

# SOUTH CAROLINA ST BULLDOGS

## POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

**QUARTERBACKS** - 2019 saw the emergence of MEAC Rookie of the Year Corey Fields at QB when he threw for 1,652 (50.5%, 15-5). Tyrece Nick threw for 805 (47.7%, 7-4) and was also their #2 rusher with 378 (4.1). In their spring season Fields completed just 49% and had a 2-5 ratio. Nick threw for 159 on just 6 attempts with 3 td passes and rushed for 95 (5.3). Last year Fields returned along with Quincy Hill (44%, 77, 1-1 in spg). Fields threw for 352 and 4 td's against New Mexico St. He also had 314 vs Bethune-Cookman. Fields finished with 2,310 (49.9%) and had an 18-12 ratio. He also rushed for 177 (2.3). Hill threw for 168 (52.2%, 1-0). Fields returns while Hill departs but Nicks is back from an injury. Soph Taurean Singletary was 2nd on the depth chart at the end of last season. Fields is now a 3 year starter and Nicks provides is an athlete that has played WR as well. Both are Grad Seniors so they have plenty of experience and Singletary is back as well.

**RUNNING BACKS** - SCSt lost their #1, #3 and #4 rushers heading into spring. Wake Forest transfer Kendral Flowers had 194 (4.9). Alex James had 162 (4.4) and Jacory Benson added 119 (6.3). All 3 returned last year. Flowers had 172 vs Norfolk St and 160 vs NC A&T in back-to-back games. He finished with 857 (5.1) with 10 td's and had 173 (7.2) receiving. Benson was #3 with 200 (4.7) and James rushed for just 67 (4.8). Three of their top 4 return this year including 1st Team All-MEAC RB Flowers. The only loss is #2 rusher Donte Anthony (221, 3.7). This is the deepest RB group in the MEAC.

**RECEIVERS** - In '19 De'Mo Burroughs led with 938 (20.4) and 13 td's. He departed in spring but they did get Shaquan Davis back, who was #2 with 632 and matched Burroughs 20.4 ypc along with 6 td's. Will Vereen was #3 with 319 (16.0). Davis led in the spring with 294 (21.0) in just 4 games. He had 146 in the finale vs Delaware St. QB Tyrece Nick was #2 with just 64 yards (7.1). Vereen sat out the spring season but returned in the fall. Davis led again with 864 and once again averaged over 20 yards per catch. Vereen was #2 with 587 (13.0). Richard Bailey was #3 with 376 (11.1). They only lose Vereen this year. Davis was 1st Team All-MEAC last year and TE Yancy Washington (89, 8.1) was 2nd Team. He has excellent size at 6'5", giving the Bulldogs a big play threat. Four of their top 5 return so this is another strong unit.

**OFFENSIVE LINE** - SCSt averaged just 142 (3.7) and only allowed 19 sacks (6%) in '19. In the spring they improved to 168 (4.2) in '19 and allowed 8 sacks (8.8%). They had two multi-year starters back including LG Tison Gray. The Bulldogs slipped to 138 (4.0) and allowed 20 sacks (4.2%). This year they lose Gray but 4 starters return including 1st Team All-MEAC OG Nick Taiste, 2nd Team All-MEAC

LT Cam Johnson and 2nd Team All-MEAC C Eric Brown. This is the MEAC's top Oline.

**DEFENSIVE LINE** - SCSt allowed just 123 (3.2) in '19 and had 28 sacks (7.9%). In spring they allowed 157 (4.1) and had 9 sacks (8%). The whole Dline from '19 was gone by the fall of '21 yet they only allowed 121 (3.6) and posted 26 sacks (6.6%). Jemblonski Green was 1st Team All-MEAC, posting 38 tackles and a MEAC high 19.5 tfl's (3.5 sk)! Patrick Godboldt had 12.5 tfl's including a team high 4 sacks and was 2nd Team All-MEAC. This year both Green and Godboldt return. They lose #8 tackler Shaheem Haltiwanger (#8 tkl'r, 2 sk, 4 tfl) and Darrell Brown (#18 tkl'r, 3 sk, 3 tfl). Four of their top 6 return including their two all conference guys so this might be the top Dline in the MEAC.

**LINEBACKERS** - In '19 BJ Davis was their #3 tackler and had 9 tfl's and 11 pd. They lost their #1 and #4 tacklers heading into spring. Davis led with 35 tackles and 3 sacks. Chad Gilchrist was #2 with 33 tackles and he had 6 tfl's. Both Davis and Gilchrist returned last year. Once again Davis was #1, posting 76 tackles (2 sk, 6.5 tfl, 5 pbu) and Gilchrist was #2 with 70 tackles (7 tfl). Both were named 1st Team All-MEAC. This year they get back Davis and SLB Chris Simmons (#12 tkl'r) while Gilchrist and Aaron Smith (#11 tkl'r) depart. This was the top LB unit in the MEAC last year but they take a step back without one half of their dynamic duo.

**DEFENSIVE BACKS** - In '19 SCSt allowed just 48.2% completions and 200 pass ypg and allowed a 13-14 ratio. Decobie Durant led with 3 int's and 12 pbu's. He was back in spring and this time the Bulldogs allowed just 51.3% and 170 pass ypg with a 9-7 ratio. Durant had 4 int's and 5 pbu! All 4 starters from '19 were back last year including Durant. They allowed 218 pass ypg (51.7%) and a 20-13 ratio. Durant was 1st Team FCS All-American with 3 int's and 12 pbu's. S Zafir Kelly was also 1st TEAM All-MEAC after finishing with 3 int's and 4 pbu's. Durant was drafted in the 4th round by the LA Rams. They also lose Kelly (#17 tkl'r) and Tim Ewing (#15 tkl'r, 1 int). They still have their #5, #9, #13, #16 and #19 tacklers back. It will be tough to replace their two best DB's but they did add Wake Forest transfer Zion Keith (PS#194) who started 10 games and had 68 tackles for the Demon Deacons the last 2 years so they won't have a huge drop.

**SPECIAL TEAMS** - This was an all new unit last year. Gavyn Zimmerman made all 8 field goal attempts (L/38) while Dyson Roberts made 3 of 4 (L/27). Roberts also averaged 40.2 ypg from 78 punts and handled KO duties as well. He had 2 punts blocked and only finished with a 31.6 net. Juwan Moody averaged 9.7 PR but he only had a 14.1 KR average. This year they go from losing the whole unit to bringing everyone back. They were decent in some areas last year and if they clean up their punting and improve their return game then this is an above average ST's Unit.

**COACHES** - Oliver "Buddy" Pough is one of the most veteran HBCU Head Coaches in the country. He has led the Bulldogs to 4 FCS Playoff appearances and a Celebration Bowl victory. They've won a share of the MEAC on 7 occasions. Pough has also won 4 MEAC Coach of The Year Awards and has a career record 143-80. They have won 3 Black College Football National Championships. The OC is Bennett Swygert. DC Jonathan Saxon has been here since 2014 and was a Grad Asst at

Louisville in '13-'14. Steve Bird is in his 3rd year as an assistant and also Coaches the WR's. He also coached at USF, Bowling Green and West Virginia

## FORECAST

**OFFENSE** - The Bulldogs only averaged between 18-21 ppg from '16-'18. In '19 they found QB Corey Fields who sparked the offense and they put up 30 ppg and 368 ypg. Against MEAC foes they put up 32 ppg and 376 ypg. Things fell apart in spring when they had to replace their top RB and WR and lost 3 starters on the OLine. They put up just 17 ppg and 316 ypg but did only play 4 games against two different teams. Last year the offense mostly returned in tact from the spring. RB Flowers stepped up as a key weapon. WR Davis was just as explosive as he was in '19 and Fields played much better than he had in spring. They averaged 24.9 ppg and 344 ypg. Nine starters are back this year including their dangerous skill-set trio of Fields/Flowers/Davis. They are strong at every unit and we think they top 30 ppg this season.

**DEFENSE** - In '19 South Carolina St allowed 20 ppg and 322 ypg. They did hold foes 17 ypg below their average. Six starters from '19 were gone in the spring. They allowed 19 ppg and 327 ypg in spring. Last year the Bulldogs had a slow start, allowing 42, 49 & 43 points in a brutal 3 game road stretch to start the season at Alabama A&M, Clemson and New Mexico St. They allowed 35 & 30 in their next two they held their last 7 opponents to 27 points or more. They allowed just 16.4 ppg in their last 7. Overall they gave up 26.2 ppg and 340 ypg. They did hold Jackson St to 194 yards in the Celebration Bowl. This year seven starters are back and they have 4 of their top 5 tacklers. Thirteen of the top 20 tacklers are back. If they play more like they did in the 2nd half of the season last year then this is the best defense in the league.

**2022** - South Carolina St last made the FCS Playoffs in 2013 & lost in the first round to Furman 30-20. They won a share of the MEAC Title in '19 they went 8-3 and were +46 ypg. In spring they played a home and away with both Alabama A&M and Delaware St. They split with A&M but swept Delaware St to finish 3-1. Last year the Bulldogs started 0-3. They led Bethune-Cookman 42-7 4Q then nearly let things get away, only winning 42-35. They were handled by FAMU 30-7 then won 4 straight including a 6 point win over Delaware St and 3 point wins over NC Central and Howard. They lost their home finale to North Carolina A&T then beat Norfolk St. They won the MEAC and earned a trip to the Celebration Bowl where they dominated Jackson St 31-10. 11 starters return this year. The Bulldogs were picked by the Coaches to win the MEAC. They open with 4 straight road games with two coming against FBS foes (UCF, South Carolina) They are at home in 5 of their last 7 and get NC Central and Norfolk St, their top competition in the conference, both at home. Their overall record may not show a big difference due to the toughness of the non-conference games but they have an experienced offense and an improving defense. The Bulldogs are our pick to represent the MEAC in the Celebration Bowl again.