

# PRINCETON TIGERS

## POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

**QUARTERBACKS** - In '19 Princeton had to replace the Ivy League Offensive POY for the 2nd straight season. Keith Davidson stepped in and threw for 2,569 while completing 66.8% with a 20-6 ratio. Last year Davidson departed. Cole Smith won the job and put up identical numbers. He had 412 in the opener vs Lehigh and finished with 2,570 (67%, 14-8). He was also their #2 rusher with 218 (2.0). Smith feasted on his lesser foes, with a 10-0 ratio vs Lehigh, Brown and Stetson (combined 8-23) but only had a 4-8 ratio in their other 7 games. Colorado transfer Blake Stenstrom (PS#43) was the backup and saw action in 5 games, throwing for 44 yards (55.6%, 0-0). Smith departs so it appears Stenstrom is the next man up and based on the Tigers track record they will be just fine with a new QB.

**RUNNING BACKS** - Collin Eady was one of 3 Princeton players that topped 600 rush yards in '18. He then led in '19 with 799 (5.0) and 12 td's. Last year he returned but they lost their #2 rusher (481, 5.5). Eady was injured early vs Dartmouth then missed the last 2 and only led with 471 (4.3) and 10 td's. John Volker was their next best RB with just 126 (3.6). Eady and Trey Gray (121, 3.4) are gone this year while Volker returns along with Ja'Derris Carr (119, 2.6). Austin Carbone was a member of the 4x100 Ivy League Champs on the Track squad back in '17. He has mostly been a ST's contributor but might find a role with this less experienced unit.

**RECEIVERS** - Princeton lost their top 3 including a 1,000 yard WR heading into '19. Jacob Birmelin led with 767 (12.8). Dylan Classi was #2 with 495 (14.6) and Andrew Griffin had 490 (14.4). Their top 2 returned last year. Birmelin had 175 vs Brown and led again with 784 (12.3). Andrei Iosivas emerged as their #2 with 703 (17.2). Classi was close behind at #3 with 621 (17.7). This year they lose Birmelin but Iosivas and Classi are both back so they have more returning yards than they did last year (1324 vs 1262) so we are calling this unit improved despite losing their top guy.

**OFFENSIVE LINE** - Princeton had one of the best Rush attacks in recent Ivy League history in '18, rushing for 295 ypg (6.5). They lose their dual threat QB in '19 and dipped to just 165 (4.3) with 16 sacks. Last year they had 3 starters back plus they got All Ivy League OL Reilly Radosevich back after he missed the '19 season. The experience didn't help much as they fell to 130 rush ypg (3.2) and allowed 33 sacks (10.4%). This year they lose a pair of 2nd Team All-Ivy League OL's in LG Radosevich (10 st) and RG David Hoffman (10 st) along with C Nikola Ivanisevic (9 st). They get 2nd Team All-Ivy League LT Henry Byrd back as 1 of 2 returning starters. This is a less experienced unit but it's not like they have big shoes to fill after a poor showing last year.

**DEFENSIVE LINE** - In '18 Princeton allowed just 96 ypg (3.1) and they posted 29 sacks (9%). In '19 Samuel Wright led with 4.5 sacks and the Tigers slipped to 113 rush ypg (3.5) with 25 sacks (7.4%). Last year 3 of their top 5 returned including Wright. This unit was even better than the '18 version, allowing just 75 ypg (2.6) with 33 sacks (8.5%). Wright tied for #1 in the Ivy with 11.5 sacks and was named 1st Team All-Ivy. This year Wright departs but the rest of the unit returns. They have 5 back that posted at least 10 tackles last year including Uche Ndudwe who had 6 sacks and was 4th Team All-Ivy. The Tigers were #2 in the Ivy in rush D last year and this unit is improved but their rush D numbers might take a hit with a less experienced back 7 behind them.

**LINEBACKERS** - In '19 James Johnson was Princeton's top tackler with 67 (8.5 tfl) and Jeremiah Tyler led with 14.5 tfl's and was their #2 tackler (62 tkl). Princeton brought back their #1, #2, #9 and #13 tacklers last year. This time Tyler led with 58 tackles (7 tfl) and Johnson was #2 with 53 (6 tfl). Daniel Beard was their #4 tackler with 35 and led with 8 pbu's. All 3 depart this year. They do get back their #6, #10, #12 and #18 tacklers. Tyler was a 4th Team All-American and Johnson was 3rd Team All-Ivy so they have some big shoes to fill.

**DEFENSIVE BACKS** - Princeton allowed 238 pass ypg in '19 but was still #2 in pass D efficiency (61%, 13-14). The Tigers had 5 of their top 6 DB's returning last year including Sultaan Shabazz who led with 3 int's. They only lost their #4 tackler. Princeton allowed 205 pass ypg but slipped 1 spot, down to 3rd (58.6%, 14-9). This year Princeton loses Trevor Forbes (#5 tkl'r, 1 int, 5 pbu), Christian Brown (#7 tkl'r, 2 int, 4 pbu), Delan Stallworth (#9 tkl'r, 2 pbu), Shabazz (#11 tkl'r, 3 pbu) and Matthew Winston (#15 tkl'r, 1 int, 4 pbu). Only 1 of their top 6 return so this is their least experienced unit and Princeton's biggest question mark.

**SPECIAL TEAMS** - In '19 Tavish Rice only attempted 8 field goals season, making 5 (L/46) while punter Will Powers averaged 40.2 ypp (36.5 net). Jacob Brimelin averaged 8.7 PR and Trey Grey had a 21.2 KR average. Last year they had to replace their kicker. Jeffrey Sexton made 13-19 fg's (L/46) and George Triplett made 2 of 3 attempts (L/33). Powers improved to a 43.8 average and a 38.2 net. Brimelin averaged 6.3 PR and JoJo Hawkins had a 15.8 KR average. Powers is back again while Triplett will have to take over at kicker since Sexton departed. This was an above average ST's unit last year and they could be as good if Triplett can step in and be successful.

**COACHES** - Bob Surace is back for his 11th year as head coach of Princeton. He has a 65-45 record and had led the Tigers to shared of 4 Ivy League Titles. He was previously the head coach at DIII Western Connecticut St in '00-'01 and led them to the playoffs in his 2nd year. He moved on to be an assistant with the Cincinnati Bengals from '02-'09 before trading one set up stripes for another. Former Princeton OL Mike Willis became one of the youngest position coaches when he returned here in '16 as TE coach. He was promoted to OC and Assistant Head Coach in '17. DC Steve Verbit has been coaching here for 37 years! He has coached the Ivy League Defensive POY in 4 of the last 8 seasons! Verbit was also on Delaware's staff when they won a National Title back in 1979! ST Coor Mike Mendenhall is in his 7th year and was also the ST Coach at NC Central for 5 years.

## FORECAST

**OFFENSE** - In '18 Princeton lost the Ivy League Offensive Player of the Year but got back John Lovett who was a dynamic runner before an injury caused him to miss the '17 season. Lovett led the Tigers to 47 ppg and 537 ypg as Princeton went 10-0. They were #1 in the FCS, averaging 163 ypg more than their foes allowed on average! Lovett was gone in '19 and while the Tigers couldn't possibly match their production but were still #3 in Scoring and Total Offense (32 ppg/425 ypg). Last year they had 6 starters back. They had the #1 Scoring Offense in the Ivy League with 33.4 but were 3rd in Total Offense (395 ypg). This year only 5 starters return. They still have a talented QB in Colorado transfer Blake Stenstrom and experienced WR's but their RB's and Oline are question marks so they may take a step back this year.

**DEFENSE** - Princeton allowed just 13 ppg and 297 ypg during their unbeaten season of 2018. In '19 they allowed 18 ppg and 345 ypg which was good for 2nd in Scoring and 3rd in Total Defense. Last year 9 starters returned. Princeton had the #1 Total Defense in the Ivy League, allowing just 281 ypg but they were 3rd in Scoring D at 17.4. They only have 4 starters back this year. Their top 5 tacklers all depart and only 3 of their top 11 return so they may take a step back here as well.

**2022** - Princeton was 5-1 then lost their last 4 games in '17 to only finish .500 for the third time in 4 years. The Tigers were +73 ypg against conference foes and were -4 Net Close Losses so we felt they would be improved in '18 and called for Princeton to win the Ivy League. They didn't just win the Ivy League, but they dominated all the way to a 10-0 season and were +191 ypg vs conference foes. They finished the season ranked #9 in the Coaches Poll. In '19 they won their first 7 games before suffering a 17 point loss to Dartmouth in Yankee Stadium then a 51-14 shellacking at the hands of Yale. The Tigers won their finale to finish 8-2, good for 3rd in the Ivy League (+17 ypg vs Ivy foes). Last year they returned off the one year hiatus. Their defense posted back-to-back shutouts to start the season (won by comb'd 95-0). They didn't give up their first points until the 3rd quarter vs Columbia in a 24-7 win. They trailed 21-6 3Q vs Monmouth but won on a game winning 35 yard field goal with :10 left. They never trailed against Brown in a shootout win 56-42. The Tigers beat Harvard without kicking scoring an offensive td. They had 3 fg's and a blocked punt td and won in OT on a 2 pt conversion. The Tigers were 7-0 when they lost to Dartmouth 31-7 then won their last 2 games to finish 9-1 and clinch a share of the Ivy League Title (+58 ypg vs Ivy). The Tigers finished Ranked #21 in the Coaches Poll. This year they only have 9 starters back. They get 4 Ivy League home games including Dartmouth but face both Harvard and Yale on the road. Princeton was picked to finish 3rd in the Ivy by the Media and if they pull out one of those road games then they could take a share of the League Title again.