

# HOLY CROSS CRUSADERS

## POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

**QUARTERBACKS** - In '19 Connor Degenhardt threw for 2,372 (53%, 14-8). He was hurt in the finale and Matt Considine saw his most considerable action. Considine finished with 341 (52%, 3-1). Considine departed in the spring. Degenhardt started the first 2 and played all 4 but was benched and Matthew Sluka started the last 2. Sluka led with 187 (57.1%, 2-1) and also led in rushing with 234 (5.3). Degenhardt threw for 147 (55.3%, 2-1). Degenhardt departed last year while Sluka returned as the clear starter. He threw for a season high 272 vs Fordham but made his biggest impact with his legs. He rushed for 112 vs UConn and 106 in a playoff game vs Villanova. Sluka with 868 (5.2) rush while throwing for 1512 (56.3%, 11-5). Marco Sideman was their most accurate passer and saw action in all 13 games. He threw for 1,040 (65.7%, 8-4). This year Sluka (2nd Tm All Patriot) returns but they lose Sideman. They are in better shape and Sluka is the best running QB in the conference.

**RUNNING BACKS** - Dominic Cozier led Holy Cross with 643 (4.9) rushing in '18 then topped 100 in 5 of the last 9 in '19 and finished with 1,147 (6.3, 131 rec). Peter Oliver was #2 with 396 (3.8) but no one else topped 100. Cozier departed last spring, but Oliver returned. Oliver was only #2 with 226 but did have an excellent 7.1 ypc. Jonathan Abrams added 147 (4.9). Oliver and Abrams both returned in the fall. Oliver had 153 vs Colgate and was their #2 rusher behind QB Sluka. He finished with 780 (5.2). Tyler Purdy was #3 with 395 (5.0). True freshman Jordan Fuller added 227 (4.7). This year their top 4 RB's all return. Oliver (son of HC's strength coach) led all RB's in the Patriot last year in rushing so they've got the best RB in the league and great depth.

**RECEIVERS** - Holy Cross lost their top 3 receivers in '19 that totaled 1414 (13.1). Ayir Asante led with 697 (14.5). Tenio Ayeni was #2 with 568 (13.2). Spencer Gilliam was #3 with 553 (14.6). Despite the losses their top 3 actually improved with 1,818 (14.1). Asante only played 1 game in spring and Ayeni sat out. With 3 of their top 4 gone they were depleted and no one topped 100 yards. Their co-leaders were Jalen Coker (18.0) and Spencer Gilliam (7.2) who both had 72 yards. Last year they the whole unit returned including Asante who was back from injury and Ayeni returned as well. This was easily the most improved unit on the team. Coker led with 691 (13.6). Asante was #2 with 529 (12.3). Ayeni led with 5 td's and was #3 with 397 (14.0) while Justin Shorter was right behind with 375 (12.9). This year they only lose

**OFFENSIVE LINE** - In '19 Holy Cross rushed for 136 ypc (4.1, 33 sk). In the spring '21 year they lost 4 starters and only had 3 back with starting experience, and LT Brian Foley only played the F/2 yet they improved to 179 (4.5) but also gave up 12 sacks (15.4%). 4 of their starters were back from spring so they are more experienced last year. They rushed for 204 ypg (4.8) overall and 252 (5.1) vs Patriot foes but they did allow 30 sacks (8.5%). This year 4 starters return. The only loss is 1st Tm All Patriot RG John Brekke. Their other 4 OL were All-Conference as well last year and is right there with Fordham for the top OL in the conference.

**DEFENSIVE LINE** - The Crusaders held foes to

160 rush ypg (4.1, 23 sk) in '19. They got 3 starters on the Dline back in the spring including DE Dan Kuznetsov (#10 tkl'r, 5.5 sk, 4.5 tfl) and only gave up 103 (3.4). Last year they had 3 multi-year starters back and allowed just 89 rush ypg (2.7) with 44 sacks! Against Patriot foes they allowed just 38 rush ypg (1.4)! This year they lose DE Benton Whitley (#4 tkl'r, 5.5 sk, 6 tfl), DT Jason Modak (11 st, #13 tkl'r, 4 tfl) and Matt Cedeno (11 st, #14 tkl'r, 3 sk). Two starters return. They are less experienced but still among the best Dlines in the Patriot.

**LINEBACKERS** - Holy Cross brought back 3 of their top 4 LB's in spring. Jacob Dobbs led with 41 tkl's (3.5 tfl). Joe Lang was #2 (29 tkl's) and Liam Anderson (15 tkl, 2 tfl) is #3. The Crusaders lost their #2 tkl'r but 2 starters returned and Liam Doran, who started 12 games in '19 was back after posting just 3 tkl's in spring. They returned their #1, #3 and #9 tkl'r's from spring and had 2 multi-year starters back. Jacob Dobbs led the Patriot with 137 tackles and was a 3rd Tm FCS AA. This year they get Dobbs, #2 tackler Liam Anderson (7.5 sk, 7.5 tfl) and Doran (#3 tkl'r) returns as well. Dobbs was the Patriot's Defensive Player of the Year.

**DEFENSIVE BACKS** - Holy Cross allowed 225 pass ypg (57%, 18-15) in '19. In spring they lost 2 starters including FS Chris Riley who posted 5 int's in '19. They matched those numbers in spring, holding foes to 227 pass ypg (58%, 5-7). Last year they had all 4 starters from spring back. The Crusaders allowed 166 pass ypg (52.5%, 15-18) and led the Patriot in pass defense efficiency. This year they only lose SS Grant Holloman (7 st, #7 tkl'r). Their #5, #6, #7, #8 and #12 tacklers back. Once again this is the Patriot's best secondary.

**SPECIAL TEAMS** - Derek Ng made 11-16 fg's in '19 (L/48) then hit 6-9 (L/51) in spring. Patrick Haughney avg'd 43.1 ypp (net 41.1). Tyler Purdy avg'd 21.5 KR. Last year they had the whole unit back. Ng made 10-17 field goals (L/50). Patrick Haughney averaged 40.1 (tm net 35.9). Justin Shorter averaged 21.9 KR. This year both Haughney and Ng (strongest leg in Patriot) return so once again this is the top ST's unit in the Patriot.

**COACHES** - Bob Chesney is in his 6th year as HC at Holy Cross and has a career mark of 92-41. They've won 3 straight Patriot League Titles under Chesney. He was also HC at Assumption College for 5 years, going 44-16 and spent 3 years as HC at Salve Regina. Chris Smith was promoted as OC after spending the last 5 years on staff. He was the Oline coach and run game/recruiting coordinator. He was also 2Y OL Coach at Northern Colorado and a grad assistant at Buffalo. Scott James is in his 5th year as DC. He was also Safeties coach at New Hampshire from '13-'17. Drew Canan is in his 5th year on staff as ST Coord.

## FORECAST

**OFFENSE** - Holy Cross didn't top 24 ppg from '16-'20. They did avg 30 ppg and 358 ypg in Patriot League play in 2018 but only 18 ppg and 305 ypg in non-conference play. In '19 Holy Cross put up 22.8 ppg including 28 ppg and 409 ypg in league play. The Crusaders failed to top 300 yards in 3 of their 4 games in the spring, avg just 265 ypg but matched '19 with 22.5 ppg. Last year they had 10 starters back from the spring. Holy Cross averaged 32.2 ppg and 406 ypg. In Patriot play they put up 42 ppg and 468. This year they will have 9 starters back and will once again contend to be the top offense in the conference.

**DEFENSE** - Holy Cross allowed 24 ppg/379 ypg in '19 but only 15 ppg & 321 in league play and 32 ppg/429 ypg against nonconference foes. They had 10 of their top 15 tkl'r's back in '19 but did lose 3 of their top 4. They allowed 330 ypg and 17 ppg. Holy Cross brought back 7 starters last year. They allowed 18.5 ppg and just 254 ypg. Against league foes they allowed just 13 ppg and 184 ypg! This year get 7 starters back including Patriot League Defensive Player of the Year Jacob Dobbs. This is once again the top defense in the Patriot League.

**2022** - Holy Cross comes in off 3 straight Patriot League Titles. The Crusaders went 5-6 in '18, finished -36 ypg but were +105 ypg vs Patriot League foes and -205 ypg in non-conference play. In Chesney's first season they went 7-6, losing in the first round of the FCS playoffs to Monmouth. They finished -33 ypg but were +89 ypg in league play and -137 ypg against non-league foes. They started the spring 3-0, winning all 3 league games by double-digits then lost to South Dakota St in the playoffs. Last year Holy Cross had 17 starters back from their spring season. They opened with their first win over an FBS program since 2002 by beating UConn 38-28. After a surprising loss to Merrimack, the Crusaders won their next 2, beating Yale by a field goal then crushing FCS playoff foe Monmouth 45-15. After a surprising 25 point loss to Harvard they finished by winning their last 6 regular season games then won their first round FCS Playoff game over Sacred Heart. They lost to Villanova the following week to finish 10-3 and were +150 ypg. Against Patriot League foes they won by an average score of 42-13 and were +284 ypg. Fordham appears to be their biggest threat but they get the Rams at home which will likely decide the Patriot League.