

SOUTHEAST MISSOURI

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - Coming into the 2020 season the Redhawks lost their starting QB, and former Nebraska QB Andrew Bunch took over and was inconsistent at times in the fall/spring season as he threw for 1,370 yds (56.6%) but had an 8-9 ratio. Last fall Bunch left and JUCO transfer CJ Ogbonna would take over the starting role. Ogbonna started all 11 games last fall and struggled early on as he only topped 100 pass yds in a game twice in the F/6 games, but topped 100 in each of the L/5 games including throwing for a season best 234 yds against Murray St. For the season Ogbonna threw for 1,521 yards (50.5%, 12-8) and also ran for 357 yards (3.8). This season Ogbonna is back along with former Louisville transfer Christian Perez, was 4-7 passing last season. This unit does lose backup Jalyin Williams, who threw for 211 yards (46.8%, 1-1). Ogbonna showed LY he can be a dual-threat QB, but needs to get more consistent as a passer if he is to take a step forward this season.

RUNNING BACKS - Geno Hess started the L/5 games in the spring '21 season and led with 666 yards (4.9) and 12 td's, while Zion Custis was #2 with 184 yards (3.7) and they both returned last fall. Hess started all 11 games last season, topped 100 yards in 7 games including 205 (8.2) and 3 td vs Tenn St, and overall rushed for 1,116 yards (5.5, 14 td) and was 1st Tm OVC. QB Ogbonna was the #2 rusher, and Shamenski Rucker finished as the #3 rusher (348, 4.5). Custis was limited to two games LY and ran for just 48 yards (3.4). This season Hess returns & overall 4 of the top 5 RB's return, with Custis being the lone loss. This unit is an exp'd one and should be one of the top rushing units in the OVC this season.

RECEIVERS - The receiving corps in the 2020/2021 season was led by Zack Smith (8 st, 403, 10.6, 4 td) and Johnny King (7 st, 392, 12.6, 2 td) and they both returned last fall along with Aaron Alston (4 st, 256, 14.2). The lone starter lost going into last fall was a TE (6 st). SEMO was a run-first team last season (ran of 61% of plays) so the receiving numbers were limited. King led the way with 449 yards (11 st, 18.7, 5 td) and was 2nd Tm OVC. Terrell Jester was the #2 receiver (6 st, 315, 12.6) and Rashaan Palmer finished as the #3 receiver (5 st, 275, 15.3). Alston was #4 (246, 16.4) and Z. Smith was #5 (171, 10.1). Even though SEMO is more of a running team, this unit will be hurt in 2022, losing 4 of their top 5 WR's from LY. The lone returnee is King, and they also return TE Will Weidemann (10 st, 96, 8.7). JUCO transfer Ryan Flournoy (545, 17.0, 5 td LY) or Dalyn McDonald (303, 13.8 LY) could help this unit out in the fall, but the lack of experience is concerning.

OFFENSIVE LINE - The OLine stayed relatively intact in the 2020/2021 season (the starting 5 OL each started at least 5 gms) led by 1st Tm OVC LG Jaden Rosenthal (7 sts) and 2nd Tm OVC C Shyron Rodgers (8 sts). Overall the OLine paved the way for 148 rush ypg (3.9) and gave up 13 sks in 8 gms (5.7%). Last fall the OLine brought back 4 starters and they topped 200 yards 5 times including 380 (6.6) against Tenn St. Overall on the season SEMO ran for 195 ypg (4.9) and the OLine allowed 18 sacks with 12 sacks coming in the F/6 games. This unit again brings back 4 starters, led by 2nd OVC C Zack Gieg and 3rd Tm OVC RT Nate Korte. With an exp'd OLine paving the way for an exp'd rushing attack, we see the Redhawks having success rushing the ball all season, and they should also do a good job protecting the QB as well.

DEFENSIVE LINE - The DLine allowed 162 rush ypg vs OVC foes in the 2020/2021 season. They also had just 9 sacks in 8 games (3.6%). The DLine returned 2 starters last fall in Bryson Donnell (6 st, 41 tkl, 3 tfl, 1st Tm OVC) and LaWilliam Holmes (5 st, 14 tkl) and they also bring back 2 other players with 5 sts combined. The rush defense had an up and down season as they held three foes to under 100 yds rushing but gave up 200+ rush yds in 4 games. Overall SEMO's run defense allowed 173 ypg (4.8) and collected just 16 sacks (4.6%). DE Bryce Donnell led the unit with 39 tackles (11 st, 4.5 tfl, 4 pbu) and was 2nd Tm OVC. Donnell departs this season, along with NT James Sackie (6 st, 8 tkl). DT Steven Lewis (F/10 st, 28 tkl, 1.5 tfl) and NT Lunden Manuel (5 st, 20 tkl, 4 tfl) both return. Donnell's replacement at DE could be Sam Keeper (1 st, 13 tkl, 4 fl), and this unit looks to be in decent shape with two starters returning.

LINEBACKERS - The Redhawks LB corps in 2020/2021 was led by Mike Matthews (8 st, 45 tkl, 2 tfl, 3 pbu) and Brandon Mincey (8 st, 42 tkl, 4 tfl) and they both returned last fall along with Omarrick Douglas (6 st, 26 tkl, 3.5 tfl). With 3 starters back the middle of the SEMO defense looked solid, but the Redhawks allowed 431 ypg and 31 ppg last fall. Bryce Norman started the L/7 games (played 11) and led SEMO with 66 tackles (7.5 tfl) and was 3rd Tm OVC. Douglas was the #2 tackler (10 st, 59 tkl, 2.5 sk, 3.5 tfl) and was 2nd Tm OVC. Mincey finished as the #3 tackler (9 st, 57 tkl, 9.5 tfl, 2 pbu) and was 1st Tm OVC. This unit loses Douglas & Mincey, but Norman is back along with Jacob Morrissey (2 st, 49 tkl, 3 sk). SEMO also returns LB's Keandre Booker (11 st, 37 tkl, 9.5 tfl) and Mike Matthews (F/4 st, 29 tkl). While this unit loses 2 starters, 5 of the top 7 LB's are back so this unit could help the defense perform better than LY.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - For the 2020/2021 season this unit allowed 181 pass ypg and only allowed 48.4% completions. SS Lawrence Johnson (8 st, 55 tkl, 4 pbu) and CB Shabari Davis (23 tkl, 4 pbu, 2 int) were the 2 starters back last fall. The pass defense allowed 460 yds to S.ILL and 440 to Mizzou, but against OVC foes they allowed 208 ypg (52.9%) and SEMO grabbed 11 int's last fall. This unit was led by FS Trai Hodges (10 st, 49 tkl, 8 pbu, 4 int) and he was 4th Tm OVC. CB Ty Leonard also had a solid season (10 st, 39 tkl, 5 pbu, 2 int) and was also 4th Tm OVC. Both Hodges and Leonard return this season along with safeties Dony'e Taylor (7 st, 46 tkl, 1 int) and L. Johnson, who was limited to 4 gms LY (3 st, 23 tkl). The lone starter gone is CB Davis (8 st, 21 tkl, 4 pbu). With 3 starters back & 7 of the top 8 DB's returning, the SEMO secondary looks to be in good shape for '22.

SPECIAL TEAMS - Kenny Doak was the main fg kicker in 2020/2021 and hit 5-9 fg's (L/35). Zach Haynes was the main P in the '20-'21 season and averaged 42.2 yds per punt (38.3 net). Doak returned last fall and hit 13-19 fg's and was named 2nd Tm OVC, while Haynes was the punter last fall and averaged 41.2 yds per punt (L/76!) with 24 inside the 20 & a net of 38.8 yds. WR Zack Smith was the top KR in '20-'21 (212, 21.2) and SEMO totaled 142 PR yds all season. Last fall CB Davis led with 214 KR yds (35.7, 1 td, 2nd Tm OVC) and SEMO totaled 116 PR yds all season. This season SEMO loses K Doak and KR Davis, but P Haynes is back. If a new kicker can emerge the kicking game should be in solid shape this season.

COACHES - Tom Matukewicz enters year nine as the HC at Southeast Missouri with a record of 41-49. After 4 straight losing seasons to start his tenure, Matukewicz led SEMO to back-to-back playoff berths & SEMO's first-ever playoff win. Jeremy McDowell enters year five as the OC at SEMO. McDowell is a former SEMO QB (2001-2003) where he threw for 2,651 yds

& 17 td's overall. The new DC for SEMO is a familiar face in Ricky Coon, who was the DL coach here from 2014-2018. SEMO does not list a ST coordinator.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - The Redhawks offense took flight in 2018 as SEMO's offense put up 409 ypg (highest total since '14) and 37 ppg, their highest mark of the past decade. In '19 the offense did suffer some losses and they took a step back to putting up 365 ypg and 28 ppg. SEMO played 1 game in the fall of '20 & 7 games in the spring of '21 and their offense had games of 507 yds and 474 yds but were also held under 250 yds three times & overall the offense produced 322 ypg and 28 ppg. Last fall SEMO's offense put up 400+ yds in only 1 of the F/6 games (607 yds vs Tenn St) but the offense got more consistent as the season went on & averaged 361 ypg and 27 ppg for the year. This season SEMO returns their starting QB, 4 of their top 5 rushers including the starter, and 4 starting OL. The one area of concern is the receiver unit as they lost 5 of the top 7 receivers, with the two returnees being their #1 receiver and starting TE (#6 receiver). We look for the offense to rely on the run game more with not much exp at receiver.

DEFENSE - The Redhawks defense in '17 put up their best marks of the decade as they allowed 346 ypg and 22 ppg. In '18 the SEMO defense allowed 480 ypg (worst mark this decade) and 31 ppg but did lead the FCS with 36 TO's forced and TO margin (+24!). SEMO returned 10 starters on defense in '19 and while they were "only" +3 in TO's they did cut back to allowing 379 ypg! In the 2020/2021 season the defense did improve again as they would allow 355 ypg and held teams to 23 ppg. Last fall the SEMO defense brought back 8 starters, and they did hold conference foes to 368 ypg and 23 ppg, they gave up 596 ypg and 53 ppg to non-conf foes (faced Missouri, plus ranked Sam Houston and ranked S.Illinois). This season SEMO returns 7 starters on defense and 16 of the top 20 tacklers, so we look for improvement on this side of the ball.

2022 - SEMO enters year nine of the Tom Matukewicz era. After four straight losing seasons from 2014-17, the Redhawks have finished at .500 or better from '18-'20 and the Redhawks won their first-ever playoff game when they came back from a 14-0 deficit to beat Stony Brook 28-14 in '18 and made the playoffs again in '19 after going 9-3. Last season SEMO got out to a 2-6 record before winning 2 of their L/3 games to finish 4-7. SEMO was -70 ypg last fall and their defense allowed foes to gain 56 ypg above their average. This season 15 starters return, but open up at Iowa St and at S.Illinois. SEMO hosts Nicholls, Central Ark and former OVC foe ECU in non-conf and they travel to NWSt as well. SEMO avoids UT Martin in OVC play, but 3 of their 5 OVC games are on the road. With a veteran HC and experience back on both sides of the ball, SEMO could make some noise in the OVC this season, but they do have a tough non-conf schedule.