

BETHUNE-COOKMAN WILDCATS

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - In '19 had a returning starter in Akevious Williams (1435, 63%, 12-6, 347 rush '18). He led the way with 1,774 (54.3%) and had a 10-6 ratio. He also was their #2 rusher with 571 (4.2) and led the team with 10 rush td's. Last year they added Arkansas Pine-Bluff transfer Shannon Patrick who was 3rd in the SWAC with 2,250 (62.7%, 19-13) in '19. Devin Black had just 3 attempts in '19 but was benched for Black against SC State and Black threw for a team season high 307 vs MVSU in his first start. Patrick started the following week against PVA&M but just 6-16-54-0-1 and Black was inserted then started the last 4 games. Patrick led with 1,360 (53.9%) but had a disappointing 9-10 ratio. Black threw for 970 (51.3%) and had a much better 9-4 ratio and added a dual threat element with 254 (5.6). Both Patrick (6 st) and Black (5 st) depart and no other QB on the roster attempted a pass. They added Jackson St transfer Jalon Jones (PS#15) who was originally at Florida in '19. Jones started 5 games for the Tigers in their spring season. He threw for 1,040 (55.6%) and had a 12-3 ratio with 248 rush yards (3.9). He is competing with Louisville transfer Marcus Riley (PS#87) who is just 5'10" 170. Jones is the most talented QB on the roster with the most experience.

RUNNING BACKS - In '19 Isaac Washington led with 636 (5.3) and Que'Shaun Byrd had 307 (4.4). Last year Washington departed but the moved their #1 receiver Jimmie Robinson (468, 12.0) to RB. Byrd had 618 (4.9) and added 117 receiving. Jimmie Robinson rushed for 229 (3.9). LaDerrien Wilson was #3 with 120 (4.3). This year they only lose Wilson. Three of their top four return including Byrd. With their top rusher back they are more experienced this year. Byrd and Robinson are both small running backs under 180 lbs and only frosh RB James Evans is over 200 lbs so short yardage could be an issue.

RECEIVERS - The Wildcats had Jimmie Robinson lead with 468 (12.0) in '19 but no other WR topped 300 yards. Steffon Francois was #2 with just 295 (22.7) on 13 catches. Converted QB Marcus Riley had 257 (12.9). Taron Mallard was #4 with 204 (12.8). Last year their big addition was TE Kemari Averett from Louisville (PS#47). Averett was a 2nd Team FCS All-American after leading with 888 (17.1). Darryl Powell was #2 with 471 and led with a 21.4 ypc. Daveno Ellington was #3 with 195 (11.5) and Dylaan Lee had 185 (14.2). The whole unit returns this year including Averett who is a legit NFL caliber TE at 6'6" 260. They add Kentucky transfer Akeem Hayes (PS#160) and Lville transfer Corey Reed (PS#98). This is the strength of the offense and now they have a VHT QB throwing their way.

OFFENSIVE LINE - BC averaged 162 (4.5) rush ypg in '19 and allowed 24 sacks but 10.4%. Last year BC returned 4 starters only losing their center. They dipped to 116 (4.2) rush ypg and 24 sacks but % did improve to 7.1%. This year they lose two starters in LT Nicholas Roos (11 st, 4th Team All-SWAC) and LG Jamal Savage (11 st, 3rd Team All-SWAC). Three starters return and they add Shorter University transfer Tahj Brighthaupt (Orig FIU) who is a mammoth at 6'8" 340. The year off from football negated their experience last year so they should actually improve.

DEFENSIVE LINE - Bethune-Cookman allowed 194 (4.5) in '19 and had 28 sacks (8.6%). They returned 2 starters from '19 including Judas McKenzie (#6 tkl'r, 3 sk, 4.5 tfl). Last year they allowed 178 (4.3) and had 24 sacks (7.2%). They were much better vs SWAC foes, allowing just 144 (3.7) vs 270 (5.9) vs non-conference teams. This year they lose their top 4 DL. Gone are Tony Bowman (#5 tkl'r, 3.5 sk, 2.5 tfl), McKenzie (#6 tkl'r, 2 sk, 4 tfl) and Jamarquis Reeves (#9 tkl'r, 3.5 sk, 3 tfl) and Mason Hall (#12 tkl'r, 6 tfl). They only have 7 DL on the roster as of their Media Days so we have to assume they add some transfer additions. BC did add New Mexico St transfer Michael Bowe (PS#339JC) who had 62 tackles and 5.5 tfl's in 2 years then spent this past spring at SELA before transferring here in August. Both experience and depth are huge concerns here.

LINEBACKERS - Two of BC's top 3 LB's departed heading into last year including their #1 and #2 tacklers. They did get Untareo Johnson back who was #4 with 52 tacklers. Last year Johnson was 1st Team All-SWAC after leading BC with 101 tackles (5.5 tfl). Tekeven Thomas was #3 with 72 tackles (2 sk, 6 tfl). Both Johnson and Thomas depart. They only return their #17, #19 and #20 tacklers but added NC State transfer Rosendo Louis (PS#71) who had 8 starts in '19 and 75 tackles in 2 years. He missed '20 with a medical issue. They really need him to stay healthy or this is a very inexperienced unit.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - In '19 Bethune-Cookman allowed 200 pass ypg and 58.3% completions. After taking the '20 season off due to Covid they returned with no experience after their top 5 DB's moved on. They allowed 250 ypg (63.9%) and a 23-6 ratio. The Wildcats finished 10th out of 12 in the SWAC Pass D Efficiency rankings. This year they only lose Henry Miller (#8 tkl'r, 3 pbu) and Malik Franklin (#11 tkl'r, 2 pbu). They return their six of their top 8 including their #2, #4, #7, #10, #13 and #16 tacklers. CB Anthony Hill-Robinson led with 4 int's and was 2nd Team All-SWAC. He returns and they added Louisville transfer TreSean Smith (PS#108) who had 70 tackles back in '17-'18. They go from inexperienced to experienced and should move up the SWAC Pass D Rankings.

SPECIAL TEAMS - Xavier McDonald made 6 of 8 fg's in '19 (L/39). Benjamin Lennon transferred in from Utah after serving as their punter in '20 with a 38.9 average. KR Jimmie Robinson was a 2x All-American and averaged 26.7 KR/7.1 PR. Last year they lost McDonald. Dylan Moghaddam and Marcos Gamboa compined to make just 4 of 6 field goals (L/32). Lennon averaged 42.2 ypp and their net improved to 37.2. Darnell Deas carried the KR mantle with a 28.0 average and 2 td's. Justyz Tuggled averaged 10.8 PR. This year Moghaddam takes over the kicking duties and Lennon returns as well. Deas returns as a 2nd Team All-SWAC KR. If they get more from their placekicking then this is a very good ST's unit.

COACHES - Terry Sims enters his 7th year as head coach at Bethune-Cookman. He was the S/ST Coor here prior to getting promoted. He was the DB Coach at Prairie View A&M from '04-'09. Former North Texas HC Mike Canales is the OC. He was OC at UTEP from '18-'20 and QB Coach at Tenn in '17. He has also been OC at Arizona, USF and North Texas. The 5th year DC is Darrin Hayes. He was DC at MVSU in '14 and coached at Jackson St from '8 years. The ST's Coor is Kenyatta McCoy.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - BC reached 30 ppg for the first time in 3 years in '18. They also increased to 363 ypg but averaged 55 ypg less than their opponents allowed on average (#95 in FCS). In '19 they slipped to 24 ppg and 326 ypg and averaged 49 ypg less than their foes allowed on average (#97 in FCS). After sitting out the spring season they returned 6 starters and added Ark Pine-Bluff QB Shannon Patrick and Louisville TE Kemari Averett. The additions paid off as BC averaged 25 ppg and 339 ypg and were 8th in Scoring and Total Offense in the SWAC. Averett was a 2nd Team All-American. This year they return their top rusher, their entire WR room and 3 OLine starters, plus they add Jackson St transfer Jalon Jones (PS#15) who started out at Florida and gained valuable experience for the Wildcats. They have massively upgraded their talent these last two years.

DEFENSE - BC allowed 30 ppg and 395 ypg in '18. They were a little better in '19, allowing 26 ppg but still 394 ypg. Last year only 3 starters were back from '19 and they were playing tougher competition in the SWAC. Predictably they regressed, allowing 36 ppg and 428 ypg. They were a little better vs conference foes, allowing 32 ppg and 373 ypg. Tehy were 10th in Scoring and Total D in the SWAC. This year they lose 8 of their top 12 tacklers. All 4 starters on the Dline are gone but they do get their top 4 DB's back. They made a few transfer additions but this will still be one of the lower ranked defenses in the SWAC.

2022 - BC won at least a share of 4 straight MEAC Titles from '12-'15 and made the FCS Playoffs five times between '02-'13 (0-5 in playoff games). They won seven games each year in '17, '18 and '19. The Wildcats took the Covid year off and came back with 9 starters in a year when everyone else was overly experienced. BC was also making the move to the SWAC. They hung with UTEP for a half but lost by 10 then were crushed at UCF. The Wildcats lost to Alabama A&M by 3 then trailed Alabama St by 4 in the 2Q but lost by 14. Their next 3 games were losses by 7 at SC State (down 42-7 3Q), by 6 at home vs MVSU and by 6 at home vs eventual SWAC West Champs Prairie View A&M. After a 30 point loss to Jackson St they won back-to-back, beating Alcorn St and Grambling before losing by 25 to FAMU. They finished 2-9 but were only -28 ypg vs SWAC foes and had 4 close losses. Their offense could be very explosive with added talent and their defense is more experienced. They only play 4 home games this year. The Wildcats host both the SWAC Champs (Jackson St) and MEAC Champs (South Carolina St) so they need to win their other 2 home games (Alabama St & Grambling) and pull out a couple road wins like at MVSU on 10/22. They were much better than their 2-9 record last year. They should be able to pull an upset or two and with the added talent we think they could get to 4 or 5 wins.