

PORTLAND ST

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - Davis Alexander started every game since starting the finale in 2017. In 2019 Alexander threw for 2,928 yards (57.0%) with a 25-8 ratio & was the #2 rusher with 517 yards (4.2, 5 td). Alexander was back last fall and they also added former Cal QB Jaden Casey (PS#38). Alexander would start all 11 games last season and threw for 3,075 yards (61.4%, 21-12) and was 3rd Tm Big Sky. The Vikings lose their 3-year starter at QB this season. They do return Casey, but he attempted just 3 passes last fall. PSU brings in former Oregon & Tarleton St QB Mike Irwin and they add JUCO Nathan West along with Utah Tech transfer Keegan Stancato. Casey is has a year in the program under his belt, so he will likely be the frontrunner for the job, but this position is a ? for us overall as there isn't a ton of experience here.

RUNNING BACKS - Coming into '21 PSU lost their top rusher from 2019 (769, 5.4, 8 td) along with their #4 rusher (275, 3.6), but returned #3 rusher Malik Walker (284, 4.3). Last fall Walker started all 11 games for the Vikings at RB and was the #1 rusher with 879 yards (5.0, 11 td) and was 3rd Tm Big Sky. Jalynee McGee finished #2 (259, 5.3) while QB Alexander was the #3 rusher. This season the Vikings lose their top rusher, but they do return J. McGee along with Ahmir McGee (38, 3.8). They also add former Boise St RB Andrew Van Buren (PS#53) who was their goal line RB & ran for 599 yards (3.3) and 15 td's the past 2 seasons. If someone can emerge as the top RB to replace Walker, this unit will be in decent shape overall for '22.

RECEIVERS - PSU lost a WR (8 st, 626, 16.5, 8 td) & an AA TE (10 st, 474, 13.2, 2 td) going into 2021. The unit did return 3 of their top 5 including Mataio Taumoepeau (6 st, 459, 14.8, 4 td) & Beau Kelly (12 st, 442, 14.3, 3 td). They also added Nebraska transfer WR Darien Chase (PS#63). However, leading WR from 2019 Emmanuel Daigbe (9 st, 651, 16.3, 7 td, 3rd Tm Big Sky) would miss the entire season with an injury. Kelly would step up & take over as the #1 guy (11 st, 981, 14.2, 10 td) and was 3rd Tm Big Sky. Nate Bennett was the #2 receiver with 616 yards (12.3) and Chase finished #3 (4 st, 579, 10.7) while Talalemotu was #4 (7 st, 573, 13.6). The good news for this unit is that the top 5 receivers all return this season & Daigbe is back healthy. If a QB can emerge this unit has plenty of talent to have a productive season catching the ball.

OFFENSIVE LINE - The OLine paved the way for 196 ypg (4.5) in 2019, but they did allow 38 sacks (9.7%). Going into 2021 this unit lost 4 starters from 2019's OLine. The cupboard was not bare though as PSU returned 5 OL who combined for 15 starts in 2019. However the Vikings only ran for 128 ypg (4.1) last season, but the OLine did improve to allowing just 20 sacks (4.5%). This season the

Vikings bring back 4 starters on the OLine led by RG Shiloh Ta'ase (10/20) and C Tyson Pauling (11/15). They also add transfers from Washington and Fresno St. With another offseason under their belts to build chemistry & cohesion we expect the rushing totals to improve and the pass protection to once again be solid for the Vikings OLine.

DEFENSIVE LINE - The DLine allowed 148 rush ypg (4.3) and collected 26 sacks (8.2%) in 2019. The DLine lost 2 starting DT's (9 st, #8 tkl'r, 5.5 sk) and (11 st, #9, 8 tfl) along with a DE (8 st, #13, 5.5 sk). The Vikings returned 3 DL who combined for 20 starts in 2019 led by DE Jake Porter (12 st, #7 tkl'r, 4.5 sk) and DT Semise Kofe (4 st, #11, 7.5 tfl). The Vikings run defense had an up & down season at times as they held 5 foes to under 90 rush yards but gave up 200+ rush yards. Overall they gave up 148 rush ypg (4.3) and they collected 26 sacks (0 sacks L/2 games). DE VJ Malo led the unit with 45 tackles (10 st, 10.5 sk, 9.5 tfl) and was 2nd Tm Big Sky. Malo returns this season along with DE Porter (6 st, 22 tkl, 4 tfl, 3.5 sk), but they lose DT starter Semise Kofe (11 st, 37 tkl, 5.5 tfl) along with Holden Williams (10 tkl) and Noah Yunker (5 tkl, 4.5 tfl). They do add San Jose St transfer DT EJ Ane (62 tkl, 5.5 tfl L3Y) and this unit remains in good shape entering the season.

LINEBACKERS - The LB unit lost their top 2 entering last season from 2019. They did return a pair of players who had 7+ starts in 2019 along with a few backups. The Vikings defense did allow foes to gain 20 ypg above their season average (#72 FCS). Parker McKenna led the team with 88 tackles (11 st, 4 tfl) and Justice Pagan was the #7 tackler (5 st, 39 tkl, 6.5 tfl). Both McKenna and Pagan return this season along with ROV Tyreese Shakir (8 st, 32 tkl, 4 pbu, 2 int), but they do lose Nicholas Ah Sam (11 st, 41 tkl, 7.5 tfl) and Alexander Lozano (22 tkl 3 tfl). They also add a Utah St transfer at LB. With 5 of the top 7 back though for this season, we expect this unit to have a productive year helping lead the PSU defense.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - PSU slipped to allowing 271 ypg pass with a 30-12 ratio in '19. Last year the lost three starters from 2019, but returned All-American Anthony Adams (11 st, #2 tkl'r). Despite losing a trio of starters the Vikings pass D did show some improvement as they allowed 246 ypg (63.8%) with a 22-9 ratio. Adams again led this unit (11 st, 52 tkl, 5 pbu, 3 int) and was 1st Tm Big Sky! S Xavier Bell (11 st, 50 tkl, 3 tfl, 7 pbu) and Broderick Harrell (L/6 st, 48 tkl, 3.5 tfl, 5 pbu) both had productive seasons as well. This unit returns starters at all 4 positions and the Vikings pass defense should take another step forward this season.

SPECIAL TEAMS - Cody Williams hit 11-14 fg's in 2018 (L/52) and was 3rd Tm Big Sky. Williams connected on 15-22 fg's (L/56) and was 3rd Tm Big Sky again. Williams went just 1-3 fg's last fall and Gianni Smith was 5-8 fg's (L/49). Seth Vernon averaged 43.2 yards per punt (37.3 net) in 2019 and last fall Vernon averaged 44.9 yards per punt (38.7 net). Last season WR Spiker led with 458 KR yards (19.9) WR Kelly led with 115 PR yards (14.4). This season the Vikings get back both return men & kicker Smith, but lose Williams and Vernon. Smith did well with fg's LY and if they can find a successful replacement at P they should have a productive ST unit this fall.

COACHES - Bruce Barnum enters his 8th season at Portland St, but after going 9-3 and making the playoffs in 2015 in his 1st season, Barnum is just 17-40 since 2016. Barnum was at Portland St from 2010-14 as the OC and before that was the OC at Cornell from 2007-09. Skyler Fulton was promoted to OC in 2021 and began coaching at PSU in 2019 as the WR coach. Prior to PSU, Fulton was the receivers coach for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 2018 & was an offensive assistant there in 2017. Payam Saadat has been the DC here since the 2019 season and also is the associate HC. Before PSU Saadat was the DL coach at Cal Poly from 2016-17 and was also the co-DC at Army from 2009-13.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - In 2018 the Vikings had the Big Sky's #7 scoring (27.5 ppg) & #6 in total offense (394 ypg). In 2019 they improved to the #4 scoring offense (35.7 ppg) & #4 in total offense (454 ypg). Going into 2021 PSU returned 5 starters on offense from the 2019 team. The Vikings finished #7 in scoring offense in the Big Sky last fall (27.5 ppg) and they were #3 in total offense as they averaged 414 ypg. This season PSU does lose their QB and their top RB, but they return their top 5 receivers and 4 of their 5 starting OL from last season are back. If a new QB can step up & replace the 3-year starter departing, this offense should be able to have a solid season overall.

DEFENSE - In 2018 Portland St's defense was #6 in both scoring (36.2) & total defense (419 ypg). In 2019 they were again #6 in scoring (30.0 ppg) & #5 in total defense (410 ypg). Last year the defense returned just 4 starters from 2019 and the Vikings had the #7 scoring defense (29.5 ppg) and also the #7 total defense, allowing 395 ypg for the season. This season the Vikings return 9 starters and 12 of the top 16 tacklers overall, so if the unit as a whole can remain healthy we should see some improvements from the Vikings defense.

2022 - Since snapped their 15-year playoff drought in 2015, the Vikings have not recorded a winning season, but came close last season finishing 5-6 despite playing 2 FBS teams. They went 4-4 in Big Sky play & were +27 ypg vs conference foes. This fall 16 starters return for Portland St, but they must replace a 3-year starter at QB. The Vikings open their season with road games at San Jose St and at Washington. After a bye they open Big Sky play on the road vs Montana. They do avoid a pair of playoff teams from last season in Montana St and UC Davis, and they get defending Big Sky champ Sac St at home but travel to face Eastern Washington. Though they have a hole at QB this team returns plenty of talent and as long as they aren't overwhelmed by injury the Vikings could secure their first winning season since 2015.