

STETSON HATTERS

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - In '19 backup QB Alex Piccirilli threw for 248 (52%, 1-0). Piccirilli returned under center and started all 4 games in the spring of '21, throwing for 521 yards (53%) but had just a 3-8 ratio. Piccirilli was also second on the team in rushing with 171 yards (3.1) and scored all 3 of the team's rushing TD's on the season. Last year Piccirilli was a returning starter and they added FAU transfer Justin Agner (orig Kent St). Piccirilli started 6 games while John Seter and Agner both started 2. Seter led with 796 (59%) and had a team high 7 td's with just 2 int's. Piccirilli was close behind with 796 (56.1%) but only a 4-6 ratio. He was again their #2 rusher with 357 (4.0). Agner added 591 (61%, 4-4). This year they lose Seter and Agner. Piccirilli returns and Donovan Tabon is the only other QB to see action (1 attempt) last year. If Piccirilli doesn't improve on his 7-14 ratio from the last 2 years then they will have to turn to one of the younger QB's.

RUNNING BACKS - Last year Stetson returned leading rusher from the spring in Jordan Younge-Humphrey who posted 359 yards on the ground (6.5) while logging a pair of starts. Also back was converted WR Jalen Leary who chipped in with 114 yards (2.8 ypc) and started the last two games. Leary had 159 vs Morehead St and led with 664 (5.8). He also had 170 receiving and was 2nd Tm All-PFL. Younge-Humphrey only started 1 game but finished with 352 (5.0, 98 rec). Leary returns this year while Younge-Humphrey departs. They are clearly better with an all-conference RB returning but 44% of Leary's yards did come against 2 NAIA foes.

RECEIVERS - In '19 Quinton Lane started 4 games as a true frosh and had 145 (10.4). Ten of the 11 players who caught a pass in spring for the Hatters returned in the fall, including the receiving trio of Jalen Mason (13 rec), Michael Carley (12 rec) and Connor Becker (10 rec) who all had double-digit totals in receptions. Becker's 159 receiving yards led the team, as did his 15.5 ypc average. Last year Lane led with 465 (15.0). Nazevia Burris started 7 games and was #2 with 364 (13.0). Michael Martinez added 218 (9.9) and Mason had 170 (8.1). Their top 4 all return this year along with TE Dominic Carlucci (5 st, 112, 7.5). This is their most experienced unit on offense.

OFFENSIVE LINE - In spring of '21 Stetson averaged 164 (4.3) but gave up 13 sacks (12.1%) in their 4 game season. Last year the Hatters' offensive was anchored by two of the league's best OL in LT Billy Corte and C Antonio Derry, who both earned 1st Team All-PFL honors. Stetson rushed for 166 ypg (4.2) but allowed 42 sacks which matched the previous season at 12.1%. This year they lose 4 starters including 2x All FCS LT Corte (10 st),

LG Alex Brown (9 st), C Derry (10 st) and RT's Nick Plunkett (4 st) and Jordan Halfinds (4 st). Only 1 starter returns, making this Stetson's biggest ? on offense.

DEFENSIVE LINE - DE Fermon Reid earned 1st Team All-PFL honors in '19 and headlines the DL unit after racking up 32 tackles (#2 tkl'r) with a team-high 4 sacks and 3.5 tfl's in the spring. Stetson allowed 178 (4.6) rush ypg in '19 then 184 (4.3) in the spring. Last year Stetson brought Reid back and improved to 130 (3.5, 27 sk). This year the Hatters lose DE Nolan DeFranco (7 st, #12 tkl'r, 2.5 tfl). They bring 3 starters back including Reid and their #6, #9, #13, #15 and #17 tkl'r's are back. Seven are back with starting experience and this is the strength of the defense.

LINEBACKERS - LB Ethan Hull returned after posting a team-high 38 tackles (2 tfl) in the spring. Stetson's top 3 tacklers came from this unit last year and all 3 return this year. Majeste' Hansberry (#1 tkl'r) was 2nd Tm All-PFL while Davion Maxwell and Hull both topped 50 tackles. Also back is their #10 and #20 tkl'r's so they get their top 5 back.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - DB Rassie Littlejohn led all DB's in tackles with 32 and recorded two of the Hatters' three interceptions in the spring. Last year the Hatters only allowed 196 pass ypg in their first 7 games but were shredded for 353 pass ypg in their last 3. They finished #8 in pass defense efficiency (58.5%, 17-11) in the PFL. This year they lose S Alex Villas (3 st, #7 tkl'r, 6 tfl, 2 int, 3 pbu), CB Dwight Lawrence (9 st, #11 tkl'r, 6 pd), CB Nate Cureton (2 st, #16 tkl'r) and Tallin Coates (#14 tkl'r). Three starters return and they have their #4, #5 and #8 tkl'r's back. Littlejohn (2nd Tm PFL) led with 4 int's last year and anchors the unit once again.

SPECIAL TEAMS - Jaylon Johnson was 1st Tm All PFL KR in their spring season. Johnson averaged 23.6 KR and 4.8 PR. Kicker Cameron Gillis connected on 2-3 FG's (long of 33) in the spring and was successful on all five PAT's while splitting kickoff duties. Punter Matt Clements avg 40.0 ypp (36.6 net) with a long of 70 and placed six punts inside the 20. Last year Gillis made 6-9 fg's (L/39). Five players recorded a punt with Marshall Golick leading with 26 attempts. He averaged 39.2 but Stetson only averaged 35.0 as a team (tm net 32.3). Jalen Mason averaged 21.7 KR and Johnson slipped to 2.0 PR. The entire unit returns so they are clearly improved and we look for an improved punt unit with Golick back.

COACHES - Brian Young is in his 2nd year as head coach at Stetson. He led their defense when the Hatters were ranked first or 2nd in the PFL 6 of 7 seasons from '13-'19. He also coached DB's during that time. Harry Richards took over offensive playing-calling during the '21 season. He also has served as the RB Coach since 2018. He got started as an offensive intern at James Madison under head coaches Everett Withers and Mike Houston.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - In 2017 Stetson bottomed out, averaging just 15 ppg and 283 ypg. The following year was a complete turn around when they put up 37 ppg and 484 ypg. In '19 they lost their all-PFL QB but only slipped to 32 ppg and 431 ypg but against PFL foes they put up just 23 ppg and 383 ypg. Stetson didn't play football during the fall of '20. In spring they played 4 games, averaged just 12 ppg and 297 ypg. Last year they had 3 QB's start multiple games, had an experienced RB and experienced Oline. Stetson improved to 26 ppg and 385 ypg. 7 starters return this year including 2Y starting QB Alex Piccirilli who will need to improve on his 7-14 ratio from the last 2 years. Their OL is a huge question mark with just 1 starter back so they may not see a huge increase in ppg.

DEFENSE - Stetson gave up at least 28 ppg each season from '13-'18. In '19 the Hatters broke through and allowed 26 ppg and 394 ypg. They slipped to 29 ppg and 364 ypg in their 4 game spring season in '21. In the fall their top 2 tacklers returned but they fell back to 33 ppg allowed but only 375 ypg. This year they get 9 starters back and nine of their top 10 tacklers return. We can't help but think HC Young will get this unit turned around.

2022 - Brian Young replaced Roger Hughes (31-50 overall, 18-42 in the Pioneer Football League), who took over the reins when Stetson resurrected its football program in 2013 following a 57-year hiatus. He is trying to turn around a program that has only finished better than 5th in the conference once (2nd in 2018) as the Hatters finished 7th or lower in the PFL in six of nine seasons since returning to the gridiron. After finishing with no more than 5 wins each season from '13-'17, the Hatters broke through with a 8-2 record in '18 (+62 ypg). In '19 Stetson went 7-4 but 3 of their wins came against lower division foes and they were -28 ypg vs PFL. They lost all 4 games in their spring season of '21 and were -68 ypg. HC Hughes resigned to become the president of Doane University. Former DC Brian Young led the Hatters to 2 wins over NAIA foes to start the season. Their lone PFL win came against Presbyterian 56-14 but did show some promise. They led eventual PFL champs Davidson 21-7 2Q and finished with a 422-368 yd edge in a 7 point loss. They also led Morehead St but allowed the GW td with :20 left. This year they get 16 starters back. The defense should be much improved. Their toughest PFL games all come on the road (SD, Davidson, ST) and they have winnable home games against Presbyterian and Drake so they should top last year's 3 win total.