

SAINT FRANCIS RED FLASH

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - Jason Brown was inexperienced in '19 but had great size (6'4" 230). He threw for over 300 yards on 3 occasions including 385 vs Sacred Heart. Brown set the single season record for yards (3084) and pass td's (28) while finishing with just 6 int's and was 2nd Tm All NEC. Brown made a surprising decision to transfer to South Carolina last fall. Former Pitt transfer Justin Sliwoski was the backup in '19, throwing for 47 yards on 11 attempts. They also added Jyron Russell who played in 4 games over 2 years at Alcorn State. It was Russell who started the first 5 games. He threw for a season high 194 vs Wagner but they turned to Sliwoski who started 5 of the last 6. Sliwoski led Saint Francis to their first road win at Duquesne in program history and finished with a 12-1 ratio. He led with 1,165 (64.7%, 118 rush) while Russell threw for 774 (52.1%, 5-4) and added 191 rush (4.8). Sliwoski returns as an all conference caliber QB and they are in much better shape entering '22.

RUNNING BACKS - Saint Francis lost their top 2 rushers entering '19. Joel Denley led with just 299 (4.6). Chris Wells was #2 with 261 (3.2) and Syaire Madden added 246 (3.7). Avery Milliner had 199 (3.2). Their leading rusher's numbers dropped but their top 4 basically matched '18, only going from 1038 to 1005 and ypc remained at 3.7. Last year they lost their #1 and #4 rushers. They still had two that topped 200 rush in '19. JUCO transfer Marques DeShield from Lackawanna CC was a huge addition. He started all 11 games, ran for 140 vs Bryant including the longest run in school history (98 yard td run). He finished with 767 (4.6), plus 228 receiving. Lovell Armstead was #2 with 296 (4.9). Their top 4 combined for 1,363 (4.4). This year they lose 3rd Tm All-NEC RB DeShields but add another Lackawanna transfer in Deondre Scott. Armstead had the best ypc of the RB's last year and Tobee Stokes (109, 10.9) has track speed so they still talented but inexperienced.

RECEIVERS - In '19 Ra'Shaun Henry and 6'8" TE EJ Jenkins proved to be the top unit in the NEC with Henry leading the NEC in both receptions (90) and yards (1,118, 12.4) and Jenkins added 779 (20.0) and a school record 13 td's. They were so good that both left for FBS schools, Henry departing for Virginia and Jenkins joined QB Brown at South Carolina. Kahtero Summers had 115 vs Eastern Michigan and led with 674 (15.3) with a team high 9 td's. Brandon Lisenby had 471 (13.4). Judah Tomb added 187 (10.4) and TE Hunter Brown contributed 184 (13.1). This year they lose 1st Tm NEC WR Summers (11 st), Tomb (2 st) and Josh McGrigg (7 st, 132, 26.4). Only 2 of their top 6 are back but they are actually in a little better shape considering they didn't just lose two FBS talents, plus they added PS#26JC Norval Black from Penn St.

OFFENSIVE LINE - SFU rushed for just 100 ypg (3.2, 18 sk) in '19. Last year four starters departed from a unit that already wasn't performing well and 8 of the 13 Oline were Fr or rFr. They did add transfers Louis Mihota (Vtech) and Teagan McDonald (Old Dominion) but neither had experience at their previous school. The Red Flash only had 1 back with starting experience in Bailey Iboleon (6 st '19) then he was lost for the season after 3 games. Despite the youth and inexperience they rushed for 146.4 (4.3) and allowed just 22 sacks. This year all 5 starters return and they get Iboleon back from injury. This goes from a completely inexperienced unit to the strength of their offense.

DEFENSIVE LINE - St Francis has allowed less than 4.0 ypc each year since 2016. In '18 they gave up just 120 (3.3) with 30 sacks (10.4%). They only lost 1 starter and 4 of their top 6 returned in '19. They allowed 116 (3.2) and sacks rose to 34 (8.9%). All 4 starters returned last year and they've had their top 5 DL back. They were led by James Watkins who posted 11 tfl's in '19. This was the strength of the defense once again. The Red Flash allowed 151 rush ypg but ypc stayed under 4.0 again (3.6). This year they only lose Calvin Beaty (1 st, #6 tkl'r), Jalen Brown (9 st, 10 tkl), Sam Cummings (9 tkl) and Yosuke Sugano (12 tkl, 2 sk). Four of their top 5 return including 1st Tm All NEC DL Donnell Brown who led with 8.5 tfl's last year. This is once again the strength of the defense.

LINEBACKERS - The Red Flash lost their #1, #9 and #14 tkl'r's at LB heading into '19. Da'Jon Lee was #2 in '18 and led in '19 with 93 tkl's and led the FCS in the regular season with 24.5 tfl's. Last year they lost 3rd Tm AA LB Lee along with his partners Brian Lee (#3 tkl'r, 12 tfl) and Jake Curry (#9 tkl'r). They had their #7 and #14 tkl'r's back but needed to replace 39 tfl's from this unit. The unit produced 3 of their top 7 tacklers but tfl's dropped to 25. This year they lost Tremayn Stott (10 st, #4 tkl'r, 2.5 tfl), Jaylen Parks (8 st, #7 tkl'r, 5 sk, 3 tfl), Jake Heiple (11 st, #13 tkl'r, 2.5 sk, 3 tfl), Maika Magalei (#14 tkl'r) and Ian White (#15 tkl'r). They do get back #2 tackler Willie O'Hara so they go from 0 starters back to 1 but the depth is inexperienced. Look for Kent St transfer Colt Jennings and rFr Joe Toepfer to step into bigger roles.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - Saint Francis allowed 171 pass ypg (53%, 15-9) in '18. They lost 3 starters (#4, #8 and #11 tkl'r's) in '19. While they didn't allow 300 pass yds in a single game, they did give up 203 pass ypg but completion % dropped to just 51.4% (14-8). Last year they lost #5 tkl'r Nick Rinella (2nd Tm All-NEC) and #7 tkl'r Dorian Jackson (1st Tm All-NEC) but they also returned their #2, #5, #8, #11 and #13 tkl'r's. They allowed just 182 pass ypg (57.8%, 14-7) and finished 4th in the NEC in pass defense efficiency. This year Saint Francis loses 1st Tm All NEC SS Martin Foray (11 st, #1 tkl'r, 5 pd), FS Gio Vonne Sanders (9 st, #3 tkl'r), Raymond Crittenden (2 st, #10 tkl'r, 2 int) and CB Christian Massie (8 st, #18 tkl'r, 3 pbu). They go from 5 of their top 7 back to just 3 of their top 7 and only 1 starter returns so they are down a few notches.

SPECIAL TEAMS - Trevor Thompson made 12-19 fg's (L/42) in '19. Ryan Oliver avg'd 37.3 ypp (33.9 net). Nick Rinella was one of the top return men in the FCS, avg 11.8 with 2 td's and 25.1 KR. The entire ST unit was replaced last year. Alex Schmoke made 15-17 fg's (L/47). Jordan Slaiby avg'd 38.9 ypp (36.5 net). Josh McGrigg avg'd 9.6 PR and 19.9 KR. This year the entire unit returns and this is the top ST unit in the NEC.

COACHES - Chris Villarrial is a 2x NEC COY entering his 11th season as HC at St. Francis. He is the winningest HC at SFU despite going just 3-19 in his first 2 seasons. He led the Red Flash to an NEC Title in '16. Marco Pecora is in his 7th year at Saint Francis and 2nd as OC. He was also the DC for 3 years here. He is the son of legendary Pitt-Johnstown Wrestling Coach Pat Pecora. Scott Lewis is one of the most accomplished players in school history and returned as DC last year. He was DC at Nebraska Kearney (DII) for 4 years. The 10 year ST Coach is Josh Hutchison.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - In '17 St Francis dipped to their lowest ppg under Villareal since his first year, avg just 21.9 in '17. They improved to 26.2 ppg but only 292 ypg in '18. In '19 they had to replace their top star QB, RB and WR but still put up 25.2 ppg and improved to 361 ypg. Last year they had to replace a QB, WR and TE who all transferred to Power 5 schools. They added Pitt transfer QB Justin Sliwoski who finished with a 12-1 ratio and they only dipped to 22.9 ppg and 323 ypg. This year they lose their top rusher and WR but Sliwoski is back and they have all 5 starters back on their Oline. 8 starters are back and they are much improved.

DEFENSE - SFU allowed under 300 ypg in B2B seasons in '17 (15 ppg, 287 ypg) and '18 (20 ppg, 290 ypg). In '19 they lost 9 of their top 15 tkl'r's including 6 of their top 9. The Red Flash held 3 of their first 5 foes to 14 pts or less but allowed 44 & 31 in losses to James Madison & Columbia. After a shutout of Long Island where they allowed -1 rush yd they gave up 30+ in 3 straight. In their final 2 games they allowed just 8 & 21 points and held Wagner and Delaware St both below 300 yards. Last year they allowed just 19.1 ppg/334 ypg including just 15 ppg/299 ypg vs NEC foes. Only 4 starters return this year and they get back 6 of their top 15 tacklers but both their Dline and LB's are actually more experienced entering this season.

2022 - He is the winningest HC at Saint Francis despite going just 3-19 in his first 2 seasons. He led the Red Flash to an NEC Title in '16. They've won at least 5 games in all but 1 season since 2012, going 4-7 in '18 but they improved to 6-6 in '19. The Red Flash were 5-6 in '17 (-1 ypg). They slipped to 4-7 in '18 and when you remove a blowout win over a D2 school they were -28 ypg. In '19 they were 4-6 and won their L/2 by 34 & 14 points to finish 6-6. The Red Flash finished +42 ypg overall and +90 ypg against NEC foes but had a blowout loss early to James Madison to skew their numbers. Last year they returned after taking a 1 year Covid hiatus. Saint Francis started 1-3 with non-conference losses to Eastern Michigan, Delaware and Norfolk St. They beat FCS bottom-feeders Morgan St and Long Island then had 3 close losses in their last 5 games. They finished 4-3 (+12 ypg) in NEC play with all 3 losses coming by a combined 5 points. This year they have 12 starters back. The offense is improved and they've got the top ST's unit in the conference but their defense is young. They only play 3 home games and 1 is against Duquesne. All 5 non-conference games are on the road so they may not match last year's 5 win total even if they finish in the top half of the NEC.