

# SACRAMENTO ST

## POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

**QUARTERBACKS** - Last year the Hornets lost a Walter Payton Award finalist and AA QB (12 st), who threw for 3,216 yards (59%, 27-8) with 619 rush (4.9, 12 td). They returned QB Jake Dunniway (1 st, 582, 60%, 5-3) and also added Middle Tenn transfer Asher O'Hara, a two-year starter, who threw for 1,960 yards (67%, 12-8) and was MT's top rusher (601, 3.4, 7 td). Both Dunniway and O'Hara played in all 12 games, but Dunniway started 9 games including the L/5 games and he led with 2,576 pass yards (63.2%, 12-5) while O'Hara started 3 games and was more of a dual-threat at QB with 899 pass yards (61.5%, 7-3) and led with 662 rush (4.0, 9 td). This season both Dunniway (2nd Tm Big Sky) and O'Hara are back and they also return former Nevada QB Kaiden Bennett. Overall this is a talented & experienced QB room that should have good success this season.

**RUNNING BACKS** - The Hornets returned their top 3 RB's last fall including AA Elijah Dotson, who led 742 rush (4.9 ypc, 7 td) & also led with 70 receptions (#2, 702, 10.0) in 2019! QB O'Hara led the team in rushing, and the top RB was Cameron Skattebo (4 st, 520, 9.1, 6 td) with 124 rec yards (10.3) and was 3rd Tm Big Sky. BJ Perkinson started 7 games and ran for 310 yards (5.4) and had 166 rec yards (9.2) while Dotson only played in 4 games (95, 3.4) before entering the portal. Two of the top three RB's are back this season in Skattebo and Marcus Fulcher (2 st, 241, 4.4, 236 rec, 12.4) with their biggest lost at RB being Perkinson. We expect Sac St to have a solid season rushing the ball with a good amount of experience returning in 2022.

**RECEIVERS** - They Hornets returned their top seven receivers from 2019 including WR Pierre Williams (931, 17.2, 7 td) & Frosh AA TE Marshal Martin (550, 14.1, 7 td)! Last fall Williams led the way again with 764 yards (10 st, 15.3) and was 1st Tm Big Sky while Martin was #2 with 649 yards (11 st, 12.2, 6 td) and was also 1st Tm Big Sky. Jared Gipson (4 st, 379, 18.9) and Chris Miller (3 st, 339, 16.9) both had productive seasons and overall the Hornets return their top six receivers! With quite a bit of experience coming back and the addition of some transfers we expect the Hornets receivers to have an even better season.

**OFFENSIVE LINE** - In 2019 with more of a passing offense, the Hornets only paved the way for 169 ypg (4.7) but only allowed just 16 sacks (3.0%). Last year they lost two OL who combined for 25 starts in '19 & 63 career starts. They returned three 13 game starters last fall and added UC Davis grad transfer OL Kooper Richardson, who had 11 starts for the Aggies in '19. The run/pass splits were nearly 50-50 last season and Sac St ran for 172 ypg (4.6) including topping 200 yards in 5 games. Sac St's OLine also allowed just 17 sacks overall in 12 games (3.9%). This season the Hornets return three starters on the OLine in 2nd Tm Big Sky RG Brandon Weldon, 3rd Tm Big Sky RT Richardson, LT Ivan Garza (10 st) and LG Jackson Slater (8 st). The lone starter that is gone this fall is 2nd Tm Big Sky C Thomas Parker. With a veteran OLine back this season we expect another productive season both running the ball and protecting the QB.

**DEFENSIVE LINE** - Last year Sac St lost both starting DT's in the #6 tackler (7 sk, 10.5 tfl) and #10 tackler (4.5 tfl) along with a backup DT (#11 tkl'r, 4.5 tfl) & a DE (#8 tkl'r) who led the Big Sky with 13.5 sacks, despite not starting a game. The DLine returned both starting DE's in Josiah Erickson (12 st, #5 tkl'r 11.5 tfl) & Wyatt Hjelm (13 st, #19, 2 tfl). Last fall the run defense did hold 6 teams to under 100 yards rushing and overall allowed 122 rush ypg (3.8) and they collected 22 sacks (5.6%). DE Erickson led the unit with 57 tackles (12 st, 10 sk, 9.5 tfl) and was 1st Tm Big Sky. He along with DE Hjelm (11 st, 17 tkl) departs, but they get back starting DT's Tyler Hardeman (12 st, 32 tkl, 3.5 tfl) and Jett Stanley (12 st, 20 tkl, 2.5 tfl). While this unit loses a pair of starters including a 1st Tm Big Sky performer, 7 of the top 9 DL return and will just need two new faces to step up at DE, but overall this unit looks to be in decent shape entering '22.

**LINEBACKERS** - This unit lost their starting NB (13 st, #2 tkl'r, 3.5 sk, 4.5 tfl) & a LB last fall. They returned Marcus Hawkins (13 st, #1 tkl'r, 5 sk) and Jeremy Harris (7 st, #3, 5.5 tfl). Last fall Hawkins led the Hornets with 78 tackles (12 st, 8 tfl, 5 sk, 3 int, 3 pbu) and was 3rd Tm Big Sky while Powell was the #4 tackler (10 st, 53 tkl, 2.5 tfl). The new NB was Marte Mapu & he finished as the #2 tackler (12 st, 65 tkl, 5.5 tfl, 10 pbu, 4 int) and was 2nd Tm Big Sky. This fall both starting LB's are gone, but they do return NB Mapu. Jeremy Harris (1 st, 34 tkl) returns along with Dylan Jorge (12 tkl) and Armon Bailey (7 tkl, 3 tfl). Replacing 2 LB starters will be tough, but they have decent depth returning and shouldn't take too much of a step back.

**DEFENSIVE BACKS** - Last year the secondary lost the #4 tackler (13 st, 3 pbu) and #7 tackler (8 st, 2 int, 4 pbu) at S. They also lost a starting CB (13 st, #9, 2 int, 8 pbu). They returned 7 DB's who combined for 15 starts and added Montana St transfer CB Munchie Filer. Last fall the Hornets allowed 208 pass ypg (60%) and collected 16 int's. The secondary was led by CB Filer (11 st, 45 tkl, 9 pbu, 4 int) and he was 2nd Tm Big Sky. S's Abel Ordaz (10 st, 42 tkl, 1 int) and Malik Jeter (12 st, 39 tkl, 6 pbu) both had productive seasons as well. This season Sac St loses CB Filer, S Jeter and CB Dominick Sanders (7 st, 28 tkl, 3 tfl, 6 pbu) and only return 1 starter in S Ordaz. CB Prince Washington (F/4 st, 6 tkl, 3 pbu) returns. While 5 of the top 8 tacklers are back, the loss of 3 starters is significant.

**SPECIAL TEAMS** - The ST unit had to replace their K from 2019 who hit 8-15 FG (L/42). They returned P Sam Clark (39.8 avg, 38.2 tm net) last fall. The new K was Kyle Sentkowski, who hit 21-25 fg's (L/51) and was 1st Tm Big Sky! Clark averaged 44.4 yards per punt (21 inside 20) and was 3rd Tm Big Sky! The top KR was WR Gandy who had 196 yards (39.2, 1 td) while Sac St had 100 total PR yards all season. This fall the Hornets get back K Sentkowski and KR Gandy, but they do lose their all-conference punter. The new P could be Nevada transfer Eric Fellenzer, and overall this unit looks to be in pretty good shape entering '22.

**COACHES** - Troy Taylor became the HC at Sac St in 2019 and is 18-7 overall (15-1 Big Sky) but Sac St DNP in 2020. Taylor was named the Big Sky Coach of the Year in both 2019 and 2021 and was the FCS National Coach of the Year in 2019. Prior to Sac St Taylor was the co-OC and QB coach at Utah in 2017-18. Taylor also calls the plays for the Hornets. Andy Thompson has

been the DC here since 2019 and prior to Sac St he spent 13 seasons at Northern Arizona, with the last 10 coming as the DC there. Jeremy LaPan is the ST coordinator here.

## FORECAST

**OFFENSE** - The offense finished last in the Big Sky in Scoring (23.4 ppg) but averaged 405 ypg in 2018. In their first year under HC Taylor they improved to 36 ppg & 464 ypg which was a Sac St record for most ppg and ypg in a single season. The Hornets DNP in 2020 and last year Sac St returned 8 starters from 2019 they again averaged 464 ypg and the scoring went down to 30 ppg, but the offense gained 70 ypg above what their foes allowed on average. This season the offense gets back both QB's, two of their top three RB's, their top six receivers, and four of their top five OL. Overall with nine starters back we expect the Sac St offense to have another stellar season and they could improve their ppg.

**DEFENSE** - The defense struggled in 2018 as they allowed 36 ppg & 477 ypg. In 2019 with a new DC they took a huge leap up as they allowed 23 ppg & 357 ypg. Last year they returned just four starters from 2019, but the defense allowed just 330 ypg and 19 ppg and they held foes to 33 ypg under their season average. The Hornets do lose seven starters on this side of the ball and five of the top seven tacklers depart including a 3rd Tm AA DE Josiah Erickson (10 sk, 9.5 tfl) and LB Marcus Hawkins (78 tkl, 8 tkl, 5 sk, 3 int). This side of the ball will likely take a step back with the loss of several talented players.

**2022** - Sac St is off to a great start under HC Taylor as he is 15-1 in the Big Sky and led the Hornets to their first FCS playoff appearance ever in 2019 and took them back to the playoffs in 2021. This season Sac St opens at home vs Utah Tech before going on the road for 3 straight games. Sac St avoids Montana St but they face E. Washington on the road and they face both Montana and UC Davis at home. Sac St does also face Weber St on the road. The Hornets will have to rely on their offense, at least early on, as the defense loses 7 starters from a strong unit LY. We have confidence that DC Thompson will put together a solid defense, it could just take some time to gel. But if the offense is as good as advertised Sac St will be a prime threat to once again win the Big Sky and make it back to the playoffs.