

IDAHO ST

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - Matt Struck won the job in 2019 and threw for 2,334 yards (51.4%, 20-12). In the spring of 2021 both QB's departed and Wyoming transfer Tyler Vander Waal was the Big Sky Offensive Newcomer of the Year and he threw for 1,843 yards (54%, 12-10). Vander Waal was back last fall but only started 3 games before going OFY with a shoulder injury. Hunter Hayes started the next 5 games before Sagan Gronauer started the L/3 games. Hayes led with just 1,066 yards (54.4%, 6-7) while Gronauer threw for 633 yards (55.3%, 3-3). This season both Hayes and Gronauer return & Vander Waal is back and should be back to 100% and if he can stay healthy this season, he should have a good season under center for the Bengals.

RUNNING BACKS - Ty Flanagan led in '19 with 895 (5.2) and Malaka Rango was #2 with 508 (5.3). Last spring they lost their leading rusher for a 2nd straight year and Rango led the way with 351 (3.9) while Raiden Hunter was #2 with 130 (3.7). Last fall both Rango and Hunter were back. However, freshman Tyevin Ford would emerge & led with 519 rush (4.4) while Hunter was #2 (239, 3.6) and Rango finished #3 (202, 4.2). This season the Bengals lose both Ford and Rango to the transfer portal, so Hunter is the top guy back. ISU also returns Soujah Gasu (93, 4.4) but overall this unit lacks experience & the depth beyond Hunter is a ? entering the season.

RECEIVERS - In 2019 ISU returned 8 of their top 9 receivers including their top 3. In the spring of '21 they had to replace their #1 WR from '19 and their #1 WR from '18 with the top returnee being Tanner Conner who led with 685 (20.1) with Xavier Guillory #2 with 324 (18.0). The top 4 all returned last fall and Conner again led with 735 yards (17.5) while Jared Scott was #2 (335, 8.2) and Guillory finished #3 (13.0). While the Bengals lose their top 2 WR's going into 2022, they return 4 of their top 6 WR's and also their starting TE Mike Davis. If this unit can get new guys to emerge & replace the top 2 that are gone, this unit could have a solid season.

OFFENSIVE LINE - In 2019 the Bengals OLine lost 2 starters who combined for 11 starts including a 1st Tm Big Sky OT, but returned 4 OL who started all 11 games in 2018. Despite the experience the unit dropped to 148 rush ypg (3.9) but they allowed 23 sacks (5.8%). In the spring they had 5 frosh OL and the numbers slipped again to 122 (3.2) with 18 sacks allowed in 6 games (8.2%). The unit returned pretty much intact last fall but the rush numbers stayed the same as they ran for 121 ypg (3.2) but the sacks allowed went up to 38 (11%). This season the Bengals bring back 4 starters on the OLine led by 3rd Tm OL Terren Carey. The lone starter lost is Jake Wilkerson & with 4 starters back the Bengals should have a better OLine this season

DEFENSIVE LINE - The ISU run defense allowed 162 ypg (4.5) in the spring of 2021 with 10 sacks (4.9%). Last fall they returned 3 DL who combined for 22 starts led by DE's Kainoa Fuiava (6 st, 50 tkl, 5.5 tfl) & TJ Toggia (11 st, 44 tkl, 5 tfl). The run defense actually took a small step back last fall as the Bengals allowed 174 ypg (4.9) and the pass rush only collected 7 sacks all season! This season the top 7 DL return for ISU led by Jake McGinnis (10 st, 40 tkl, 2 tfl), David Rowe (7 st, 35 tkl, 2 tfl) and Raemo Trevino (8 st, 27 tkl). With plenty of experience returning on the DLine this season we expect the rush defense to show some improvement & the pass rush can only improve in 2022.

LINEBACKERS - The Bengals returned three LB's who combined for 14 starts, 162 tackles & 5 tfl led by 3rd tm BSC LB Kody Graves (6 st, 83 tkl, 1.5 tfl, 2 int) & LB Oshea Trujillo (4 st, 47 tkl, 2.5 tfl). Last fall Darian Green would emerge was the top tackler (6 st, 69 tkl, 6.5 tfl) while Trujillo was the #2 tackler (11 st, 60 tkl, 3.5 tfl). This season ISU loses Green and Trujillo along with Connor Wills (8 st, 57 tkl, 3 tfl). They also lose backup Jared Gibson (20 tkl). Overall 4 of the top 5 LB's are gone & the lone returnee is Charles Ike (3 st, 44 tkl). This unit is quite inexperienced, but they have an experienced DL in front of them that will help out.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - The secondary lost their top 2 going into the spring of 2021 and gave up 275 pass ypg in the spring of 2021 (60%). Last fall the pass defense gave up 300+ yards 4 times and overall allowed 255 pass ypg (59.7%) and they collected 6 int's. This secondary was led by Jayden Dawson (11 st, 54 tkl, 13 pbu, 2 int) and he was 3rd Tm Big Sky. This fall Dawson departs along with Jacob Jones (9 st, 47 tkl, 1.5 tfl) and Manase Time (6 st, 42 tkl, 4 pbu). This unit does return starters Quantrail Morris-Walker (10 st, 29 tkl, 4 pbu) and Josh Alford (9 st, 24 tkl, 7 pbu). The ISU secondary loses 3 players who started 6+ games and they may take a step back this season.

SPECIAL TEAMS - Kevin Ryan hit 12-15 fg's in 2019 (L/45) and also averaged 39.9 yards per punt (34.3 net). Ryan handled the kicking & punting again in the spring of 2021 and hit 8-13 fg's (L/35, 2 bkl'd) while he averaged 40.1 yards per punt (36.1 net). Last fall Ryan returned but focused mainly on the punting as he was just 1-3 fg's but averaged 45.6 yards per punt with a 39.5 net. David Allish was 8-12 fg's (L/44). Last fall WR Omayebu led with 406 KR yards (29.0, 1 td) while ISU had just 100 PR yards as a team last fall. This unit takes quite a hit as do-it-all kicker Ryan is gone along with Allish. Return man Omayebu is back but someone will have to emerge at K & P if this unit is to see any success in the kicking game

COACHES - After 5 seasons and a 16-35 record Idaho St let go of Rob Phenicie. The new HC is Charlie Ragle who spent 2017-2021 at Cal as the ST Coordinator. The new OC for Idaho St is Taylor Mazzone, who spent the 2021 season at San Diego as the WR coach. Prior to that he was the WR coach at Arizona from 2018-2020. Tim Schaffner was hired as the new DC. Schaffner comes here after spending the past 17 years at Butler CC as a coach. Schaffner spent the L/7 seasons at Butler CC as the HC. Edgar Weiser is the new ST coordinator.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - In 2018 ISU's offense averaged 495 ypg which was #2 in the Big Sky! That season they also averaged 37 ppg which was #3 Big Sky. In 2019 the Bengals lost a ton of talent on offense & regressed to averaging 375 ypg which was #11 in the Big Sky. Their scoring offense in 2019 dropped to 22.5 ppg which was #11 in the conference. Of the 7 Big Sky teams that played 6+ games in the spring of 2021 ISU was #4 in total offense (413 ypg) and #5 in scoring offense (25.6 ppg). Last fall ISU finished 11th in total offense in the Big Sky (311 ypg) and were #12 in scoring offense with 15.3 ppg. This season the Bengals get back 8 starters on offense and should be able to top LY's low offensive numbers.

DEFENSE - The Bengals defense was ranked #8 in total defense in 2018 (449 ypg) and allowed 33.8 ppg (#7 Big Sky). The defense remained consistent in 2019 as they allowed 452 ypg (#10 Big Sky) and they gave up 34.8 ppg (#10 Big Sky). Of the 7 Big Sky teams that played 6+ games in the spring of 2021 ISU was #7 in total defense (484 ypg) and #7 in scoring defense (37.9 ppg). Last fall the ISU defense gave up 430 ypg which was #10 Big Sky & their scoring defense allowed 34.1 ppg (#11 Big Sky). This season the defense returns 6 starters, but 6 of the top 7 tacklers including 3 LB's who started last fall. This unit will need to have new faces emerge & replace the top tacklers from LY if they are to show any improvement.

2022 - Since going 8-4 in 2014 the ISU Bengals have only had 1 winning season (6-5 in 2018) and have won 3 or fewer games 5 times. ISU last won the Big Sky in 2002 (co-champ) and have not been to the playoffs since 1983! This season ISU has a new HC and new coordinators, but they do get back 14 starters. They open with a pair of road FBS games at UNLV and at San Diego St. The Bengals avoid 2 of the 5 Big Sky playoff teams from last season (E.Wash, Sac St) but face UC Davis and Montana St on the road. They also travel to Weber St, who should be improved. They do face Montana at home but their other 3 conference home games are vs Cal Poly, NAU and Idaho. We think ISU can top their 1-10 record from a season ago, but we won't go as far as saying they have a shot at a winning record.