MISSISSIPPI VALLEY ST DELTA DEVILS

FORECAST

QUARTERBACKS - Portland St transfer Jalani Eason debuted at QB in spring of '21 and left plenty to be desired. Eason averaged an incredibly low 3.8 ypa and failed to throw a TD pass in three full games. Eason played much better in the fall, hitting 60% for 1,533 yards and a 10-7 ratio. He threw for a career high 315 vs Alabama St. Eason also added 185 rush (2.5). Conor Regan played in 9 games and started 3 including the first 2. He only hit 46.6% for 314 yards and a 1-3 ratio. Eason returns while Regan departs. They add JUCO transfers Travis Mumphry (orig UNLV) and Jamari Jones (6'3" 210). Only 3 QB's are on the roster so depth is a concern. Easy is an experienced QB but lacks size at just 5'10" 180 so the transfers could challenge for the job.

RUNNING BACKS - Caleb Johnson was #2 in '19 with 427 (4.1). In spring they lost their top rusher but used their 3 games to build their depth. Dederrian Williams was a pleasant surprise in spring ball (123, 8.2) while veteran RB and Preseason All-SWAC 2nd Team honoree Caleb Johnson (113, 5.7) was back as well. Johnson saved his best for last with 193 vs Prairie View A&M and led with 979 (4.2). Williams only finished with 208 (4.3). This year both Johnson and Williams return along with Jakobe Thomas (143, 5.3). The depth is solid this year and Johnson was a 2nd Team All SWAC performer last year so this is their strength.

RECEIVERS - Jarius Clayton was the team's leading receiver in '19 (365, 9.4) and returned last year alongside the leading receiver from spring, Malik Myers but that was just 5 receptions. Jacory Rankin stepped up and led with 682 (16.2) on the back of 2 big performances with 147 vs FAMU and 152 vs AL State. Claton was #2 with 345 (12.8). Malik Myers finished #3 with 160 (9.4). Donald Johnson had 150 (9.4). Clayton departs this year but they get 4 of their top 5 back including 4th Team All-SWAC WR Rankin. This is a much more experienced group and up a few notches.

OFFENSIVE LINE - MVSU averaged 142 (3.6) and allowed 29 sacks (8.5%) in '19. They improved in spring with 153 (4.1) but allowed 13 sacks (14.8%). The experience in the spring helped as all 5 starters returned and they averaged 143 (3.7) and allowed 27 sacks (9.5%) in a full season. This year they lose Joshua Taylor and C/G Jonathan Irizarry. Three starters return so they now have legit experience and LT James Lofton was 4th Team All-SWAC last season. This is another unit that looks improved.

DEFENSIVE LINE - In '19 the Delta Devils allowed 171 rush ypg (4.3). They also finished with 32 sacks (8.8%) led by DE Jerry Garner who finished with 9. In spring they only allowed 130 (3.8) with 6 sacks. Last year Garner returned. MVSU allowed 147 (4.3) but sacks dropped to 23 (6.9%). They did perform better down the stretch, allowing just 113 rush ypg over their last 5. This year MVSU loses DE Garner (11 st, #9 tkl'r, 3 sk, 5 tfl), NG Jeremiah Caine (11 st, #6 tkl'r, 4 tfl) and Terrance Williams (1 st, #20 tkl'rl, 4 tfl). They get their #7, #12, #13 and #17 tacklers back. Four of their top 7 return including DT Jalen Bell who had 9.5 tfl's last year and DE Ronnie Thomas who led with 6.5 sacks so they might be better than expected.

LINEBACKERS - In '19 Volme Swanier was their #4 tackler and had 6.5 tfl's. Swanier returned in the spring and had 13 tackles in 3 games while Deione Reed had 16. Last year LB's made up 4 of MVSU's top 5 tacklers. Swanier was 2nd team All-SWAC after he finished #2 with 57 tackles and led with 10.5 tfl's. Swanier departs this year along with NB Markell Gladney (#4 tkl'r, 5.5 tfl). They get Reed back (#3 tkl'r, 7 tfl) and Jayren Fox who had 44 tackles as a frosh. In all they get 5 of their top 7 back but the loss of 2 of their top 3 makes them a little less experienced.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - MVSU allowed 251 pass ypg and 60% completions in '19. In spring of '21 MVSU allowed 288 pass ypg and an 8-3 ratio but only 56%. Last year the Delta Devils returned 1st Tm All-SWAC CB Caleb Brunson. MVSU allowed 300 pass yards on 3 occasions including 405 vs Alabama A&M but overall they only gave up 244 ypg and 59% with a 25-13 ratio which put them 8th in the SWAC in pass defense efficiency. The losses are heavy this year. Gone are 1st Tm All-SWAC FS Keonte Daniels (11 st, #1 tkl'r, 7 tfl, 3 int, 6 pbu), CB Andrew Bloodsaw (6 st, #10 tkl'r, 2 int, 3 pbu), CB and William Morgan (11 st, #17 tkl'r, 9 pbu, 1 int). They get their #9, #11, #14 and #16 tacklers back but 3 starters are gone including their top guy so this unit is down a notch.

SPECIAL TEAMS - Orlando Fernandez served as the team's K/P/KOS last spring, and while he averaged 39.6 yds per punt and 55.1 yds per kickoff, he connected on just 2 of 5 fg's. Jarius Clayton served as the team's primary PR last spring (7.4) while Jacory Rankin handled KRs (16.2). All 3 returned. Fernandez made 11 of 18 fg's (L/50) and had 3 kicks blocked. Fernandez also averaged 42.1 on 62 punts but only a 32.5 net. Donald Johnson averaged 19.9 KR. Clayton averaged 5.8 PR. This year they lose Clayton but Fernandez and Johnson return. They are a below average unit until they get more consistent kicking at both placekicker and punter.

COACHES - Vincent Dancy is in his 5th year as HC of MVSU. He was DC here from '15-'18. He spent 5 years as an OLB and Safeties coach at Jackson St from '09-'13. The new OC Kenton Evans came over after spending last year as QB Coach at Arkansas Pine-Bluff. He was the OC at Central Methodist College for 2 years prior. In 2013 he was QB Coach at Valparaiso. Javier Gonzalez is the first year DC after spending the last 2 years as a LB Coach. He coached LB's at Coahoma and Kentucky State prior to coming here. MVSU doesn't have a designated Special Teams Coordinator.

OFFENSE - MVSU hasn't averaged more than 20 ppg in a season since 2008. In '19 they did average 20.6 ppg in their first 8 then were shutout in 2 of their last 3 and finished with 16 ppg and 254 ypg. They only put up 14 ppg and 278 ypg in their spring season. Last year MVSU averaged 19.6 ppg but they did top 300 ypg for the first time since 2014 at 311. They even put up 23 ppg and 344 ypg vs SWAC foes. This year the Delta Devils get 8 starters back including their top passer, top 2 rushers, 4 of their top 5 WR's and 3 starting OL. It's hard to predict a huge jump but with all 4 offensive units improved we could see them finally going over 20 ppg for the season.

DEFENSE - In '18 MVSU allowed 42 ppg and 455 ypg. They gave up 92 ypg more than their foes averaged on the season. In '19 the Delta Devils improved by nearly 2 td's, allowing 29 ppg and 421 ypg but still allowed 37 ypg more than their foes averaged. In their 3 spring games they gave up 36 ppg and 419 ypg. They improved again, allowing 31 ppg last year, with 392 ypg and in SWAC play they allowed just 28 ppg and 392 ypg. Once again they allowed 18 ypg more than their opponents averaged. This year only 4 starters return. They lose 6 of their top 10 tacklers and considering they've consistently gone up and down each season this appears to be a down year.

2022 - MVSU won just 8 games in 5 years from '13-'17 so they made a change and hired Vincent Dancy. They won just 1 game in his first year of a full rebuilt and were -186 ypg (-143 vs SWAC foes) with most of their losses in blowout fashion. They were 2-6 in '19 before dropping their last 3 games including back-to-back shutouts. They finished -167 ypg and -176 vs SWAC foes. They used the spring season to work on depth and went 0-3, finishing -141 ypg. Last year they started 0-3 then won consecutive games for the first time since 2012. They lost their next 4 games but did lead FAMU 28-24 4Q in a 3 point loss and led SWAC champs Jackson St 12-7 3Q in a 9 point loss. They finished the season by ending an 11 game losing streak to Alabama St then beat SWAC West Division Champs Prairie View A&M on the road. MVSU finished 4-7 and were -48 ypg vs SWAC foes (-81 overall). This year they miss the two bottom teams from the SWAC West. They do have their toughest SWAC games on the road at Jackson St & at FAMU in back-to back weeks. Their first 5 FCS games are all against teams that finished with winning records last year. The 2nd half of the schedule lightens up but they will need to pull some upsets to get back to their 4 win mark from a year ago.