

FLORIDA A&M RATTTLERS

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - Last year FAMU had to replace a four-year starter at QB in Ryan Stanley, who completed over 60.0% of his passes as a senior while throwing for 2,566 yards with a 23/7 ratio. Rasean McKay was stellar as a backup in '19, completing over 71% of his passes for 538 yards and a 6/2 ratio. McKay started 11 games. He threw for a season high 383 and 5 td's vs Ark Pine-Bluff and led with 2,457 (58%, 22-5). Junior Muratovic started vs DII Fort Valley State. He threw for 173 (57.1%, 1-2). Cameron Sapp had 6 attempts for 30 yards. All 3 return this year. They also add Vanderbilt transfer Jeremy Moussa. They go from losing a 4 year starting QB to returning a 4th Team All SWAC QB in McKay so they are in much better shape entering this season.

RUNNING BACKS - Bishop Bonnett was #2 in '18 when he had 533 and led the Rattlers with a 7.2 ypc. In '19 he finished #1 but actually dipped to 372 (3.8) as the Rattlers Oline struggled in run blocking. Last year Bonnett returned to form. He topped 100 in 5 of his last 8 games including 187 vs Alabama A&M. Bonnett finished #3 in the SWAC with 972 (6.2). Terrell Jennings was a solid #2, rushing for 517 (4.9). Jaylen McCloud added 257 (4.6). This year they lose 1st Team All-SWAC RB Bonnett. Jennings and McCloud both return and they added Pitt transfer AJ Davis (PS#14) who rushed for 991 yards in 4 years at Pitt. Losing your leading rusher hurts but adding a VHT to replace him makes this a solid unit once again.

RECEIVERS - FAMU returned their top two WRs from '19. An All-MEAC 1st Team selection in '19 (1159, 15.1), Xavier Smith was named a Preseason 3rd Team All-American, giving QB McKay a reliable and experienced top-end target. David Manigo had 575 (14.0) in '19. Last year Smith led with 713 (11.1). Texas St transfer Jah'Marae Sheread was #2 with 622 (11.3). Manigo finished #3, dipping to 365 (11.8). The only loss this year is Chad Hunter (2 st, 338, 11.7). Seven of their top 8 return including 3x All-SWAC WR Smith, making this their biggest strength. They also add Florida St transfer TE Koby Gross and Wayne St transfer Trevonte Davis who was 1st Tm All-GLIAC.

OFFENSIVE LINE - Only 1 starter returned from '19 on the Oline. They rushed for just 106 (3.3) but did only allow 8 sacks in '19 (2%). The Rattlers Oline was very stable in '21, only using 3 lineups all year. They improved to 154 (4.5) and allowed 15 sacks (3.7%). This year FAMU loses 1st Tm All-SWAC RG Keenan Forbes (12 st), 2nd Tm All-SWAC LT Jay Jackson-Williams (12 st) and 3rd Tm All-SWAC RG Jalen Spady (12 st). They add Florida St transfer Jalen Goss (PS#104). Normally when you lose 3 All Conference OL you are down, but they actually go from 1 returning starter to 2 so we are calling this a slightly more experienced unit.

DEFENSIVE LINE - The DL lost two of their top three tacklers from '19 but returned their most impactful player up front in Renaldo Flowers (9.0 sk, 4.5), who was named Preseason All-SWAC 2nd Team. FAMU also added former Tennessee transfer Savion Williams (PS#33JC) to it's DL. They allowed 129 (3.8, 19 sk) in '19 and improved to allowing just 94 (2.9) with 42 sacks (11.9%) in '21! No FCS team rushed for more than 160 yards against them and against SWAC foes they gave up just 79 (2.6). This year they lose 2nd Tm All-SWAC DE Williams (8 st, #8 tkl'r, 6.5 sk, 4.5 tfl), DT Kameron Smith (#19 tkl'r, 1 sk), DE Deonte Williams (#15 tkl'r, 4 sk) and Renaldo Flowers (2 st, 7 tkl). Two starters return in the 3 man unit, so they are more experienced but this time they lose their top guy. Still, this is one of the better Dline's in the SWAC and could match last year's production.

LINEBACKERS - Last year FAMU lost 3 of their top 4 tacklers at LB. Isaiah Land played the Fang spot which is an OLB/DE hybrid. He made his name ring out in FCS circles after leading the nation with 19 sacks! He was a 1st Team All-American, won the Buck Buchanan Award for FCS National Defensive Player of the year and was the SWAC Defensive POY. Land entered the portal but decided to stay at FAMU. Together with MLB Nadarius Fagan (#5 tkl'r, 4 tfl) FAMU has the top LB corps in the SWAC and. They do lose SLB Derrick Mayweather (12 st, #3 tkl'r, 8.5 tfl) but they have a future NFL player coming off the edge

DEFENSIVE BACKS - FAMU had three of their top five back from '19. Markese Bell had a team-high five INTs and nine PBUs in '19 and was named to the All-MEAC 1st Team. Bell was named Preseason 1st Team All-American. FAMU allowed 239 pass ypg (56%) in '19 then improved to just 184 pass ypg and 53.1% (12-13 ratio) last year. The Rattlers finished 2nd in the SWAC in pass defense efficiency. This year they lose 2nd Team AA FS Bell (#1 tkl'r, 6.5 tfl, 2 pd) and Rover Antwan Collier (12 st, #4 tkl'r, 4 tfl, 9 pd). Two starters return and they get their #2, #7, #10, #11, #14, #18 and #20 tacklers back. With 7 of their top 9 back, they have plenty of experience and they add grad transfer Khalif Copeland from Indiana St and Kym-mani King who started 10 games for Iowa St last year and notched 29 tackles. This is once again a strength.

SPECIAL TEAMS - P Chris Faddoul was 1st Team All-MEAC in '19 after booming 16 punts for 50+ yds and downing 19 punts inside the 20 and an average of 46.0 yds per punt. FAMU had to replace their kicker from '19, who converted just 8-15 fg's. No one on the current roster had attempted a fg in '19. Jose Romo-Martinez made 17-24 fg's (L/51). He also had 40 punts for a 43.4 avg with 14 downed inside the 20. Faddoul had a 45.4 avg and they combined for a 37.5 team net. Jah'Marae Sheread had 358 PR yards and a 19.9 average. Xavier Smith had a 20.8 KR avg. This year the whole unit returns and we are calling this the top ST unit in the SWAC.

COACHES - Willie Simmons is the 5th year head coach at FAMU. He was the head coach at Prairie View A&M from '15-'17. Simmons was the OC at Alcorn St from '12-'14 and at Middle Tennessee he was the RB Coach in '10 then promoted to OC in '11. Joseph Henry is the 1st year OC. He has spent the last 3 years as OL Coach at LSU in '21, Ark in '20 and Mizzou in '19. He also coached here in '18

as Pass Game Coor and RB Coach. Ryan Smith is the 5th year DC. He was an asst at Florida from '16-'18 and spent 1 year as the offensive quality control coach at Bama in '15. Chili Davis is the first year ST Coordinator. Last year Davis was a ST's Analyst at Washington.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - Florida A&M improved by a whole td per game in '19 when the Rattlers put up 33 ppg and 397 ypg. Against conference foes they had 35 ppg and 407 ypg. After taking a year off from football, FAMU had to replace an experienced all-conference QB but did have their top rusher and WR from '19 back. The offense put up 28 ppg and 380 ypg and against SWAC foes they nearly matched '19's numbers, averaging 30 ppg and 390 ypg. This year FAMU has 7 starters back. QB McKay now has experience and he has a veteran WR corps to throw to. They added VHT transfer AJ Davis from Pitt and the biggest concern is the Oline who loses 3 starters. With the talent around McKay they should top last year's production as long as the Oline gels.

DEFENSE - FAMU's D improved each year from '15 through '18, going from 472 ypg to 383 to 365 to 355 ypg allowed. In '19 they took a small step back, allowing 27 ppg and 362 ypg but against conference foes only gave up 25 ppg and 358 ypg. Last year they lost 2 of their top 3 tacklers from '19. FAMU added a Tennessee transfer at DE and brought back their best DB. Isaiah Land emerged as not only the best player on the defense, but one of the best in the country and led the nation with 19 sacks. FAMU allowed just 17 ppg and 277 ypg. Against SWAC foes they only gave up 14 ppg and 255 ypg. They met their match in the playoff game against SELA and allowed 38 points and 503 yards. This year FAMU returns 7 starters including Land. Ten of their top 14 tacklers return. The Rattlers held their opponents 90 ypg below their average last year which was 8th best in the FCS. They have experience in all 3 units so we can confidently say they should be even better in '22.

2022 - FAMU last won a conference title in 2010. In '17 the Rattlers went just 3-8 but were only -19 ypg and +8 ypg in MEAC play. Alex Wood resigned after their loss to Bethune-Cookman and Willie Simmons was hired as head coach. Simmons led the Rattlers to a 6-2 start in '18 but they lost their last 3 games despite holding a yards edge in all 3. They finished 6-5 but were +36 ypg and +49 ypg vs MEAC foes. In '19 they lost to UCF in the opener 62-0 then rattled off 9 straight wins. For the 9th consecutive year they lost the Florida Classic to rival Bethune-Cookman, finishing 9-2 and +35 ypg (+49 ypg vs MEAC). After not participating in football in '20 or spring of '21, they returned last fall with a younger team and made the move to the SWAC East. They lost to Jackson St 7-6 in the opener and were only outgained 404-380 at USF 2 weeks later. The Rattlers won their next 8 games including when they ended their losing streak in the Florida Classic. At 9-2 they were awarded with a spot in the FCS playoffs where they trailed 38-0 at SE Louisiana before adding 2 garbage time td's. This year 14 starters are back. They open at North Carolina then play Jackson St in Miami on ESPN 2 on 9/4 which could decide the SWAC East. They avoid the top teams in the SWAC West which sets them up possibly match last year's win total. If they can pull it out against Coach Prime's Tigers then FAMU could have their first conference title in a decade.