

INDIANA ST SYCAMORES

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - Last year Indiana St had to replace QB Ryan Boyle (508, 68.6%, 6-4, 171 rush), who after starting the first 4 in '19 was OFY with a torn ACL. They returned QB Kurtis Wilderman (3 st), who led with 1,170 yds pass (69%, 6-4). Michael Hauptert ran for 335 (6.7) in '19 in a wildcat role. Northern Illinois transfer Anthony Thompson (PS#141) won the job and started 9 games. He threw for 1,326 (61.6%) but only an 8-8 ratio with 79 rush yards (1.5). Wilderman saw action in 7 and started 2 games including the finale. He threw for 594 (52.8%, 2-3). Hauptert is an athlete and saw action as a QB and WR while Cade Chambers played in 2. Thompson and Wilderman both depart this year. Hauptert and Chambers are both back. They added Colorado St transfer Evan Olaes (PS#157) who played in 3 games last year, and JUCO Transfer Gavin Screws (PS#149, orig Troy) who threw for 1,593 and 17 td's at Butler CC last year. This group is inexperienced and ranks near the bottom of the Missouri Vally QB units.

RUNNING BACKS - Last year Indiana St lost 4 of their top 6 rushers including 2 of their top 4 RB's in #2 rusher Dominique Dafney (439, 7.1) and #4 rusher Titus McCoy (3 st, 201, 4.0). They returned their top 2 RB's in Peterson Kerlegrand (9 st, 746, 5.5), who was their #6 receiver (151, 7.9). They added San Diego St transfer Justin Dinka (PS#85). Kerlegrand had 178 vs Western Illinois and 151 vs YSU. He led with 830 (4.5) and was their #5 receiver (133, 13.3). Dinka only had 112 (5.9). This year ISU loses their workhorse in Kerlegrand (4th Tm All-MVFC). They add Tennessee transfer Tee Hodge (PS#53) who is a hard worker and has the size to be a power back at 6'1" 215. They are much less experienced but Dinka and Hodge are more talented so they could surprise.

RECEIVERS - ISU lost 2 of their top 4 receivers in #2 WR Dante Jones (236, 9.8, 2 td) and #4 Dominique Dafney (196, 13.1, 1 td), who started the first 3 at WR. They returned 6 of their top 8 receivers led by #1 1st Tm MVFC WR Dante Hendrix (11 st, 653, 12.8, 2 td), #3 WR Dakota Caton (3 st, 221, 10.5, 2 td) and #5 WR Rontrez Morgan (5 st, 157, 13.1) along with TE Zach Larkin (11 st, 109, 9.1, 1 td). They added Minnesota transfer Harry Van Dyne (PS#240). Hendrix missed 5 games but still led with 447 (10.6). Phazi McClurge was a close #2 with 438 (12.2). TE Larkin started 9 and was #3 with 312 (10.8). Rontrez Morgan added 296 (7.6). This year Hendrix returns while McClurge, Larkin, Morgan and Matt Sora (6 rec) all depart. They go from returning 6 of their top 8 to returning just 3 of their top 8 (4 of top 5 are gone). They are less experienced and didn't add any additional transfers. If Hendrix stays healthy then he is one of the better WR's in the conference but their QB's are all inexperienced too.

OFFENSIVE LINE - In '18 the OLine paved the way for 242 ypg rush (#2 MVFC) & 5.1 ypc. In '19 they slipped to 179 ypg rush (#7) & 4.3 ypc while allowing 30 sks (9.6%). Last year they lost 4 of '19's starters, who all started 7+. They returned 4 OL who combined for 20 starts in '19 giving the unit more experience than you would expect. ISU plummeted to just 112 rush ypg (3.5) but did allow just 20 sacks (5.9%). They were held under 100 rush yards in 7 games. This year ISU loses LG/C Alvin Clemons (11 st), LT Isaiah Edwards (11 st,

4th Tm All-MVFC) and LG Jalen Booth (5 st). They get the right side of their Oline back and 5 have starting experience. They are also much younger than last year but have a low bar to match.

DEFENSIVE LINE - In '19 ISU improved to allowing 175 ypg rush (4.7 ypc) and had 27 sacks (8.4%). Last year the unit had to replace their top DT (12 st, #7 tkl'r, 5.5 tfl) along with 3 others that combined for 6 starts, 44 tkl, 4 sk & 3 tfl. They returned 3 starters in DE Kaleb Brewer (9 st, #8 tkl'r, 2.5 sk, 8 tfl), DT Henrik Barndt (9 st, #9, 4.5 sk, 2 tfl) & DE Inoke Moala (11 st, #11m 3.5 sk, 9 tfl) giving them a solid unit. They had a mix of bad performances and great performances, allowing over 200 rush in 6 games but holding 3 teams under 90 rush yards. Overall they had nearly identical numbers as the previous season as they allowed 177 (4.7) with 27 sacks (8.3%). This year they lose DE Moala who led with 8 sacks (11 st, #5 tkl'r), DT Gavin Dineen (6 st, #15 tkl'r), DT Brewer (10 st, #14 tkl'r, 2.5 sk), Barndt (5 st, #17 tkl'r, 2 sk, 3 tfl) and DE Matt Thompson (5 st, #6 tkl'r, 2.5 tfl). Five of their top 7 are gone. They lost 120 tackles from this unit and only have 44 returning.

LINEBACKERS - Last year ISU's LB Corps had to replace their an All-American LB Jonas Griffith (#1 tkl'r, 4 sk, 3 tfl) and their #2 tkl'r who led with 15.5 tfl in '19 along with two NB's (#10 & #13 tkl'rs). They did return 2 of their top 6 LB's in Matt Thompson (4 st, #5, 2 tfl) & Dayveon Higgs (2 st, #14, 2 tfl). Geoffrey Brown led with 61 tackles (1 sk, 7.5 tfl). No other LB finished in their top 10 tacklers. This year they lose Heath Stephens (6 st, #11 tkl'r, 3 sk), DW Thompson (4 st, #12 tkl'r, 2.5 tfl), Kevin Broome (4 st, #16 tkl'r, 2 tfl) and Ty Hambright (#9 tkl'r, 2.5 tfl). They do get their #1 and #18 tkl'rs back and are actually in slightly better shape this year.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - ISU improved to #3 in Pass D Efficiency in the Valley in '19, allowing just 163 ypg pass (55.0%) with a 13-9 ratio. The secondary lost their #4 and #12 tacklers last year but they returned 5 who earned starts in '19 led by SS Michael Thomas (12 st, #3 tkl'r, 2 int, 3 pbu) & CB Mekhi Ware (10 st, #6, 11 pbu) along with Stetson transfer JJ Henderson, who made 10 starts for the Hatters in '19 recording 52 tkl and was 1st Tm PFL. They allowed 229 pass ypg and fell to #9 in pass D efficiency rankings, allowing 58.1% (23-11 ratio). This year they lose FS Michael Thomas (7 st, #2 tkl'r, 2 int), 3rd Tm All-MVFC CB Henderson (11 st, #4 tkl'r, 3 int, 9 pbu) and Kaelub Newman (#19 tkl'r, 2 int, 3 pbu). Two starters return and they get their #3, #7, #8 and #20 tacklers back. This unit has the most experience on the D, and should move up a few spots in the Pass D Rankings.

SPECIAL TEAMS - Last year ISU lost a 2nd Team All MVFC K. Alan Selzer made just 6 of 12 fg's (L/48). Travis Reiner averaged 40.3 ypp (35.3 net). Michael Hauptert had 30 PR yards (5.0 avg) and 286 KR yds (22.0 avg). Both Selzer and Reiner are gone and this ST's unit is at the bottom of the Valley.

COACHES - Curt Mallory enters his 5th season as Head Coach. He has a career record of 17-28. Prior to coming here he was the DB Coach at Wyoming ('15-'16) and at Michigan ('11-'14). He was also a DC at Akron ('10) and Illinois ('07-'09). Mike Bath takes over as OC/QB Coach. He spent the last 3 years as the RB Coach at Western Michigan. He also had stints at Wyoming and Miami, OH. DC Brad Wilson is in his 5th year. He was DC/DB Coach at Wayne State for 5 years before coming here. The new ST Coach is Patrick Shepard.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - After finishing last in the MVFC in both Scoring (17.5 ppg) & Total Offense (301 ypg) in '17, the Sycamores improved to #4 in Scoring (31.7 ppg) & #6 in Total Offense (403 ypg) in 2018. In '19 with a new OC they slipped to #8 in Scoring (19.6 ppg) but remained #6 in Total Offense (346 ypg) despite averaging almost 60 ypg less. Last year the offense had 6 starters back from '19. They were held to 10 points or less in 5 games and finished with just 16 ppg and 289 ypg. They were last in scoring offense and next to last in total offense. This year they have just 3 starters back. Gone are their top 2 QB's, their leading rusher, 4 of their top 5 WR's and 3 starters on the Oline. They also have a new OC so this is most likely going to be a tough year for the offense again.

DEFENSE - After finishing '17 last in Scoring allowed (41.2 ppg) & second last in Total Defense (464) ypg, they improved to #7 in '18, allowing 28.2 ppg and #8 in Total Defense (430 ypg). In '19 they improved again to #5 in Scoring (22.8) & #5 in Total Defense (338 ypg). Last year the defense returned 5 starters from '19 but lost an All-American LB. They gave up 30 ppg and 406 ypg, #9 in the Valley in both. This year just 4 starters return. They lose 4 of their top 6 tacklers and 12 of their top 20 are gone. They are especially young at DL and LB and don't have any big time transfers so this appears to be a rebuilding year for the defense.

2022 - After making the playoffs in 2014 and finishing 8-6 the Sycamores suffered 3 straight losing seasons going 5-6, 4-7 & 0-11 in 2017. In 2018 they finished the season with 5 straight wins but at 7-4 missed the playoffs. In 2019, they had high hopes with thoughts of returning to the playoffs but finished a disappointing 5-7. Last year after canceling their Fall schedule the Sycamores decided not to play in the Spring season. They had 11 starters back last year. ISU started 2-1 with close wins over Eastern Illinois and Eastern Kentucky. After blowout losses to SDSU & South Dakota they won at home over MVFC cellar dweller Western Carolina. They suffered 3 more blowout losses in their next 5 but did get wins over YSU and Illinois St in the finale to finish 5-6 but were -117 ypg. They were +3 net close wins. Their average win came by 6.6 ppg while their average loss came by 31 ppg. They have just 7 starters back this year and considering they were pretty fortunate to finish 5-6 last year it makes sense that they were picked to finish 10th in the preseason by the Missouri Valley. After their opener against North Alabama they have a brutal 4 game stretch at Purdue/Montana/at NIU/ND SU. They get both Youngstown St and Western Illinois on the road so their toughest games are all at home. We don't see them getting back to 5 wins as this could be a tough year for the Sycamores.