

SAN DIEGO TOREROS

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - In '19 San Diego had to replace their All-Pioneer QB who finished with a 39-7 ratio. Their new starter, Reid Sinnett threw for 3,538 (67%, 32-10). Sinnett departed last spring so for the 2nd straight year San Diego had to replace an All-Pioneer QB but this time with added Covid disruptions. Mason Randall started all 6 games and threw for 1,561 (63.4%) but only a 10-11 ratio. Randall returns and they added Colorado St transfer Judd Erickson. Randall had a 2-6 ratio in his first 4 but ended on a strong note with an 11-1 ratio in his last 6 and threw for a career high 337 in the finale vs Stetson. Erickson was #2 with 343 (53.5%, 3-3). Once again the Toreros lose their starting QB. Erickson saw action in 4 games last year. He seemed to have a clear leg up on soph Tanner Jellison in the spring.

RUNNING BACKS - San Diego's top rusher departed in spring of '21 but they did get back Emilio Martinez who was a 2x All-Pioneer RB that led with 1,033 (5.3) in '17 and 710 (5.4) in '18. Also back was Terrence Smith (473, 6.5, #2 '19). Martinez led with 486 (4.9, 125 rec). Smith only finished with 117 (3.0). Their top 3 RB's all returned in the fall. Smith was the one to stay healthy and he led with 548 (4.2). Martinez battled an injury (0 carries in 3 straight gms) and finished #2 with 499 (4.2, 275 rec). Rhyle Hanson added 168 (5.1). Both Smith and Martinez are gone this year along with FB's Dominic Graziani (3 st) and Noah Thomas (6 st). Hanson and Javon Sturns (84, 5.6) are the next in line as they go from experienced to very little experience.

RECEIVERS - San Diego had to replace 2x FCS AA WR Michael Bandy in the spring of '22. Four of their top 5 were gone and the only returnee, Alex Spadone only played 1 game. Michael Carner led with 538 (15.4). Christian Brown was #2 with 347 (13.9) and TE Derek Kline added 287 (13.0). Last year they returned their top 5. True frosh Vance Jefferson led with 498 (11.3). Brown was #2 with 446 (12.1). Carner finished #3 with 400 (13.3). Jaseem Reed added 297 (21.2). This year they only lose TE Michael Gadinis (11 st, 264, 9.1) but Kline returns (101, 14.4). For their 2nd straight year they have at least their top 4 back and Jefferson (2nd Tm PFL) is one of the top WR's in the conference.

OFFENSIVE LINE - San Diego rushed for 191 (5.4) ypg with just 15 sacks in '19. The Toreros slipped to just 109 (3.3) in spring, but they did only allow 7 sacks. Last year San Diego returned 3 starters and added Nevada transfer RT Trey Price so we called for decent improvement. They rushed for 134 ypg (3.9) and allowed just 14 sacks. This year they only lose 1st Tm PFL RT DJ Wright. 4 starters return again, making this the most experienced OLine in the PFL.

DEFENSIVE LINE - San Diego allowed 128 rush ypg (3.7) with just 16 sacks in '19. They lost 2 starting DL (#6 & #9 tk'l's). In spring they allowed just 79 rush ypg (2.4) and had 19 sacks in 6 less games! Last fall San Diego lost 2 starters again in DT Kevin Glajchen who led with 6 sks (#5 tk'l'r) and DE Chris Reese (#7 tk'l'r, 6 tfl). Four of their top 6 returned but we said it would be tough to match their production. They were gashed for 305 vs Montana St and 272 vs Davidson. Overall they gave up 120 (3.6) rush ypg but in their last 4 only allowed 35 (1.7) and against PFL foes only allowed 105 (3.0). This year they lose DE's Muhindo Kapapa (11 st, #6 tk'l'r, 6.5 sk) and Ronald Sharlous (5 st, #12 tk'l'r, 2 sk). Will Buck (1st Tm PFL) led the conference with 10 sacks and returns this year. They have their #7, #9 and #14 tk'l's back and 4 of their top 6 return again. This was a stout unit by season's end and they should pick up where they left off.

LINEBACKERS - The Toreros lost their #2 and #10 tk'l's at LB in the spring but returned 2 starters (#1 & #4 tk'l's). Kyle Bilchik led with 38 tkls. '19's leader, Kama Kamaka posted 32 tkls. Last year they Bilchik and Kamaka along with David Ambagtsheer (#6 tk'l'r). With all 3 starters back, including 2 multi-year starters, this is the strength of the defense. This year they only lose Bilchik (11 st, #5 tk'l'r, 6 tfl). Their #2 and #4 tk'l's return and Jagger Pagano (#13 tk'l'r) will slide into the vacant spot so this is once again the strength of the defense.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - The Toreros were excellent against the pass in '19, allowing just 54.8% (16-19) but in the spring they had to replace their top guy, CB David Tolbert, who posted 6 int's in '19. Four of their top 6 were gone yet they still only allowed 53% (8-5). Last year their top 6 all returned and we called this the most improved unit on the defense. They allowed just 50.2% (16-12 ratio) and finished #3 in the PFL in pass defense efficiency. This year they lose 1st Tm PFL SS Michael Hawkins (11 st, #1 tk'l'r, 2 int, 5 pbu), 2nd Tm PFL CB Cassius Johnson (11 st, #11 tk'l'r, 11 pbu, 2 int) and CB Isaac Haney (1 st, #10 tk'l'r), and. They still have 2 All-PFL performers returning including FS Hunter Nichols (1st tm, #3 tk'l'r) who led with 3 int's so this is still a strong unit but down a notch.

SPECIAL TEAMS - Brandon Eickert made 8-10 fg's in spring (L/36). Connor Strode avg'd 39.8 ypp (36.9 net). San Diego's avg'd 8.1 PR. Hunter Nichols avg'd 26.8 KR. Strode departed last year. Eickert made 11-16 (L/44). Pablo Tager was their distance kicker and only made 1 of 7 (L/53) with 4 misses of 50+. Tager did have a 67% touchback rate on KO's. Aidan Lehman averaged 37.8 (34.4 net). This year they get all 3 specialists back. If Tager can find accuracy on the long kicks then they have a fantastic duo. They need more out of their KR unit (17.1) but this is one of the top ST units in the PFL.

COACHES - HC Dale Lindsey was a long time NFL assistant who spent 2 years as the DC for the San Diego Chargers. He was DC here in '12 then took over as HC the following year. The Toreros won 8 games in his first year then followed that up with 9, 9, 10, 10, 9 and 10 win campaigns. Cory White starts his third stint at San Diego. He was the Oline coach at New Mexico State the last 2 years. 5th year DC Bobby Jay has been with the Toreros since 2010 and worked his way up. 3rd year ST Ben Barton has been with the program for 9 years.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - From 2015-2019 San Diego averaged at least 31 ppg each season. In '18 they averaged 37.8 ppg and 471 ypg and basically repeated that feat in '19, putting up 37.6 ppg and 474 ypg. In spring of '22 the Toreros had to replace their QB, top RB and 4 of their top 5 receivers. They slipped to just 23.7 ppg and 369 ypg. They had 9 starters back in the fall. San Diego improved to 25.7 ppg but ypg remained consistent at 368. This year they lose their QB and top 2 RB's but have 7 starters back and a wealth of experience at WR and Oline.

DEFENSE - In '15-'17 San Diego allowed 18, 16 & 17 ppg. In '18 they slipped to 29.2 ppg and 461 ypg. They rebounded in '19, allowing 19.1 ppg and 331 ypg. In spring San Diego returned 8 of their top 15 tk'l's. They only allowed 17.5 ppg and 266 ypg. Last year 9 starters were back. They allowed 44 ppg/475 ypg in 3 non-conference games but only 18 ppg/284 ypg in PFL play. This year the Toreros bring 6 starters back. They lose 6 of their top 12 tacklers but 14 of their top 20 are back. This has been one of the most dominant defenses in the PFL and we see no reason that won't continue, especially considering how they finished last season (11 ppg, 166 ypg L/3).

2022 - In the spring of '22, San Diego started 3-0 but had 2 close losses down the stretch including a 20-19 loss at Valpo where they finished with a 302-191 yd edge which ended their streak of 6 straight conference titles. They came back last year with 18 starters returning but started the season 3 losses to non-conference foes. They led 9-7 at half vs Davidson but lost 28-16. The Toreros were nearly 0-5 but rallied from down 10 points to beat St. Thomas by a late fg which started a 7 game win streak and were +102 ypg in PFL play (-155 ypg vs non-conf). Lindsey has led the Toreros to 5 FCS playoff appearances including two first round victories. He has a 57-5 record in the Pioneer league and had won 40 straight conference games until their spring season. The Toreros have 13 starters back this year but must replace their QB, top 2 RB's and #1 tk'l'r. They were +4 net close wins last year. San Diego hosts Davidson but travels to St. Thomas. They will pick right up where they left off and once again are among the favorites to win the PFL.