

RHODE ISLAND RAMS

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - In 2019 the Rams had to replace 2nd Tm CAA QB JaJuan Lawson (7 st), who threw for 1,711 (66.7%, 17-5) & was the #3 rusher (172, 2.3, 5 td), despite missing 4 games. They returned QB Vito Priore (781, 54.6%, 7-4), who started the 4 games Lawson missed. Priore threw for 3,268 yards (59.6%, 22-12) in the Rams 2-10 season. In the spring of '21 season they lost Priore. Maryland/Tennessee transfer Kasim Hill (PS#26) started all three games hitting 36-of-63 (57.1%) for 389 yards with a 2-2 ratio, he also rushed for 49 yards and a pair of touchdowns, including the game-winner vs Villanova. He split time with Liberty transfer Brandon Robinson (7-12-124-0-1), who was the #2 rusher with 63 yds (4.5, 2 td). Against nationally-ranked Delaware, he rushed for 43 yards and 2 td's on nine carries while also completing 3-of-6 passes for 85 yards. Both QB's returned last year. Hill started 10 and threw for 2,170 (53.2%, 18-6) & was the #3 rusher with 253 (2.2 ypc, 6 td). Robinson played in 8, starting vs Maine but hit just 16-30-125-1-1 & rushed for 75 yds (4.2). This year they lose Robinson They bring in JC transfer QB Kennique Bonner-Steward (PS#10) who RS at Temple in '19, and he provides some experienced depth (798 pass & 312 rush at JC). With Hill for his third season in the offense, he could put up his best numbers yet, if he stays healthy.

RUNNING BACKS - In '19 the Rams returned 8 of their top 9 rushers including their top 2 in RB Zoe Bryant (6 st, 456, 4.0, 101 rec) and RB Naim Jones (4 st, 435, 4.4). Bryant led with 493 (4.3) despite missing the last 4 games with injury. Jones stepped in and had 444 of his 493 (4.7) yards in the final 5 games. Matt Pires was #3 with 117 (7.8). In the spring of '21 season they had to replace Jones. Pires moved to WR while Bryant returned he had just 5-28 in the opener & missed the last 2 games. UMass transfer Kevin Brown burst on the scene and led with 256 (5.2) in just 3 games and was CAA Rookie of the Year, the first Rhode Island player to win a major year-end league award since Joe Casey was Atlantic 10 Rookie of the Year in 2005. Both He benefitted from the presence of 1st Tm CAA FB Joey Kenny. Last year Brown was expected to return but missed the season with injury. They added Purdue transfer Tirek Murphy but he played in just 5 games (21, 2.3, 27 rec). They had one old & one new RB step up. Rsr Justice Antrum, whose best prior season was 2018 (99, 7.1). He started the first 6 and led with 591 (4.7, 6 td, 65 rec) despite missing 2 games. True frosh Jaylen Smith started the last 5 finishing #2 with 473 (5.2, 1 td, 110 rec). He led the Rams in all-purp yds thanks to 513 KR yds. This year they lose Antrium & 3rd Tm AA FB Kenny (7 st), who was their #6 receiver (126, 18.0, 2 td). They return Smith along with #4 rusher Gabe Sloan (82, 3.2) and get Brown back, giving them a much more experience unit than last year & could improve.

RECEIVERS - In '19 Rhode Island lost 3 of their top 6 receivers who combined for 660 yds including WR Marven Beauvais (2 st, 336, 10.8, 7 td) & 2nd Tm CAA TE Tyler Burke (11 st, 238, 15.9, 3 td). Their top 2 receivers returned in 1st Tm CAA WR Aaron Parker (955, 15.7, 10 td) & WR Isaiah Coulter (604, 14.4, 3 td). Even in a 2-10 season both topped 1,000 yards with 1st Tm CAA Parker leading with 1,224 (15.1) and 2nd Tm CAA Colter #2 with 1,039 (14.4). Ahmere Dorsey was #3 with 605 (14.1). Unfortunately the top 3 moved on and the leading returnee in the spring of '21 season was Ivory Frimpong (122, 8.7) and moved in RB Pires. Frimpong led with 186 (13.3, 1 td) in just 3 games & earned 2nd Tm CAA with. Last year he returned along with #2 Ed Lee (144, 14.4) & #3 TE Caleb Warren (82, 10.3) & #4 WR Pires (46, 23.0). They also added Rutgers transfer Paul Woods. Frimpong (7 st) led again with 496 (13.8, 2 td), while Woods (9 st) was #2 with 423 (17.6, 1 td). Pires (9 st) was #3 with 391 (15.0) and led the Rams with 5 td's. TE Warren (7 st) was a close #4 (386, 16.8, 3 td) & earned 1st Tm CAA despite missing 3 games. This year they lose Frimpong & Pires. They return Woods, Warren & #5 WR Lee (165, 10.3, 2 td) and add transfers Darius Savedge (ODU), Dejuan Ellis (Maryland), Pedro Schmidt (North Dakota) & TE Kevin Schaeffer (Rutgers). Despite losing 2 of their top 3 the unit has the talent to improve.

OFFENSIVE LINE - In '19 the OLine lost 3 OL, who started 8+ including Ball ST transfer RT Kadin Booker (10 st) & C Dwayne Scott, a 3 year starter, who went through spring before deciding to grad transfer to Boston College. They returned 4 OL who combined for 26 starts led by two 11 gm starters in 1st Tm CAA LT Kyle Murphy & RG Kevin Lawrence. After the OLine paved the way for 127 (3.6) rush in 2018 with 11.8% sacks they slipped to 92 ypg rush (3.4) but did cut the sacks to 5.2%. In the spring they lost both Murphy (NYG) and Lawrence. They returned a pair of 12 games starters in Nick Correia & Evan Lovell along with C Sebastian Delasoudas who was a team a team captain as a Soph. They improved to 148 ypg (4.1) but allowed 13.3% sacks. Last year the top 11 OL returned led by 2nd Tm CAA RG Correia C Delasoudas & LG Lovell. While all 5 OL started all 11 games, they slipped a little to just 134 ypg (3.8) but allowed just 26 sacks (8.3%). This year they lose 3rd Tm CAA LG Lovell. They return their other 4 starters in 2nd Tm CAA RG Correia, C Delasoudas, RT AJ Cornelius & LT Lorenzo Thompson. They also add Miami, FI transfer Michael Scibelli. This is a very experienced OLine and should improve this year.

DEFENSIVE LINE - In 2019 the DLine lost 2 of their top 7 DL who combined for 5 sts, 31 tkl, 1 sk & 4.5 tfl. They returned their top 5, who combined for 39 sts, 189 tkl, 19 sk & 12 tfl giving then a solid front. They were led by DE's LB Mack (10 st, 52 tkl, 6 sk, 5 tfl) & Andre Bibeault (6 st, 40 tkl, 4.5 sk, 2 tfl). Surprisingly they slipped from allowing 163 ypg rush (4.3, #9 CAA) with 25 sacks to allowing 244 ypg rush (6.3) with just 16 sacks on the year. In the spring of '21 season they had to replace 2 DL and Mack moved to LB as the Rams switched to a 3 man front. They returned DE Bibeault (12 st, 43 tkl, 1.5 tfl) and added a rare HT true frosh in DT Westley Neal (PS#76). In their 3 games they allowed a CAA worst 361 (6.2) rush with just 5 sacks. Last year they returned their top 3 in DE James Makszin (10 tkl, 2 tfl), DT Neal (10 tkl, 1 sk) & DE Bibeault (8 tkl, 2.5 tfl). They also added Rutgers transfer Matt Thomas. They improved to the CAA's t-#3 rush defense giving up just 84 ypg rush (2.4). This year they lose DE Bibeault (10 st, 30 tkl, 3.5 sk, 2 pbu). They return DT Neal (9 st, 41 tkl, 2.5 sk, 6.5 tfl), DE Makszin (9 st, 28 tkl, 2 tfl), DE Matt Thomas (2 st, 16 tkl, 2 sk, 1 tfl) & DT Dylan Brown (2 st, 11 tkl, 1 sk). Despite the loss of a 3+ year starter, this is a deep unit & should be on par with last seasons.

LINEBACKERS - In '19 the Rams lost two of three 11 game LB starters in Justin Hogan (52 tkl, 2.5 tfl) & Nas Jones (48 tkl, 3 sk, 4.5). They returned #1 tkl'r Brayan Javier-Castillo (78 tkl, 6.5 tfl, 2 int) but their next 2 returning LB's combined for just 19 tkl. They went from allowing 28.2 ppg (#9 CAA) & 345 ypg (#6) in '18 to giving up a CAA worst 36.3 ppg & 452 ypg. In the spring of '21 season, they had to replace Castillo. They returned #3 tkl'r Jake Fire (73 tkl, 3.5 tfl, 2 pbu), #8 Andre Blackett (47 tkl, 4.5 tfl) & #14 Andre Johnson (23 tkl, 1.5 sk). They added a spot in the new defense but moved in DE Mack and added Boston College transfer Evan Stewart. In their 3 games they allowed 27.3 ppg (#9) & a CAA worst 429 ypg. Blackett led 20 tkl, Johnson was the #3 (17 tkl), Stewart was #4 (15 tkl, 2 sk), Mack was #6 (14 tkl) while Fire was #8 (11 tkl). They added in UConn transfer Oneil Robinson at NB. Everyone looked to return last year but then Johnson missed the season with injury. They allowed 25.4 ppg (#7) & 363 ypg (#8). This year they lose two 11 game starters in t-#1 tkl'r Blackett (88 tkl, 3 tfl, 1 int) & #3 2nd Tm CAA Mack (51 tkl, 2.5 tfl), who led the team with 8.5 sacks. They return t-#1 tkl'r Stewart (11 st, 88 tkl, 2 sk, 7 pbu), #5 NB Robinson (10 st, 46 tkl, 1 sk, 1 pbu), #13 Fire (24 tkl, 0.5 sk), #15 Christian Arrington (20 tkl, 2 tfl) & #16 LB Jarrett Martin (2 st, 16 tkl, 4 pbu). The loss of 2 of their top 3 could see them slip a little this year.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - In 2019 the secondary lost 3 of their top 8, who combined for 21 sts, 105 tkl, 3 int & 10 pbu. They returned 5 DB who combined for 22 sts, 131 tkl, 4 int & 7 pbu led by S Momodou Mbye (9 st, 41 tkl, 1 int). They went from #7 CAA in Pass Efficiency Defense (182 ypg pass, 56.2%, 16-12) in '18 to #9 (208 ypg pass, 58.1%, 26-12). In the spring of '21 season, they had to replace #2 tkl'r CB Rashod Dickerson (12 st, 73 tkl, 2 int, 6 pbu), #4 S Mbye (10 st, 67 tkl, 2 tfl, 5 int), #5 S Brian Campbell (8 st, 64 tkl, 2 sk, 2 pbu) & #10 CB Malik Wilder (12 st, 42 tkl, 5 pd). Their top two returnees were #6 tkl'r S Malik Gavek (5 st, 55 tkl, 2 int) & #11 DB Kwadie Brown (1 st, 31 tkl, 1.5 tfl, 5 pbu). They also added Towson transfer 3rd Tm CAA S Coby Tippet (11 st, 5 int in '19). The young unit had 10 ppu and 5 int's in 3 spring games & finished #4 CAA in Pass Eff D (174 ypg, 59.3%, 3-5). Last year they lost #5 tkl'r S Cayvian Holmes (14 tkl, 1 pbu). They returned 2nd Tm CAA S Tippet (10 tkl), who had 3 int in 3 games, along with #2 tkl'r S Henry Yianakopoulos (19 tkl) & #7 CB Jordan Jones (12 tkl, 4 pbu). They also added Western Carolina transfer AJ Rogers (128 tkl in 30 gms). They improved to #3 in Pass Eff D (119 ypg, 54.1%, 14-10). This year the unit loses 3rd Tm CAA S Tippet (9 st, 40 tkl, 1 int, 6 pbu). They return S Yianakopoulos (11st, 48 tkl, 4 tfl, 1 int, 6 pbu), CB Antonio Carter (10 st, 45 ykl, 6 pbu), S Malik Gavek (1 st, 35 tkl) & 2nd Tm CAA CB Jones (11 st, 35 tkl) who led with 5 int & 8 pbu. They add Fresno ST transfer Randy Jordan (3 st '19) & 3rd Tm IVY FS Jordan Colbert. (L/5 sts at Columbia LY). This should again be one of the CAA's top units.

SPECIAL TEAMS - In '19 the ST unit only lost their P (31.8 avg). They returned K CJ Carrick (6-8 FG, L/40) and 2nd Tm CAA RS Ahmere Dorsey (11.1 PR, 1 td, 28.4 KR, 2 td), who led the CAA with 1,085 total return yds. Carrick set an URI record scoring 78 pts (15-19 FG, L/44, 33-36 XP, 5 TB/61 KO). P Davey Scaum-Bartocci avg 40.4 ypp. Dorsey was 2nd Tm CAA KR (26.8) & PR (10.4). In the spring of '21 season Rhode Island managed just 17.0 on KR's & 1.33 on PR's. Scaum-Bartocci avg 44.4 ypp. Carrick was 2-2 FG & 8-8 XP. Last year everyone returned Scaum-Bartocci avg 39.6 ypp. PR Tippet (12.6) earned 1st Tm CAA. Carrick hit 11-18 FG (L43), 32-34 XP & had 6 TB/54 KO. He became URI's all-time career scoring leader (268 pts). This year they lose both Carrick & Tippet. Scaum-Bartocci returns and they add Notre Dame transfer Soph K Harrison Leonard (PS#41), who will compete with true frosh Dylan Shank & rFr Michael DeBolt but until a RS & K step up this unit may struggle.

COACHES - HC Jim Fleming returns for his 9th season leading the Rams. In 2018 he led the Rams to their first winning season in 17 years. Last year he led them to a 7-4 finish, their most wins in a 20 year span (8-3 in 2001). Fleming was the DC at UCF in '12 & '13 & was HC at Sacred Heart in 2000 & '01 leading them to a combined 21-1 record. OC Patrick Murphy returns for his 3rd season. He spent the previous 2 years as OC at Holy Cross. DC Jack Cooper also returns for his 3rd season. He spent the previous 2 yrs as an asst at Nebraska. Troy Gilmer returns for his 9th season overall at Rhode Island including his 3rd as STC/OLB cch. A former Akron LB, he spent '13 as a grad asst there.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - In 2019 the Ram's offense had to replace their 2nd Tm CAA QB, 3 of their top 6 receivers including their 2nd Tm CAA TE & 3 OL starters. They returned their top 2 RB, top 2 WR's & two 11 game starting OL including a 1st Tm CAA LT. They went from putting up 30.3 ppg (#3 CAA) & 352 ypg (#7) to just 25.7 ppg (#6) despite gaining 387 ypg (#7). In the spring of '21 season, they again lost their starting QB, #2 RB, top 3 receivers including two 1,000+ yd WR's & two 11 game starting OL. They did an FBS transfer at QB, who started all 3 games. Rhode Island produced 26.0 ppg (#3) & 319 ypg (#6). Last year their CAA ROY RB was injured & missed the season but they returned their QB, top 4 receivers, & top 11 OL and also added a Rutgers transfer WR. They finished with very similar numbers with 25.2 ypg (#3) & 343 ypg (#6). This year they lose their top RB, their AA FB, 2 of their top 3 receivers & a 3rd Tm CAA LG. They return their 2 year starting QB, get back their former CAA ROY RB along with 3 of their top 4 RB's, 3 of their top 5 receivers & 4 starting OL including their 2nd Tm CAA RG. They also add some transfers & should again be 1 of the CAA best.

DEFENSE - In 2019 Rhodes Island's defense lost two starting LB's, 3 of their top 8 DB's & a backup DL. They went from allowing 28.2 ppg (#9 CAA) & 345 ypg (#6) in '18 to a CAA worst 36.3 ppg & 452 ypg. In the spring of '21 season they had a new DC and switched from a 4 man front to a 3 man front. They lost 2 DL starters while another DL moved to LB in the new system and also had to replace an LB & 3 of their top 4 DB's. They allowed 27.3 ppg (#9) & a CAA worst 429 ypg. Last year they lost their #5 tkl'r (DB) & then their #3 tkl'r (LB) was injured & missed the season. Their other top players returned & they improved a little allowing 25.4 ppg (#7) & 363 ypg (#8). This year they lose 4 of their top 11 tkl'rs including a 2nd Tm CAA LB & 3rd Tm CAA S but return 19 of their top 23 tkl'rs including a 2nd Tm CAA CB and add several transfers giving them a very experienced unit now in their 3rd season of the defense.

2022 - In 2018 the Rams beat New Hampshire in the season finale 24-21 to finish 6-5 their first winning season in 17 years. They dropped to just 2-10 in '19 but had another winning season at 2-1 in the spring of '21. Last year they opened 4-0 including a come from behind 16-14 win over Albany & an OT win over Stony Brook. Ranked #20 they hosted #9 Delaware and with 4Q comeback won 22-15. They jumped up to #12 their highest ranking since 2001. They were held to just 162 yds & were upset by Towson 24-7. They then lost 44-0 to #5 Villanova, being shutout for the first since 2016. They only trailed Maine 31-24 in 4Q but lost 45-24. With the season falling apart, the Rams righted the ship beating UMass 35-22, just their 2nd win ever over an FBS foe & first since beating UConn in the Huskies first FBS season in 2000. The defense then stepped up and limited New Hampshire to just 159 total yards in a 28-3 win. That gave them 7 wins Rhode Island's most since going 8-3 in 2001. Despite QB Hill throwing a career high 394 yds Rhode Island lost to Elon 43-28. The Rams had 8 all-CAA selections last year, their most in a single season since 1995. There is a lot of expectations around the Rams this season as they return 14 starters overall including former FBS transfer QB Hill. They also get back CAA ROY RB Brown, who missed last year with injury. The defense returns 19 of their top 23 tacklers and add some talented transfer. They do have to replace their all-time leading scorer K Carrick but bring in a Notre Dame transfer PS#41 K to compete for his job. The Rams are one of the most experienced teams in the CAA. While Pitt replaces UMass on their schedule, Villanova is replaces by CAA newcomer Monmouth, and the Rams host Delaware, Elon, Maine & Albany. They have the talent & the schedule to not only have another winning season but have a shot at the playoffs.