

# CHATTANOOGA MOCS



## POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

**QUARTERBACKS** - In 2019 Chattanooga lost QB Nick Tiano (2710, 62%, 15-6). Drayton Arnold was an ODU transfer in 2019 that hit 5-10-36-0-2 here. In spring he threw for 783 (48%, 3-3) and Cole Copeland threw for 196 (65%, 1-1). Copeland started 9 and threw for 1,555 (58.7%) but only had a 6-9 ratio. Arnold started the opener and the finale. He finished with 301 but only completed 41.5% with a 1-4 ratio. Copeland returns while Arnold departs. They needed an upgrade at QB so they added Eastern Michigan transfer Preston Hutchinson (PS#218) who was 4th Team All-MAC in 2020. Hutchinson started 9 games and threw for 2,340 (65.1%) for the Eagles. Together with Copeland they now have two experienced QB's so they come in more experienced and more talented.

**RUNNING BACKS** - In 2018 Tyrell Price led with 697 rush (3.7) and was 2nd Tm All-SoCon. He was injured in 2019 and Ailym Ford led all D-I Frosh with 108.1 ypg rush and led with 1,081 (5.2). In '19 Ford rushed for 92 yards vs the tough WKU defense but did not see action in the spring. Price had 111 vs Furman and led with 226, 4.3). WKU transfer Gino Appleberry was #2 with 194 (4.1). All 3 returned in the fall. Ford had 128 vs Kentucky's vaunted defense. He topped 100 on 5 occasions and was #2 in the SoCon with 1,071 (5.3) and 11 td's. Price had 144 in the finale vs The Citadel and was #2 with 853 (6.4, 144 rec). Appleberry added 194 (5.2). 3rd Tm All-SoCon RB Price departs but Ford is the top returning RB in the SoCon. They also add Charlotte transfer Chris Houston (PS#443). They are still the top RB unit in the SoCon but are down a notch without half of their dynamic duo.

**RECEIVERS** - In spring of '21 UTC had to replace their #1 WR (794, 13.9) but they added Western Michigan transfer Tyron Arnett (21-287, 19 gm) , WKU transfer Tyler Smith (PS#218). South Carolina transfer TE Keshawn Toney (PS#37). Reginald Henderson (381, 18.1, #2 '19) led with 285 (19.0) while Jamoi Mayes was #2 (165, 18.3), Andrew Manning #3 (115, 19.2) and Tyler Walker #4 (91, 18.2) and they all returned last year. TE Chris James led with just 326 (15.5). Henderson was #2 with 319 (10.3). Kanore McKinnon added 263 (14.6). Mayes contributed 250 (16.7). This year they lose James (6 st), Henderson (8 st) and McKinnon (7 st). They lose their top 3 and will need bigger contributions from Arnett (176, 9.8), Toney (116, 14.5) and Smith (67, 11.2). This unit didn't contribute much last year so it won't be hard to improve, especially with better QB play.

**OFFENSIVE LINE** - The Offensive Line paved the way for 4.8 ypc rush and allowed just 4.1% sacks in '19 and practically returned in tact in the spring. The numbers slipped with a new QB and banged up RB's as they paved the way for 3.3 ypc and al-

lowed 8.8% sacks. Last year all 5 returned with Cole Strange was a preseason All American and Jacobs Blocking Award candidate. They only rushed for 14 (4.4) in non conference play but did have 171 vs Kentucky and allowed 0 sacks. The Mocs gashed SoCon foes for 225 rush ypg (5.5) and finished with 206 (5.2) overall with just 10 sacks (3.7%)! Strange was a 1st Team FCS All-American and was drafted by the Patriots in the first round. They also lose LT Harrison Moon (9 st), C Blake Mitchell (5 st), C Kyle Miskelley (8 st) and backup Brock Bethea (1 st). Only 2 starters return including 1st Tm All-SoCon RG McClendon Curtis. It's never easy for an FCS team to replace a 1st round draft pick but they did add 6 transfers (4 from FBS) including 3 with starting experience.

**DEFENSIVE LINE** - In '19 UTC allowed 205 (4.9) ypg rush. They added a Georgia Tech DL and Purdue transfer in Giovanni Revere at DT plus a Rhode Island transfer in Montez Wilson up front. DE Devonsha Maxwell (#7 tkl'r, 5 sk) was 1st Tm All-SoCon as the Mocs allowed 146 rush ypg (3.2) with 9 sacks in 5 games (10.5%). Last year Maxwell returned along with John Prince who was impressive as a true frosh (#10 tkl'r, 3 tfl). Maxwell had twice as many sacks as any player in the SoCon with 12 and was a 1st Team AA and SoCon Defensive POY. UTC allowed 122 rush ypg (3.3) and recorded 31 sacks (11.3%). All 3 starters return this year including Maxwell. They lose Giovanni Revere (#12 tkl'r) and Tavi McLean (4 st, 10 tkl, 3.5 tfl). Their #6, #10, #14, #15 and #16 tacklers all return and they've got one of the top DL's in the FCS.

**LINEBACKERS** - This whole unit returned in tact last year including OLB Jay Person who transferred here from App State in '19 and was 2nd Tm All SoCon during their spring season. Last year Person was tied for #1 with 5.5 sacks and finished with 63 tackles (6.5 tfl). Ty Boeck led with 90 tackles (3 sk, 6 tfl). This year they lose OLB Rashun Freeman (#7 tkl'r, 4 tfl, 8 pd) but Boeck (1st Tm All SoCon) and Person (2nd Tm All SoCon) both return along with their #4 tkl'r Kam Jones. 3 of their top 5 are back, making this an excellent front 7.

**DEFENSIVE BACKS** - Brandon Dowdell was a 2x 1st Tm All SoCon Safety heading into last year. They also returned Preseason 2nd Tm All SoCon Jerrell Lawson. In '19 UTC allowed just 170 pass ypg (61%, 14-7). They were just as good in the spring, allowing 173 pass ypg (67%, 4-5). Last year UTC led the SoCon, allowing just 154 pass ypg (56.2%, 15-15) and they were #1 in pass defense efficiency. Over their last 4 games, UTC allowed just 53 pass ypg and 38.3% but 2 of those were against option foes. This year they lose both Lawson (11 st, #2 tkl'r, 5 int) and Dowdell (9 st, #5 tkl'r, 5 int) along with CB Jordan Jones (11 st, #8 tkl'r). Only their #9, #13 and #17 tacklers return and it will be tough to replace two 1st Team All-SoCon Safeties. They did add add 3 FBS transfers but this is clearly their biggest question on the team.

**SPECIAL TEAMS** - Last year UTC added Arkansas St transfer K Aaron Sears. Gabe Poring averaged 42.4 ypp in spring then came back to average 43 ypp on 27 punts while Jason Pierce chipped in with a 42.3 average on 25 punts. They finished with a 39.7 team net. Sears made 12-16 fg's (L/43). Neither their PR or KR chipped in much and their KO unit struggled thanks to just 1 touchback all season. Sears, Boring and Pierce all

return so this is once again an above average unit.

**COACHES** - Rusty Wright enters his 4th season as Head Coach. Wright previously spent 2 seasons on Shawn Elliot's staff at Georgia State coaching ILB's and ST's and was the recruiting coordinator. He was also the LB Coach and ST's Coordinator here from '13-'16. OC Joe Pizzo is in his 4th year. He cut his teeth as OC at Gardner Webb from '97-'10 and was OC at Mercer in '18. DC Lorenzo Ward is in his 4th year as well. He coached DB's at Louisville and was their interim HC in '18. He was also DC at Fresno St ('16) and South Carolina ('09-'15). Mike Yeager is the 4th year ST's Coord.

## FORECAST

**OFFENSE** - In Rusty Wright's first year here UTC improved to 26 ppg and 390 ypg. They were even better vs the SoCon, averaging 32 ppg/444 ypg. In '20 they dipped to 21 ppg and 321 ypg but only played 5 games. Last year they excelled behind a strong run game and put up 27 ppg and 374 ypg. This year they get 5 starters back on offense. They've got the top RB in the league and made a solid upgrade with Preston Hutchinson from Eastern Michigan at QB. Their OL is the biggest question after losing a 1st round DC but adding 6 transfers should mitigate the losses somewhat. This is still a talented offense and near the top of the SoCon.

**DEFENSE** - In '19 UTC struggled to stop the run in their first year under new DC Lorenzo Ward. They allowed 30 ppg and 397 ypg. Ward was a DC in the SEC so it's no surprise they improved quickly. They allowed just 21 ppg and 245 ypg in '20. Last year they had two 1st Team FCS All-Americans and gave up just 17 ppg and 276 ypg. They also held Kentucky 73 yards below their average. This year 7 starters return and they get back 12 of their top 18 tacklers. Their secondary is the big concern but they did add 3 FBS transfers and they still have both 1st Team All Americans returning in DE Maxwell and LB Boeck. They were #1 in total defense and scoring defense in the SoCon last year and they will be back near the top this year.

**2022** - Rusty Wright's return in '19 showed immediate promise with the Mocs competing for the SoCon title into the final week. His charges completed the campaign at 6-6 overall and was third in the league with a 5-3 conference tally. Six overall wins and five in SoCon play stacks up well with other first-time head coaches during the program's SoCon era (since 1977). He tied Buddy Nix (6-5, 5-1 in 1984) and Bill Oliver (8-3, 5-2) for most league wins in a debut season. Wright also tied Nix and Russ Huesman (6-5, 4-4 in 2009) for second-most total wins in a debut over the last 40 years. They went 3-2 in their spring season and were +76 ypg. Last fall they opened just 2-3, but that including a loss to Austin Peay where they led late 3Q, a 5 point loss to Kentucky and an overtime loss to VMI. At 2-3 they rattled off 4 straight wins, including a victory over eventual SoCon Champs ETSU. In their final 2 games they lost to Mercer 10-6 despite a 285-163 yard edge and a 3 point loss to The Citadel (led 21-17 4Q). They finished 6-5 but were +98 ypg and +140 ypg in SoCon play. The Mocs were -3 net close losses. This year they have 2 winnable non-conference games. They do travel to ETSU but they get Mercer at home and their final 4 games are very winnable. They should top last year's 6 win total and will contend for the conference crown and a playoff spot.