

LAMAR CARDINALS

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - With a new QB in the spring of 2021 the offense struggled to produce and only put up 265 ypg and 16 ppg. The new QB was Jalen Dummett and he threw for 478 yds (64%, 4-3) while the backup Austin Scott hit 51% (182, 1-3) for the season. Dummett returned in the fall and began the season as the starter, but didn't top 100 yards passing in any of his 7 starts! For the season he passed for just 372 yards (55.4%, 2-4) and ran for 272 yds (4.1). Mike Chandler (Colorado transfer) got a pair of starts and played in 7 games, and overall was the leading passer with 578 yards (54%, 4-1) with 206 coming against Abilene Christian. Daelyn Williams started the final two games and threw for 275 yds (39.1%, 1-0) and ran for 83 yds (2.1). All 3 QB's are back this season, and they add Jakob Longio from UTEP who will be in the mix to start. One of these four will hopefully take the reigns and secure the starting job & they will have a normal offseason to work under HC Morgan, who took over in the spring of '21 season.

RUNNING BACKS - The leading rusher for Lamar in the spring of '21 was Chaz Ward (3 st, 271, 2.8) and Jaylon Jackson was #2 with 220 yds (3 st, 4.5). Both were back in the fall last season, but the production was limited. Jackson was the leading rusher with just 309 yds (3.6) while Ward finished with 288 (6 st, 288, 3.4). QB Dummett was #3 and WR James Jones was #4 (236, 4.4). Both Ward and Jackson are gone this season, but they do get back former Tarelton St transfer Hunter Batten (125, 4.3) and they add Rice transfer Khalan Griffin (PS#199) who had 400 yds LY (3.5) with the Owls. The top two weren't overly effective last season, so if this unit can develop a reliable one-two punch they could top last season's rushing numbers.

RECEIVERS - Since '15 LU has thrown for 200+ yds per game just 1 time (215 ypg in '17). Since 2018 the Cardinals have ran the ball on over 68% of their plays. In the spring '21 season Lamar threw for just 119 ypg & their high for the season was 164 pass yds vs Incarnate Word. WR Kirkland Banks was the leading receiver with just 183 yds (13.1) and Marcellus Johnson was #2 with 137 yds (12.5) and he missed the L/3 games with injury. With 5 of the top 6 receivers returning last season, we thought this unit would show some improvement. However, Lamar threw the ball on just 28% of their plays last fall, and averaged only 111 pass ypg as they failed to top 100 pass yds in a game 6 times. Erik Pizarro led with 423 (15.1) while Banks was #2 (173, 17.3) and M. Johnson was #3 (161, 12.4). Those 3 all depart this season & overall their top 5 WR's are gone with their leading returnee being TE Jeremy Davis (10 st, 91 yds). This unit isn't relied on a ton, but still may struggle to produce with inexp'd players taking over the starting roles.

OFFENSIVE LINE - The OLine paved the way for 146 rush ypg (3.0) including two games of over 210 rush yds in the spring. However this unit struggled to stop the pass rush as they allowed 20 sks on 110 pass attempts (18.2%). While this unit took their lumps last season, they did return all 5 main starters in the fall of '21. However, the rush numbers remained about the same (141, 3.3) and they improved a bit on sacks allowed (29, 15.6%). The same 5 started 10 of 11 games, with 4 OL starting all 11 games and those 5 all return this year! With a full offseason to build their chemistry and work together, we envision this unit playing better in '22.

DEFENSIVE LINE - The DLine allowed 241 rush ypg (7.0!) and collected just 8 sks in 6 games in the spring of '21. DE Tylo Phillips collected 22 tkl and 3 sks & was 3rd Tm Southland. He returned last fall along with DT Vincent Rollins (4 st, 13 tkl), but they lost 2 NT's who comb'd to start 5 games. But with 2 starters back up front we thought this unit might be able to show improvement. The run D started off well (200 total rush yds all'd F/3 gms) but then from games 4-8 they all'd 263 ypg (6.8). Overall last fall they gave up 181 rush ypg (5.2) and collected 20 sacks, but 10 came in the F/3 games. DT Jack McCarthy led the unit in tackles (11 st, 30 tkl) while T. Phillips also played well (8 st, 19 tkl, 4 sk) and DE Jaymond Jackson (8 st, 14 tkl, 4.5 sk). They lose Phillips, but Jackson and McCarthy are both back so the Cardinals DLine should hopefully be more consistent vs the run this year.

LINEBACKERS - Lamar's defense struggled in the spring of '21 as they allowed 510 ypg and 42 ppg in 6 games. Coming into last fall Lamar returned all 4 LB starters from the spring including Aaron Calcote (5 st, 27 tkl, 3 tfl) and Caimyn Layne (6 st, 3.5 tfl, 2 int). The top LB was freshman Adrian Owens, as he was the #3 tackler (47 tkl, 2.5 tfl) despite not starting one game. Tyler Jackson had a solid season (11 st, t-#4 tkl'r, 2.5 tfl) as did Calcote (11 st, #6 tkl'r, 5.5 tfl) and Layne (3 st, #8 tkl'r, 2 sk). The defense overall did show some improvement and allowed 408 ypg and 36 ppg for the season. Owens and Jackson return along with Vence Rockwell (L/8 st, 24 tkl), but they lose Calcote, Layne, and Desmond Veals (11 st, 23 tkl, 7.5 tfl). While 2 starters are back, they unit may not be as strong with the loss of 3 productive players who all had starts last season.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - In 2019 LU allowed opposing QB's to hit 59% of their passes for 251 ypg. In the spring of '21 the pass defense struggled as they gave up 269 ypg including 3 games allowing over 340 pass yds. The Cardinals pass defense also allowed opposing QB's to hit 61% of their passes, though LU did record 10 int's and 13 pbu's. Last fall S Anthony Ruffin (6 st, 43 tkl, 4 pbu, 3 int, 3rd Tm All-Southland) and CB Kyron Norwood (6 st, 20 tkl, 4 pbu) both returned & overall they had 3 starters back in the secondary. The pass defense allowed 228 ypg (60.8%), which was a bit of an improvement. and they had 33 pbu and 9 int's. SS Ruffin led Lamar in tackles (11 st, 63 tkl, 2 int) while FS Divine Buckrham was the #2 tackler (11 st, 53 tkl, 8 pbu) and CB Norwood had 23 tackles (11 st, 1 int). The bad news for Lamar is that those 3 starters all are gone this year. Ramond Stevens (2 st, 15 tkl, 1 int) and DeMarco Roberts (6 st, 12 tkl, 2 pbu) both started at CB last season and return, but with 3 starters gone, the Lamar secondary may struggle to match last season's numbers.

SPECIAL TEAMS - Kicker Bailey Giffen returned last season after hitting 6-8 FG's (L/49) in the spring season. Giffen went 7-10 on fg's last fall (L/54) and was 4th Tm WAC. Punter Enrique Carmona averaged 40.7 yds per punt (L/70) with a 35.6 net in the spring, but departed last fall & kicker Giffen took over the punting duties too and averaged 39.6 yards per punt (35.3 net). Giffen, who handled fg's, punts, and kickoffs last season departs. Colby Sessums could take over the punting and either true frosh Angel Ibarra or Hutchinson CC transfer Alfonso Deleon will take over as the top kicker. Lamar also loses their top 2 KR's and their top PR. This unit is undergoing a lot of change and will need some new faces to step up if they are to have a productive ST unit.

COACHES - Former Air Force QB Blane Morgan took over as the Lamar head coach in 2020 and is 4-13 in 2 seasons. Prior to taking this job, he was the QB coach at San Diego St (2015-19) and before

that he was an assistant coach at Air Force from 2003-2014, and was the co-OC there from '07-'14. Patrick Covington is in his 3rd season with Lamar as the OC. Prior to coaching here he spent 10 seasons at Coastal Carolina as the OLine coach. Ron Antoine is listed as the co-OC here. Matt Weikert joined the staff in 2020 as the DC. In 2019 he was the OLB coach at Vanderbilt and before that he spent 12 seasons as an assistant coach at Air Force, with 9 of those seasons being the OLB coach. Lamar does not list a Special Teams Coordinator.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - In 2017 the Lamar offense dipped to averaging 374 ypg and 22 ppg. The following season those numbers shot up to 431 ypg and 31 ppg as the Cardinals made the playoffs. The following season in '19 they averaged 364 ypg the F/8 gms but just 255 ypg the L/4 gms and scored 24 ppg overall. In the 6 game spring season under a new HC, Lamar put up just 265 ypg and 16 ppg. Last fall the numbers actually dropped as Lamar averaged just 252 ypg and 15 ppg and their offense was held to 144 ypg less than their foes typically allow. This season they do return 7 starters including all 5 on the OLine, and add transfers at QB and RB. Though Lamar likes to run the ball (68% run plays the L4Y) they will need some inexp'd players to step up at WR to help the offense be less one-dimensional.

DEFENSE - Lamar's defense allowed 458 ypg and 36 ppg in 2017, and the ypg only slightly improved the following season to 442 ypg allowed, but they cut the ppg allowed to 28. In 2019 the Cardinals defense allowed under 400 ypg for the first time since 2014 (391, 28 ppg). The defense gave up 510 ypg and 42 ppg in the spring of '21. Last fall we saw some improvement with 10 starters back as they gave up 408 ypg and 36 ppg. This unit returns just 5 starters and loses 3 starters in the secondary, so we may see this defense take a step backwards in 2022.

2022 - After being dormant from 1990-2009, Lamar's football program came back in 2010. Since their return, Lamar only recorded 2 seasons with more than 5 wins and made their only trip to the FCS playoffs since returning back in 2018 where they lost to Northern Iowa and finished the year 7-5. In 2019 Lamar started 5-2 but lost their last 5 games to finished 5-7 as they were -219 ypg and -20 ppg over the L/4 games. Blane Morgan was named the new HC but didn't get a chance to coach until the spring of '21 where Lamar went 2-4 and were -245 ypg and -26 ppg. Last fall Lamar still struggled and finished just 2-9 and for the season were -156 ypg and -21 ppg in their 1st year in the WAC. While Lamar will have a full & normal offseason under their belt, they return 12 starters and made the late choice to join the Southland Conference this season instead of 2023. This looks like another rebuilding year for Lamar, and their main goal should be winning some conference games after going 0-9 last season.