

SAMFORD BULLDOGS

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - In '19 Samford had to replace Devlin Hodges who had 540 ypg and 40 ppg in SoCon play and went on to start games for the Pittsburgh Steelers. Chris Oladokun led with 2,058 (62%, 18-7) while Liam Welch took over the last 3 games and threw for 759 (54%, 6-7). Oladokun began their spring season as the starter but the Welch era became full time when he threw for 311 vs WCarolina and 570 vs VMI. In just 6 games he threw for 2,242 (374 ypg, 68%, 12-5). Oladokun moved on last year. Welch set the SoCon record for passing yards (582) and school records for completions (56) and attempts (73) against SoCon Champs ETSU in an overtime loss. He threw for 3,097 (66.1%) with 20 td's but also struggled with int's (14). Welch added 456 rushing (4.5). No other QB had more than 2 attempts. This year they lose 1st Tm All SoCon QB Welch. With 10 QB's on the roster they have plenty of options but 5'8" Chris Hatcher has the most experience (completed all 10 career passes). They do have Kentucky transfer Nik Scalzo (PS#48) but he is coming back from 2 torn ACL's. Scalzo split time with JUCO transfer Michael Hiers in the spring. The starting job will go down to the wire and it will be tough to replace a productive dual threat like Welch.

RUNNING BACKS - Jay Stanton was the top RB in 2019 with 690 (5.7). Demarcus Ware was #4 with 167 (4.2). In the spring Stanton led again with 479 (5.4). Ware rushed for 101 (6.3) in just 3 games. Dakota Chapman, a Jacksonville State transfer was #4 with 96 (3.7). The top 4 rushers were all back last year. Stanton only had 46 in his first 3 games but topped 100 in 3 of their 8 and led with 553 (5.1, 97 rec). Welch was #2 again with 456 (4.5). Ware and Welch tied for #1 with 7 td's and Ware had 268 (4.1). No other RB topped 40 yards. Both Ware (2 st) and Washington depart but they get their top guy back in Stanton and they add Elon transfer Jaylon Thomas who was the CAA ROY in '18 with 761 (6.6) then rushed for 415 in '19, 307 in their spring season and 600 last year. They have a potent 1-2 punch with Stanton and Thomas.

RECEIVERS - In spring Samford had to replace their top 2 WR's (565, 474 yds). The top returnee was Montrell Washington (405, 14.5) and he was #3 again with 406 (15.0). Ty King led with 609 (18.5). TE Michael Vice (293, 12.2) was #4 and Kendall Watson added 229 (14.3). The top 5 were back last year. Washington had 148 vs ETSU and 124 vs Florida (10 catches in both). He led with 770 (14.3, 143 rush). TE Vice was #2 with 475 (11.3). Jai'Rus Creamer added 389 (15.0). Chandler Smith was #4 with 376 (9.6) and Watson added 342 (11.0). This year they lose their top 3 including 1st Tm All SoCon WR Washington. Smith and Watson return after solid contributions last year and spring leader King (240, 10.4) is back as well. They added experienced WR's Judd Crockett (3Y 669, 8.8) from Southern Utah, JR Tran Reno (2Y 173, 11.5) from Vanderbilt, Sy Barnett (2Y 1950, 21.9) from Ferris St and 6'6" Quadir Ismael (181, 16.5 LY) from Villanova. The transfer additions should mitigate some of the losses.

OFFENSIVE LINE - Four starters returned up front from a unit that opened holes for 168 ypg (3.8) rush and allowed 9.0% sacks in the spring. The top returnee was 1st team preseason SoCon RT Gavin Orr. This unit was average last year and should be improved but is middle of the pack conference

wise. UAB transfer Chris Noble took over in their 4th game. Samford averaged 147 ypg but ypc was up to 4.6 and they gave up just 13 sacks. Against the SoCon they rushed for 162 (4.9). This year their only loss is RG JD Beall (9 st). Orr returns along with along with Noble and this is a veteran unit.

DEFENSIVE LINE - Samford had a new DC in spring and they cut down to 212 rush ypg (4.2). Last year they lost just 1 starter but had Armond Lloyd (33 tkl, 2.5 sk) back. Samford held Tenn Tech to 69 rush yards in the opener then completely fell apart, allowing over 180 rush in all but 1 remaining game with 7 teams topping 200. They allowed 243 (4.9) with 17 sacks. This year they get 5 if their top 7 back including 1st Tm All SoCon DE Seth Simmer (#5 tkl'r, 4.5 tfl). They lose DT Nelson Jordan (#7 tkl'r, 1.5 sk) and Armond Lloyd (8 st, #12 tkl'r). They get their #5, #11, #15, #18 and #19 tacklers back and with 3 starters back are in the same shape entering '22.

LINEBACKERS - In the spring Nathan East led with 68 tackles. Trimarcus Cheeks was Samford's #2 tackler. Both returned last year along with Noah Martin (#5 tkl'r) making this the strength of the defense. East, Cheeks and Martin finished #1, 2, 3 tacklers but Samford allowed 39.3 ppg. This year they lose 3rd Tm All SoCon LB Cheeks (11 st) but 2 starters return including 2nd Tm All SoCon LB Nathan East who led with 7.5 tfl's last year. They get their #1, #3, #10 back and the defense can't get much worse than last year. They also added Vandy transfer Brayden Devault-Smith (56 career tkls) and USF transfer Drew Mims (80 career tkls).

DEFENSIVE BACKS - Last year the Bulldogs returned their #3 and #4 tacklers. They only allowed 232 pass ypg (56%) in the spring. Last year they were shredded by VMI (463) and Florida (464) in a 3 game span where they faced an option team in between. The Bulldogs allowed 272 pass ypg (59.9%, 22-10). They finished 8th in the SoCon in pass efficiency defense and dead last in ypg allowed. This year they lose CB Coutrell Plair (7 st, #16 tkl'r), CB Sylvaughn Turner (10 st, #6 tkl'r, 3 pd), S Chris Edmonds (10 st, #8 tkl'r, 3 int), Lamar Anderson (7 st, #9 tkl'r, 4 pd) and Ty Herring (2 st, #17 tkl'r, 3 pd). All 4 starters are gone so the unit needs rebuilt. They added 5 FBS transfers and they only have one way to go but the additions give them experience despite 0 starters returning.

SPECIAL TEAMS - Last year Samford had to replace a K who hit 15-18 (L/50) and transferred to Purdue. They did still have AA PR Montrell Washington. North Texas transfer Zach Williams hit 11-13 fg's (L/42). Bradley Porcellato averaged 39.6 (38.3 net). Washington was even better with 18.3 PR and 23.1 KR averages. Washington was 1st Tm All-Purpose AA but he departs. They get their K and P back so this is still a solid unit but the return game won't be as explosive.

COACHES - Chris Hatcher enters his 8th year as HC here. He was previously HC at both Murray St ('10-'14) and Georgia Southern ('07-'09). He has a career record of 161-93. Ricky Turner is the new OC. He has been here the last 7 years as ST Coord/TE Coach before being promoted. The 2nd year DC is Chris Boone who DL Coach at SMiss from '18-'20 and DC at Murray St from '15-'17. He also served as DC at NW St and UT Martin. Mike Krysl is the new ST Coord.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - This has traditionally been one of the top offenses in the SoCon. They've averaged at least 30 ppg each year since 2013 with the exception of 2017 when they put up 28 ppg and 413 ypg. In '18 Samford put up 40 ppg and 540 ypg vs SoCon foes and 38 ppg/516 ypg overall! They had to replace 3x SoCon Offensive POY QB Devlin Hodges who was who went on to start 6 games for the Pittsburgh Steelers. They dipped to 32 ppg and 404 ypg. The Bulldogs played 7 games in the spring of '21. They averaged 40 ppg and 514 ypg. Nine starters were back in the fall. The Bulldogs put up at least 42 points in 4 of their first 5. They had a 2 game lull where they only scored 27 and 13 then rebounded with at least 34 points in their last 4 including a remarkable 52 points and 530 yards vs Florida. They finished with 38 ppg and 449 ypg. This year they have 7 starters back but must replace QB Welch and their top 2 WR's. They should have a strong run game and they added 6 transfer additions at WR. This is always one of the SoCon's top offenses but will take a step back from last year's production.

DEFENSE - In 2018 Samford allowed just 366 ypg and 26 ppg allowing 3.8 ypc rush and 57% passing. In 2019 they allowed 236 (4.5) rush and 453 ypg and 38 ppg. Last spring they had had a new DC and it took time to gel as they allowed 444 ypg and 27 ppg. Samford did lead the SoCon in 3rd down defense (31%) and forced turnovers (18). 20 of their top 21 tacklers were back in the fall. After allowing just 231 yards vs Tenn Tech in the opener they struggled mightily, allowing 504 ypg overall and 516 in SoCon play. They were gashed for 622 vs VMI and 717 vs Florida. Overall they allowed 39 ppg and were 8th in scoring D and last in total D. This year only 4 starters return but they added 8 transfers and it's not like the players they lost were performing well so they could surprise.

2022 - Samford had made the college football playoffs three times in their history prior to Chris Hatcher getting them there 2 of his first 3 years. 2018 they got off to a rough start at 1-4 but went 5-1 down the stretch to nab their 8th straight winning season and were +161 ypg in SoCon play. In 2019 the team had 4 OT games which tied an NCAA record was held by Hatcher's Georgia Southern team in 2008. They went 1-3 in those and lost a game in which they scored 58 points but won a game where they allowed 55 points. They were 5-7 for a rare losing season and -3 ypg in SoCon play. Last spring they had losses by 7, 7, and 1 and led by at least 14 points in all 3 of the losses! They finished 4-3 and were +70 ypg in SoCon play. Last year had 5 losses of 7 or less but were -56 ypg in SoCon play. They lost games when they scored 48, 42, 45 and 52 (vs Florida!) and finished just 4-7. They have 11 starters back this year. Their opening 2 games are brutal (Kenn St, UGA) and only get 5 home games. They went heavy in the Portal, so it's hard to say if the additions will gel but Hatcher is a proven winner and should right the ship.