HOWARD BISON

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - The Bison were led by Caylin Newton, younger brother of NFL star QB Cam Newon, heading into the '19 season. Newton had a 6-3 ratio in the first 4 games but went down with an injury and true frosh Quinton Williams started the next 5. He also started the finale and finished with 942 (55.7%, 8-7) and was their #3 rusher with 219 (2.6). They lost both Newton (815, 51.2%, 6-3) and Remar Williams (2 st, 321, 53%, 1-3) heading into spring. In the spring they played Delaware St twice and Quinton Williams threw for 386 (47%, 2-2, 67 rush). Williams returned last year with 7 starts under his belt. He started all 11 games, threw for a career high 357 vs Hampton and also had 337 vs Morgan St and 313 vs NC Central. Williams threw for 2,353 (58.5%, 16-7, 94 rush, 1.2). Chance Hollingsworth played in 8 games and threw for 127 (57.9%, 1-0). This year Hollingsworth departs so the backup job is open between soph's Isaiah Okoro and Jaylon Tolbert and they added 2 true frosh QB's as well. Williams is playing under his 3rd head coach but should be able to handle the change but depth is a concern with no experienced backups.

RUNNING BACKS - Howard had to replace their top rusher who had 847 (3.9) heading into the spring season. Josiah Crute as #2 in '19 with 325 (5.2) and 55 (5.0) in spring but he only played 2 games last year. True Frosh Jarrett Hunter had 69 rush (4.1) and led with 114 receiving in 2 spring games. Hunter didn't top 100 yards in any games last year but did lead with 625, had a solid 4.6 ypc and added 233 (8.0) receiving. Ian Wheeler had the team's season high with 121 vs Delaware St. He finished #2 with 443 and an excellent 6.8 ypc. This year they only lose Crute (2 carries) and add true frosh Eden James (PS#158) who is the son of former Colts star RB Edgerrin James. They are much more experienced this year and have added talent as well. Both Hunter and Wheeler were Preseason 2nd Team All-MEAC, making this the top RB duo in the conference.

RECEIVERS - Howard lost their top 6 WR's from '19. In spring RB Hunter was their top receiver. Malik Hyatt and David Terrell both had 6 catches for 73 and 71 yards respectively. Last year Antoine Murray emerged as a big play threat. He had 629 (19.1) and had 7 td's out of his 33 catches. Kasey Hawthorne was #2 with 447 (11.2) and added 101 (7.8) rushing. Matthew McDonald added 288 (14.8). Four others finished with over 100 receiving yards. This year they only lose Hawthorne (3rd Tm All-MEAC). Their top 8 all return including 2nd Tm All MEAC WR Murray. Nah'Shawn Hezekiah is their top addition. This unit goes from completely inexperienced to experienced and becomes a strength.

OFFENSIVE LINE - Last year Howard had 3 with starting experience back from '19 including Branden Johnson who started at 3 different spots (RG, RT, LG) in '19 then moved to Center in the spring. Howard rushed for 127 ypg (4.2) and allowed 29 sacks which was actually a huge improvement considering they gave up 60 sacks (17%) in '19! This year they only lose Johnson (11 st). Four startersr return and 5 have starting experience. LT Anim Dankwah was 1st Team Preseason All-MEAC and LG Darius Fox and C DeShawn Ingram were both 2nd Team. Howard's Oline has struggled at times due to lack of size but this year all 5 starters top 300 lbs and they could make another sizeable jump.

DEFENSIVE LINE - From '16'-19 Howard's rush D finished 10th, 10th, 10th and 9th in the MEAC, allowing at least 216 ypg and 5.4 ypc each season. During that time they never topped 14 sacks. They allowed 85 rush in their first spring game vs Delaware St then allowed 217 in the 2nd meeting. The Bison returned 3 starters from '19 last year, and 2 more had starting experience. They struggled early in non-conference play but showed significant improvement vs MEAC foes, allowing 151 rush ypg (4.2). Overall they finally got below 200 rush ypg at 188 (4.7) but only had 10 sacks (2.9%) all season! They finished 5th overall in Rush D but were 3rd vs MEAC foes only. This year they lose DT Aaron Motley (11 st, #7 tkl'r, 1.5 tfl). Three starters return and 5 of their top 7 are back. They showed significant growth last year. DE Dorrian Brokenburr (#10 tkl'r) led with 3.5 sacks last year and was 1st Team All-MEAC in preseason.

LINEBACKERS - Christian White started at LB as a true frosh in '19. He was their #5 tackler and had 4.5 tfl's. Last year White returned along with their STAR Ray Williams who led with 61 tackles and Aaron Walker who was #3 with 47 tackles in '19. The experienced group were a big reason for Howard's improvement. Walker finished #2, Williams was #3 and White #4 (led with 6 tfl's). This year five of their top 7 are back. Walker (58 tkls), Sadiq Salawu (1 st, #8 tkl'r) and Christopher Sumners (#17 tkl'r) all depart but they get their #2, #3, #4 and #12 tkl'rs back. This was the strength of the defense last year and should be again with 3 of their top 4 back.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - In '19 Howard allowed 230 pass ypg (57.9%, 26-6) and finished last in the MEAC in pass D efficiency. They allowed just 228 pass yards in 2 games against Delaware St in spring. Last year all 4 starters from '19 were back including Rodney Dennard who led with 3 int's. The Bison allowed 214 pass ypg and finished 5th in the MEAC in pass D efficiency (61.9%, 14-2). This year the Bison lose S Rodney Dennard (11 st, #6 tkl'r, 2 tfl) and CB Jalen Smith (9 st, #9 tkl'r, 2 pbu). They go from 4 starters returning to 2, but they have their #1#11, #13, #16 and #20 tacklers all returning. This was a below average unit last year and should at least match last year's output.

SPECIAL TEAMS - K Faraji Woodson made 7 of 8 field goals in '18. He didn't play in '19 but returned last year and made all 7 attempts (L/44). Punter Dylan West averaged 35.3 (31.4 net). The return game was a strength with Richie Ilarraza averaging 20.0 on 5 punt returns and Ian Wheeler averaging 24.1 on 11 kick returns. West returns while Woodson departs. West is the only kicker punter on the roster as of 8/5 so he may handle both duties while they did add true frosh Punter Aaron Bickerton.

COACHES - Larry Scott was hired as HC here in '20. His first season was during the Covid year and they only played 2 spring games. Scott was a longtime FBS assistant, coaching TE's at Florida, Tennessee, Miami and USF. He was also OC at Tennessee in '17. Lee Hull is in his 2nd full season as OC. He was OC/WR Coach at Wagner and coached on the staff for the Indianapolis Colts. He has head Coaching experience in the MEAC at Morgan St in '14-'15 and was Maryland's WR Coach from '08-'13. Troy Douglas also is in his 2nd full season as DC. He was the DB/DB Caoch Coach at Lamar from '17-'19. He also coached DB's for Pitt, Iowa St, USF and others. The ST's Coordinator is veteran Vernon Hargreaves who doubles as the Dline coach.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - In '17 Howard made nearly a 2 td jump by putting up 30 ppg and 448 ypg then in '18 they got even better, averaging 34 ppg and 471 ypg. The Bison Oline couldn't pass protect in '19 when they allowed 60 sacks and QB Newton got hurt. Howard put up just 17 ppg and 302 ypg. They averaged 73 ypg less than their opponents allowed on average. They put up 38 points in 2 games against Delaware St in spring. In Scott's first full season they only had 4 starters back from '19. The Bison improved by nearly a td, averaging 22.6 ppg and 354 ypg. They put up 24 ppg and 387 ypg against MEAC foes. This year they only lose their starting C. Ten starters are back including their QB, top 2 RB's, top 6 WR's and they added size up front. This is their best offense since '18.

DEFENSE - Howard allowed 35 ppg and 422 ypg in '16. In '17 they improved by allowing 28 ppg but ypg actually rose to 442 and they gave up 34 ppg and 462 ypg in MEAC play. In '18 was more of the same (34 ppg/449 ypg) then they hit rock bottom in '19, allowing 45 ppg and 455 ypg. They were a td better against MEAC foes, allowing 38 ppg and 424 ypg. After allowing 54 points in their two spring games they came back last year with 9 starters back and improved to 32 ppg allowed and 418 ypg. Against MEAC foes they only gave up 27 ppg and 359 ypg. Seven starters are back and they have 4 of their top 5 tacklers returning. They had 2 players named 1st Team Preseason All-MEAC and they should make another improvement in their 2nd full season under DC Douglas.

2022 - Howard went 1-10 and 2-9 in '15 and '16, respectively, but turned it around for a truly memorable 7-4 campaign in '17. That season was highlighted by the biggest upset in major college football history when the 45-point dogs traveled to Las Vegas and beat UNLV 43-40. All signs were pointing up for the program as Howard boasted the MEAC Rookie of the Year in '17 at QB. However, the program's inconsistencies reared it's ugly head once more. TO margin went from +7 in '17 to -7 in '18, and the team fell to 4-6, despite outgaining opponents by 22 ypg. The wheels came completely off in '19, as the team went spiraling downward with a -13 TO margin and -152 ypg to finish 2-10. They lost both spring meetings vs Delaware St. Last year in Scott's first full season Howard lost their first 4 games but upset Sacred Heart who was a playoff team in 'spring. Howard shutout Morgan St 27-0 then lost their next 4 games including back-to-back close road losses to Delaware St and South Carolina St. They blewout an NCCAA member in their finale (only 2Q ply'd) to finish 3-8. They were +28 ypg in MEAC play last year and return 17 starters in Scott's 2nd full season. Howard was picked to finish 5th in the MEAC and it doesn't help that they only play 3 home games but this team was better than their record last year. With 2 NCCAA schools on the schedule we call for them to top last year's 3 wins.