkl'rs were gone in spring and their #8 tkl'r has departed as well. Last year they did get back their #1 and #4 tkl'rs from spring but all 3 starters are gone from spring so they were much less exoerienced. Ryan Saddler led the group with 91 tackles (6 tfl) and together with Joe Andreessen (#2 tkl'r, 8 tfl) they were the top LB unit in the NEC and both were 1st Tm All Conference. This year they get both Saddler and Andreessen back along with their #5 and #16 tacklers. This is now the top LB unit in the Big South.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - Bryant held foes to just 176 pass ypg (54.7%, 17-9) in '19. CB Eulogio Portugal (12 st, #7 tkl'r) and SS Gbatoh Browne (9 st, #6 tkl'r) both departed in spring but they added Rutgers transfer Javis Hanks who started all 4 games and they only allowed 109 pass ypg (61%, 3-2). All 4 starters from the spring were back and they had 7 back with starting experience. Bryant allowed 219 pass ypg (59.4%, 16-11). This year they lose S Ricardo Martinez (11 st, #3 tkl'r, 1 int), CB Hanks (10 st, #9 tkl'r, 1 int), S Tyler Allen (1 st, 13 tkl, 1 int) and CB Andre Brackett (3 st, #15 tkl'r). They do get their #6, #8, #17 and #18 tacklers back but they are clearly less experienced. This unit goes from a strength to a weakness.

SPECIAL TEAMS - K Luke Samperi made 11-14 fg's (L/50) in '19 but only made 3-8 fg's (L/44) in spring. Gavin Rowley avg'd 42.0 ypp in '19. He departed and WR David Zorrilla actually led with a 38.1 avg in spring. They lost their top KR/PR after '19 but Andre Brackett avg'd 40.0 KR in spring. Last year Samperi made 7-10 fg's (L/41). Eddie Gettman averaged 33.8 on 31 punts and Zorrilla had a 38.3 average on 11 punts. Shai Young was their top KR with a 25.1 avg. This year they lose Samperi but the rest of the unit returns in tact. San Jose St transfer Charles Bostic had a 99 yd KR td in their bowl 2 years ago.

COACHES - Chris Merritt enters his 4th year as HC of Bryant. He was a finalist for the Eddie Robinson Award last year after leading the Bulldogs to 7 wins including 5 in conference which tied for their most ever. Merritt spent 18 years as a High School Head Coach in Miami. They have no designated OC. Steven Ciocci is in his 4th year as Run Game Coordinator/Oline coach. Tom Sydeski is the Pass Game Coordinator/QB Coach. He was an assit under Butch Davis at FIU in '18. DC Anthony Barese is in his 3rd year in the role. He was DB Coach at Holy Cross for 2 years prior to coming here. John Sielawa is in his 8th year at Bryant.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - Bryant topped 30 ppg and 400 ypg in '17 and '18 but in Merritt's first year they took a nosedive to just 16.6 ppg and 270 ypg. In spring they basically matched those numbers, avg 17.5 ppg and 276 ypg. Last year they had inexperience at QB and the Oline. Merritt struck gold with true frosh Zevi Eckhaus who went on to win NEC's Frosh POY and was 1st Team All Conference. After scoring just 52 points in their first 3 games Bryant topped 30 in 6 of their last 8. They averaged 30 ppg and 379 ypg. This year 10 starters return including Eckhaus, their top 4 receivers, their leading rusher and 4 starters on the Oline. The only real concern here is the fact that they are moving to a new conference but this is still going to be the top offense in the Big South.

DEFENSE - In '17 Bryant allowed 34.7 ppg and 460 ypg. In '18 they allowed 40.5 ppg and 449 ypg. In Merritt's first year they immediately improved to 27.1 ppg and 378 ypg allowed then in spring they only gave up 14.5 ppg and 227 ypg in 4 games Last year they lost some key pieces from '19 but most of their starters gained valuable experience in the spring. Bryant allowed 23 ppg and 339 ypg. In NEC play they allowed just 18 ppg and 288 ypg. This year they get 8 starters back. 15 of their top 20 tacklers return including 8 of their top 9. They've got the top LB unit in the Big South and could be the top overall defense if the secondary comes around.

2022 - In '17 Bryant allowed 34.7 ppg and 460 ypg. In '18 they allowed 40.5 ppg and 449 ypg. In Merritt's first year they immediately improved to 27.1 ppg and 378 ypg allowed then in spring they only gave up 14.5 ppg and 227 ypg in 4 games! Last year started 1-2 with a loss to Rhode Island by 24 (-246 yds) and Akron, though they were tied 14-14 3Q but were also outgained 578-146 , eventually losing by 3 td's. The switch to true frosh QB Eckhaus eventually paid off. They rattled off 6 wins in their last 8 and went 5-2 in conference play to match their previous best. They were +38 ypg and +123 vs conference foes. This year they get 18 starters back. They did have disappointing losses to non-scholarship Duquesne and Central Conn St last year. Now they move into the Big South. They open at FIU who has a new HC. They host Rhode Island then have 3 straight road games, including their conference opener at NC A&T who had the best record of the remaining teams in the Big South at just 5-6. Bryant should fair well in conference play but are at a disadvantage with only 4 home games all season. Still, the Bulldogs are our pick to win a depleted conference.