CAL POLY MUSTANGS

QUARTERBACKS -In 2019, the Mustangs were in their 11th & final year of the triple option offense. QB Jalen Hamler, threw for 1,167 (57.4%, 12-5) & was the #2 rusher with 522 (2.7, 9 td). He returned for the spring of 2021 season. In the new offense in just 3 games Hamler threw for 357 (58.2%, 2-2) & surprisingly had -48 rush yds (-2.2, 0 td). QB Hunter Raquet threw for 188 (53.1%, 2-0) & was the #3 rusher. Last year both transferred Hamler to San Jose St & Raquet to Jacksonville St. They returned Conner Bruce (1-1-11-0-0, -7 rush) & rFr Jacson Pavitt (PS#210). They also added Cal transfer Spencer Brasch (PS#56, 9-25-71-0-1, 1 car start). Brasch started the first 2 & the last 5 games throwing for 1,725 (54.3%, 10-9, 63 rush). Bruce played in 3 (1 st) throwing for 290 (57.9%, 1-1, 11 rush). Pavitt played in 2 (2 st, 15-35-105-0-1, -46 rush), while rFr Kahliq Paulette played in 4 (1 st) throwing for 221 yds (44.0%, 1-1, 32 rush). All 4 return this season giving them a very experienced unit, but they will be breaking in a new OC.

RUNNING BACKS - In 2019 the Mustangs lost 1st Tm AA FB Joe Protheroe, who rushed for an amazing 1,810 yds (5.0, 13 td). FB Duy Tran-Sampson, who had just 1 attempt for 4 yds in '18, took over, rushing for 1,037 (4.4, 8 td). He looked to return in the 2021 spring season but was injured & OFY and later medically retired. They also with a new HC,moving away from the Triple Option offense, so RB Xavier Moore (6 st, 105, 6.2) moved to WR. Their top returnee was. Their top returnee was #4 rusher Lepi Lataimua (274, 8.3, 1 td). In their 3 game "season" they had just 1 rushing td. Lataimua led with just 143 (3.8) and Chuby Duna was #2 with 100 (3.7). Last year they lost 3 of their top 5 rushers from the spring but returned both Lataimua & Dunu. Despite playing an 11 game season their rush numbers were still low as rFr Shakobe Harper (5 st) led with just 251 (3.1, 3 td). True frosh Jaden Jones played in just 3 & was able to RS but still finished #2 with 148 (5.3). Dunu was #3 with 144 (3.4, 1 td) & Lataimua, despite starting 6 finished #4 with 143 (2.8, 1 td). This year they lose both Duna & Lataimua but return 12 of their top 14 rushers & should put up better rush numbers in their 3rd year moving away from the option offense.

RECEIVERS - In '19 the receiving corps returned theit top 2 from 2018 in WR's JJ Koski (666, 20.2, 4 td) & Quentin Harrison (130, 21.7, 3 td). They were again the top 2 receivers as Koski led with 868, (20.7, 8 td) while Harrison had 362 (21.3, 5 td). No other receiver had 40 yds or more. In the spring of '21, they had to replace Koski. Harrison returned & was the #1 receiver, he led with just 111 (12.3, 2 td). Former RB Moore started all 3 at WR but finished #7 with just 43 (14.3). Their top 7 receivers combined for just 407. Last year all 7 returned and they added some FBS transfers including Fresno St transfer Chris Coleman (5 st, 266, 16.6). Coleman (9 st) led with 590 (13.7, 4 td). RFr Giancarlo Woods was #2 with 339 (12.6, 1 td) Zedakia Centers (1 st, 5-26 rec '19) started 10 and finished #3 with 310 (8.9). This year all 3 return along with TE's Michael Roth (2 st, 227, 11.9, 1 td) & 2nd Tm BSC Ryan Rivera (9 st, 46, 11.5, 1 td). They lose #5 Michael Briscoe (199, 22.1, 1 td) & #6 Harrison (159, 10.6). With 7 of their top 9 receivers back, along with all 4 QB's, we look for their pass numbers to improve especially being in the third year since moving from the option offense.

OFFENSIVE LINE - In '19 in the Triple Option offense the OLine paved the way 255 ypg rush (#2 BSC, 4.2 ypg), while allowing 11 sacks (8.4%). In the spring of 2021 season they plummeted to just 99.7 ypg rush (2.3), while their sacks allowed doubled to 22 (25.0%!!) in 8 fewer games. Last year they returned 4 OL who combined for 30 starts in '19 and all 5 of their three game starters from the spring. Still while the spring season gave them in reality 3 scrimmages to help implement the change in Offense, they were still learning the new offense. Still it was surprising that they dropped even further to just 87.4 rush ypg (#12 BSC, 2.6 ypc) as they allowed 35 sacks (8.5%). This year they lose 4 OL who combined for 18 starts last year including C Nicolo DiFronzo (8 st) & LG Wade Willit (F/5 st). They return 6 OL who combined for 37 starts including 5 who all started 5+ in LT Austin Anderson (11 st), RT Charles Lincoln (6 st then inj & OFY), RT Payson Campisano (L/5

st), OG Mohab Wahdan (6 st) & RG Hunter Jones (8 st). While their may be a few changes with their new OC, They now have a full season of experience in the offensive style and should be much improved.

DEFENSIVE LINE -The DLine struggled against the run in '19 allowing 211 ypg, while having a BSC fewest 8 sacks (2.5%). In the spring of 2021 season, despite still running a similar 3-4 defense they allowed an even worse 265 ypg rush & just 2 sacks (1.9%) in their 3 games. Last year they lost DT Ryan Boehm (#8 tkl'r), who started 11 at DE in '19 (#9). They moved to a 4-3 defense and returned DE Dustin Grein (#7 tkl'r) & NT Myles Cecil (#10, 1 sk) who started 11 in '19 (#8, 1.5 sk). They also added Fresno St transfer DE Emeka Ndoh (4 st, 20 tkl, 5 sk). They underperformed finishing last in the Big Sky allowing 216 ypg rush but did have 22 sacks (#11 BSC, 6.5%). This year they lose 3rd Tm BSC NT Cecil (11 st, #4 tkl'r , 6.5 tfl), DE Ndoh (5 st, 15 tkl) & DE Lance Vecchio (5 st, 19 tkl, 3 tfl). They return two 11 game starters in DT Josh Ngaluafe (28 tkl, 2 sk, 2.5 tfl) & DE Elijah Ponder (36 tkl, 3 tfl), who led Cal Poly with 8 sacks along with DE Dustin Grein, who had 36 tkl & 6.5 tfl despite only starting 1 game. With their top 3 DL back, they can only improve after last year's poor performance.

LINEBACKERS - In 2019 the Mustangs had the Big Sky's #8 Scoring (34.1 ppg) but were #11 in Total Defense allowing 454 ypg. In the spring they returned #1 tkl'r Matt Shotwell (10 st, 89 tkl, 7.5 tfl) & #3 tkl'r Aaron Cooper (11st, 67 tkl, 6 tfl). In their 3 games spring of '21 season they allowed a Big Sky worst 56.3 ppg & 611 ypg. Last year the LB unit had one less spot to fill but returned their top 4 from the spring, who finished as the team's top 4 tkl'rs in Shotwell (34 tkl, 1 tfl), Cooper (20 tkl, 2 tfl), Lance Vecchio 919 tkl, 1.5 tfl) & Fenton Will (17 tkl). They improved to allowing 39.2 ppg & 460 ypg which were both 2nd worst in the Big Sky. This year the losses are heavy as they lose 3rd Tm AA OLB Shotwell (11 st, 5 tfl) who led with 127 tkl, 70 more than the #2 tkl'r ILB Fenton Will (1 st, 5 tfl) who also departs along with OLB Cooper (#6, 2 sk, 3.5 tfl). Their top 3 returnees are ILB Laipeli Palu (4 st, #3 tkl'r, 2 tfl, 2 int), ILB Judaea Moon (6 st#11, 1.5 tfl) & OLB David Meyer (#12, 2 tfl). While the losses are huge there really is only one way to go, especially in total defense as they only finished ahead of Souther Utah, who leave the Big Sky this season.

DEFENSIVE BACKS- .In '19 the secondary allowed just 242 ypg pass (63.4%) with a 22-9 ratio. In the spring of 2021 season, they had to replace all 6 DB's that earned started in '19 and allowed 347 ypg pass & a shocking 74.3 comp % along with a 12-3 ratio. Last year they lost their top CB Isaiah Jernagin (#5 tkl'r, 3 pbu). They returned 5 of their top 6 led by S Brandon Davis (#7 tkl'r, 1 int) and S Isaiah Robinson (#9) & CB Xavier Oliphant (#11, 1 int, 1 pbu). They also added Illinois transfer Dylan Wyatt (10 gm '18, inj '19 & '20). They improved allowing just 244 ypg pass (67.5%) with a 21-7 ratio. This year they lose 5 DB's who combined for 13 starts last season including #5 tkl'r S Robinson (3 st, 40 tkl, 3 pbu), S Davis (2 st, 20 tkl, 1 pbu) & CB Trevor Owens (5 st, 19 tkl, 7 pbu). They return 6 DB's who earned starts led by S Dustin Griffin (5 st, #8 tkl'r, 4 pbu), CB Oliphant (6 st, #13, 2.5 tfl, 5 pbu), S Dominick McCormack (4 st, #14) & CB Wyatt (11 st, 18 tkl, 7 pbu, 1 int). With most of the unit back they should be on par with last year talent wise but unlike the rest of the defense have more than one way to go.

SPECIAL TEAMS - In 2019 K Colton Theaker hit 7-13 FG (L/52) & had 22 TB/54KO. P Mitch Souza had a 42.4 avg with a 36.3 net. In the spring of 2021 they had to replace P Souza & in their 3 games had 3 different punters who combined to avg just 31.0 ypp with a 28.3 net. Theaker hit 3-3 FG with a long of 39. Last year they had to replace Theaker. Jaden Ohlsen hit just 3-9 (L/47), while Matt Hoffman hit 2-3 (L/28) including the game winner with :04 left vs Idaho St. P Chris Bartolic averaged 41.7 ypp on 62 punts while WR/P Michael Roth averaged 40.8 ypp on 8 punts & Cal Poly had a team net of 37.2. This year they lose P Bartolic & K Hoffman is no longer on the roster. Ohlsen saw time at both K & P in the spring.

COACHES - The Mustangs return 3rd yr HC Beau Baldwin, who was the OC here from '17-'19. He spent the previous 9 years as the HC at Eastern Washington,

including leading them to the 2010 FCS Championship. Two year OC Nick Edwards left for a job with the Atlanta Falcons, while two year DC JC Sherritt, left for a job at Auburn. They return 3rd yr Run Game Coor Paul Wulff, who formerly was the HC at Eastern Washington & Washington St. Also back is 3rd year co-DC Will Plemons, who had 3 stints as a defensive coach. They add Cody vonAppen, who was at Boise St last year after 5 seasons at Northern Arizona, as their new co-DC. STC/TE cch Casey Petree returns for his third season with the Mustangs.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - In 2019 under then-HC Tim Welsh fell to just #10 in both Scoring (25.2 ppg) and Total Offense (376 ypg). In 2020 they brought in new HC Beau Baldwin and after 11 years of the Triple Option offense they switched to more standard offense. They played just 3 games in the new offense in the spring of 2021 and had just 19.3 ppg (#9 BSC) & 285 ypg (#10) before shutting the season down due to injuries. Last year they brought in Cal transfer QB Spencer Brasch, but he missed four games mid-season. In their first full season of the offense they actually slipped to just 15.4 ppg (#11 BSC) despite improving slightly to 306 ypg (#12). This year the offense returns 9 starters. They return 4 QB's who earned starts last year, their top 2 rushers, 7 of their top 9 receivers including their top 4 along with 6 OL who combined for 37 starts last year. They do however lose their OC who left for a job in the NFL. Still they now have experience in the new offense and should show improvement this season.

DEFENSE - In '19 the DLine struggled against the run allowing 211 ypg, while having the Big Sky's fewest 8 sacks (2.5%). The Mustangs still improved to #8 in Scoring (34.1 ppg) but remained #11 in Total Defense (454 ypg). In the spring the defense returned 5 starters but were under the new coaching staff. Despite running a similar 3-4 defense, they allowed an even worse 265 ypg rush with just 2 sacks (1.9%). Cal Poly finished last in the Big Sky in both Scoring (56.3 ppg) & Total Defense (611). Last year they returned 10 starters from the spring "season" but just 3 starters from '19. They improved to allowing "just" 39.2 ppg (#12 BSC) & "just" 460 ypg (#12). This year they lose their 2 year DC to the SEC but return a 3 year co-DC. The defense loses 5 of their top tacklers including 3rd Tm AA LB Matt Shotwell (127 tkl). They return 6 starters & 10 of their top 15 tacklers & really have only one way to go.

2022 - The Mustangs have not had a winning season since going 7-5 in 2016 and last made the FCS playoffs in 2012. While CoVid made the 2020 season (spring of '21) tough for everyone, it was especially tough for Cal Poly as they were not only breaking in a new HC but were making a major change in offensive style. After opening 0-3 including two losses by 49+ pts and with injuries piling up Cal Poly shut down the season. Last year they opened with a 28-17 win over San Diego but then lost 8 straight by an average 32 ppg. They never trailed vs Idaho St but needed a GW FG with :04 left to pull out the 32-29 win. In the season finale they led NAU 7-0 but trailed 38-7 2Q & lost 45-21 to finish just 2-9. That was however against the NCAA's 5th toughest schedule. Their OC & DC were hired away by the NFL & the SEC respectively, but still will be running the same style offense and defense for a 3rd straight season. They play 10 of the same teams they did last year and exchange Weber St for Eastern Washington, making this a very tough schedule once again. While they could improve their numbers on both offense & defense, they have a lot of ground to make up as they were outscored by an avg 23.8 ppg & outgained by an avg 156 ypg. So their record may not improve much if at all this year.