

NEW HAMPSHIRE WILDCATS

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - In '19 New Hampshire had to replace their #6 all-time passer QB Trevor Knight, (6345 yds), who despite missing 3+ games with injury threw for 1,074 (56.1%, 7-5, 84 rush, 4 td). They also lost Christian Lupoli, who started the 3 games Knight missed, throwing for 565 (50.5%, 2-2). Their only QB with gm experience is former Iowa transfer QB Tommy Herion, who hit 25-53-284 (47.2%, 0-2) in limited play in '18 but did not play in '19. RFr Frosh Bret Edwards started the opener but was replaced by true Frosh Max Brosmer in the 2H. Brosmer became just the 2nd true frosh QB to start here in school history as he started the last 10 going 6-4 as a starter. He threw for 1,967 (58.8%, 12-12, 28 rush). Edwards played in just 4 (10-25-124-0-1, 14 rush). In the spring of '21 season, which consisted of just the opener as their last 5 games were cancelled. Brosmer was the only QB who played, hitting 20-35-128-2-0 in the 4 pt loss to Albany. Last year Brosmer missed the season with a leg injury. Edwards played in 10, starting 9, but was injured in 3Q vs Rhode Island & missed the finale. For the season he threw for 1,565 (62.3%, 12-5, -56 rush). RFr Brody McAndrew started vs Albany but hit just 11-23-73-0-2 for the season. Herion played in 7, including starting the finale (all pass att). This year they lose Herion (21-49-224-3-5). Both Edwards & McAndrew return & they also get back Brosmer, giving them a very experienced unit.

RUNNING BACKS - In '19 UNH lost their #3 RB (2 st, 198, 3.0) but returned their top 2 in Carlos Washington (582, 5.9, 6 td) & Evan Gray (292, 3.4, 1 td). Gray led in '19 with 646 (6.0) while Washington was #2 (601, 4.4). Dylan Laube was #3 with 285 (4.5) and led the team in all purpose yards with 1,372. In the spring of '21 season they had to replace Gray but Washington and Laube returned. In their 1 game "season", Laub rushed for 33 (4.1). Washington had 30 (3.0) while WR Sean Coyne had 4 (4.0). Last year all 3 returned. Washington started 9 and led with 547 (4.7, 1 td, 139 rec). Laube despite missing 2 games & only starting the finale finished a close #2 with 501 (6.3, 4 td, 206 rec). RFr Isaac Seide made 1 start and finished #3 with 182 (5.1, 1 td, 38 rec). This year they lose Washington. Both Laube & Seide return giving them a solid duo but they still need to develop some depth and the loss of their top guy could see their overall rush numbers drop some.

RECEIVERS - In '19 the Wildcats had to replace their top 2 receivers in 1st Tm CAA WR Neil O'Conner (11 st, 814, 11.5, 3 td) & Keiran Presley (11 st, 437, 13.2, 2 td). Their top returning receiver was RB Washington (164, 9.6). The receiving unit's top returnees are WR Sean Coyne (9 st, 148, 7.0, 2 yd) & TE Justin Malone-Woods (6 st, 80, 8.9, 1 td) but Coyne missed the season with injury. They also got back 2017's #2 WR Malik Love (9 st, 733, 10.5 in '17), who only played in 2 games (2-15 rec) in '18. Love led with 542 (11.1) while RB Laube was #2 (412, 14.7). Brian Espanet was #3 with 340 (13.6) and Charles Briscoe was #4 with 236 (12.4). In the spring of '21 season they had to replace Love but Coyne returned. As Covid shortened the season to just 1 game Espanet led with 41 (8.3). Coyne was #2 with 34 (6.8), which included both of UNH's 2 receiving TD's. TE Kyle Lepkowski was #3 (18, 9.0). All 3 returned last year. Espanet (10 st) led with 454 (13.4) and had 7 of their 16 receiving TD's. Coyne (11 st) was #2 with 324 (9.3, 3 td), Lepkowski (11 st) was #3 with 297 (11.9, 1 td), while RB's were #4 & #5. This year they lose #5 RB Washington (139, 7.3), #6 WR Nick Lorden (123, 10.3), #8 WR CJ Turner (101, 12.6) & WR Symir Blacknall (2 st, 51, 6.4). They again return the same top 3, who are now even more experienced but will need others to step up as the unit's only other returnee with over 100 yds is #7 WR Griffin Helm (119, 7.4, 1 td).

OFFENSIVE LINE - In '19 the OLine only lost 2 OL who combined for 10 sts in '18. They returned 7 who combined for 45 sts including C Patrick Flynn (11 st) & RT Noah Robinson (9 st). In '19 NH improved from 113 ypg rush (#10 CAA, 3.2) to 140 ypg rush (#7 CAA, 4.0) and improved the sack % from 10.7 to 5.6%. Three starters returned to the OLine but only C Matt Mascia is in the same spot as '19. Patrick Flynn started 11 at C in '18 and 11 at LT in '19 but was at LG in the spring of '21. Riley Burns who had 9 st at RG in '19 but moved to RT in the spring of '21 season. They had just 58 yds rush (2.4) while allowing 1 sack in their one spring of '21 "season". Last year they returned C Mascia (33 car sts), LT Flynn (23), RT Burns (10), RG Matt O'Neill, LG Osho Omoyeni (1 st). They slipped back to almost equaling '18's production as they paved the way for just 110 rush ypg (#10 CAA, 3.9) while allowing 27 sacks (8.1%). This year they lose two starters in C Mascia (11 st) & RT Burns (10 st) and two backups (2 st). They return 4 OL who combined for 32 starts last year in 3rd tm CAA LT Flynn (11 st), LG Omoyeni (10 st), RG David Perry (6 st) & RG O'Neill (4 st). With last year's Run Game Coordinator now the lone OC, we would expect some emphasis to be put on the run game. This experienced unit should help with that and they should show some solid improvement this year.

DEFENSIVE LINE - The DLine lost two 11 gm starters in 2019 including a 2nd Tm CAA DE (38 tkl, 3 sk, 5 tfl). They returned 2 starters in DT Elijah Lewis (11 st, 34 tkl, 5 tfl) & DE Brian Carter (8 st, 22 tkl, 5 sk, 1 tfl). After allowing 129 ypg rush (#5 CAA, 3.4) in '18 they slipped to allowing 139 ypg (#3 CAA, 3.8) as their sack total went from 36 (#2 CAA) to 30 (#4). For the spring of '21 one game "season", they had to replace a 11 game starting DE Josh Kania (30 tkl, 4 sk, 4 tfl). They returned both 11 game starting DT's in Elijah Lewis (43, 1.5 sk, 5.5 tfl) and Niko Kvietkus (45 tkl, 5.5 sk, 2.5 tfl) along with DE's Carter (8 st, 23 tkl, 3 sk, 2 tfl) and Gunner Gibson, who despite just starting 2 had a 9.5 tfl. They held Albany to just 32 rush yds (0.9 ypc) thanks to their 4 sacks in their only game of the season. Last year they had to replace DE Carter (6 tkl, 0.5 sk). They returned DT Kvietkus (5 tkl, 1 sk, 1 tfl), DT Lewis (6 tkl, 1.5 tfl) & DE Gibson (7 tkl, 1.5 sk, 1 tfl). Surprisingly for a veteran group they allowed 148 ypg rush (#8 CAA, 3.6) despite being tied for #2 CAA with 31 sacks. This year they must replace 3rd Tm CAA DE Gibson (11 st, 56 tkl, 2 sk, 5 tfl), DT Lewis (9 st, 34 tkl, 3.5 sk, 2.5 tfl) & DT Duval Paul (2 st, 15 tkl, 1 sk, 3 tfl). They return 3rd Tm AA DE Josiah Silver (11 st) who led UNH with 80 tkl & 19.5 tfl including 12.5 sacks along with DT Kvietkus (9 st, 25 tkl, 2 sk, 2.5 tfl) & DT Neil Politano (15 tkl, 1 tfl). They are less experienced & will be learning a new system under the former LB coach, who takes over as DC, which could force some changes to the unit. Still with the return of CAA Def Rookie of Year DE Silver, this unit should still be solid.

LINEBACKERS - The LB unit lost 1 of their 2 starters in 2019 in #5 tkl'r Jared Kuehl (10 st, 48 tkl, 4 sk, 4.5 tfl). They looked to return #1 tkl'r 2nd Tm AALB Quinlen Dean (11 st, 79 tkl, 6 sk, 8 tfl) & #8 Michael Balsamo (1 st, 35 tkl, 4.5 tfl). Then over the summer Dean transferred to Marshall. They went from allowing 22.8 ppg (#4 CAA) & 310 ypg (#2) in '18 to allowing an even better 20.1 ppg (#2) despite allowing 350 ypg (#2). That was despite starting a true frosh at LB in #5 tkl'r 3rd Tm AA Oleh Manzyk (9 st, 49 tkl, 4 sk, 2.5 tfl, 1 int). Sr Cameron Brusko (11 st, 59 tkl, 3 sk, 2 tfl). Balsamo made 2 starts and was the #9 tkl'r (41 tkl, 2.5 tfl). For the spring of '21 season they had to replace both Brusko & Balsamo. Manzyk returned along with backup LB RFr Zedane Williams (5 tk). They both started vs Albany with Williams having 9 tkl & 2.5 tfl, while Manzyk had 3 tkl & a fumble recovery. Both looked to return last year but Manzyk injured his leg and played in just 4 games (12 tkl, 1 tfl) but was able to RS. Williams made 2 starts including the opener but missed for games & finished as the #11 tkl'r (32 tkl, 0.5 tfl). A pair of underclassmen stepped into the starting roles in Soph Bryce Shaw, who after having just 8 tkl in '19 was the #3 tkl'r (11 st, 65 tkl, 2 sk, 4.5 tfl), and #2 tkl'r RFr Ryan Toscano (9 st, 67 tkl, 3.0 tfl). The Wildcats allowed a CAA worst 29.6 ppg & 415 ypg. This year all 4 return and if they stay healthy should be able to make some solid improvement even in the new system under their former position coach, who is the new DC.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - In 2019 the secondary lost their starting SS (11 st, 61 tkl, 5.5 tkl, 3 int, 5 pbu) & a bkp CB (3 st, 25 tkl, 4 pbu). They returned 4 of their 5 starters in 2nd tm CAA FS Pop Lacey (11st, 79 tkl, 2 int, 5 pbu), WS Evan Horn (11 st, 57 tkl, 3 tfl, 4 int, 5 pbu), CB Prince Smith (8 st, 37 tkl, 2 int, 8 pbu) & CB Isaiah Perkins (11 st, 29 tkl, 7 pbu). Despite Lacey missing the last 6 games with injury they went from the CAA's #5 Pass Efficiency D (58.8%) allowing a CAA best 181 ypg pass and a very good 10-12 ratio. For the spring of '21 "season" they had to replace #3 tkl'r CB Smith (11 st, 64 tkl, 2 tfl, 3 int, 7 pbu) & #11 CB Perkins (11 st, 39 tkl, 1 int, 8 pbu). They returned #1 tkl'r AA WS Horn (11 st, 70 tkl, 4 sk, 3 tfl, 4 int, 5 pbu), #2 SS Pop Bush (11 st, 69 tkl, 4.5 tfl, 3 pd), #8 S Max Oxendine (6 st, 43 tkl) & CB Derek Thompson (9 tkl, 2 pbu). In their 1 game season they gave up 192 yds pass & 3 pass td vs Albany. Last year S Oxendine departed but everyone else returned. Surprisingly UNH finished last in the CAA in Pass Efficiency D (66.0 %, 23-1) allowing a CAA worst 267 ypg pass. This year they lose 3rd Tm CAA WS Horn (#6 tkl'r, 54 tkl, 2 tfl, 2 int, 6 pbu). They return 7 DB's who combined for 44 sts last year led by #4 tkl'r FS Noah Stansbury (11 st, 62 tkl, 2.5 tfl, 3 int, 4 pbu), #7 CB Randell Harris (10 st, 48 tkl, 2 int, 5 pbu), #8 SS Bush (7 st, 54 tkl, 2 int, 5 pbu) & #9 CB Thompson (10 st, 39 tkl). Despite the loss of their top man, they have only 1 way to go.

SPECIAL TEAMS - In 19 UNH returned K Jason Hughes, who hit 5-8 FG L/41 in '18 along with 3rd tm P Drew Sanborn (40.2 avg). In the the spring of '21 ssn they had to replace P Sanburn (41.0 avg) & K Hughes (14-17, L/45, P Auden Cadogen avg 33.5 ypp & K Jordan Conn had 2 TB/4 KO 7 made 2-3 xp in their 1 game ssn. Both returned last year. This year they lose K/O Conn (4 TB/37 KO, 0-5 FG). They return K/P Sean Lebane (2-6 fg L/36, 42.6 ypp) & P Cadogen (41.1 avg, 38.4 tm net) and should be improved.

COACHES - New Hampshire has their first new full HC since 1999, as Sean McDonnell retired after leading the Wildcats to an overall 157-104 record. He took a medical leave missing the '19 ssn. He led UNH to 14 straight playoff games from 2004-'17 but

finished with 3 losing ssns but that includes an 0-1 in the 2020 Covid shortened ssn. Former UNH QB ('04-'07) Rick Santos takes over as HC after being the associate HC/QB cch the past 3 ssns, including serving as the Interim HC in 2019 leading UNH to a 6-5 finish. He was the QB cch/Pass gm coor at Columbia from '16-'18 after being UNH's WR cch from '13-'15. Brian Scott takes over as OC after being UNH's co-OC/Run gm Coor last year. He previously spent 1 season as Run gm Coor at Towson after 13 seasons as the OC at Old Dominion. New DC Garrett Gillick was promoted after being UNH's LB cch the last 8 years. They return 2nd yr STC Garrett McLaughlin, who was the STC at Bates College the previous 3 ssns.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - In 2019, The Wildcats under an Interim-HC returned 7 starters but had to replace their #6 career passer. While they improved some from 17.8 ppg in '18 to 20.2 ppg they went from #11 to #12 in the CAA in scoring and while they remained #11 in Total Offense they improved from 283 to 337 ypg. In the spring of '21 one game "season" they put up 20 pts and 186 yds. Last year their starting QB Max Brosmer from '19 & '20 missed the season with injury and they returned 7 starters but were again last in the CAA in scoring (16.5 ppg) & Total Offense (284 ypg). This year the offense returns 8 starters and while they lose their top rusher, they return their top 4 receivers and also look to get back QB Brosmer. While they have a new "OC" he was a co-OC here last year, so their will be a lot a familiarity despite the change and the offense really has only 1 way to go.

DEFENSE - In 2019 the defense returned 6 starters but improved from allowing 22.8 ppg (#4 CAA) in '18 to 20.1 ppg (#2) despite going from allowing 310 ypg (#2) to 353 ypg (#2). They allowed 24 pts but just 224 yds vs Albany in the spring of '21's only game. Last year the defense returned 6 starters but shockingly plummeted to last in the CAA in Scoring & Total Defense allowing 29.6 ppg & 415 ypg. This year they return 8 starters and 12 of their top 15 tacklers including their top 4. Their new DC has been the LB cch for the last 8 years and so will also have some familiarity with the players. Like the offense they have only one way to go, but unlike the offense, they have been much better in recent seasons & so should find it easier to return to their normal finish in the top of the CAA.

2022 - Last year New Hampshire looked to have returned to their winning ways opening the season 3-0. They then ran into a Pitt team that had been upset the week before and they took out their frustrations on the Wildcats. They allowed 77 pts & 707 yds to the Panthers, which did skew their defensive stats for the season. They then led JMU 21-17 into the 4Q but lost 23-21. They were then shocked by Dartmouth 38-21. They were still 3-3 and could have pulled the season out but they surprisingly lost their last 5 games all by 13+ ppg. Finishing 3-8 was even more disappointing as long time head coach Sean McDonnell retired after leading the Wildcats to an overall 157-104 record including to leading them 14 straight playoffs from 2004-'17. While normally replacing a 23 year HC, DC & co-OC would look to be a rebuilding process, New Hampshire has the advantage that their new HC served as their Interim-HC for the 2019 season. Their new OC was co-OC here last year & has a combined 13 yrs experience as an OC in FBS & FCS and the New DC has been the LB cch here the past 8 years and so should be familiar with his players. They replace Pitt with Western Michigan, ironically the team that upset Pitt last year, causing their frustrations. They also have JMU move off their schedule and they avoid Villanova & Delaware while facing their toughest conference foes toward the end of the season. The schedule should help as the Wildcats have a shot at a winning season but will need some luck to be in the playoff hunt this year.