

# ST. THOMAS TOMMIES

## POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

**QUARTERBACKS** - Tommy Dolan took over as the starter in 2019 and threw for 1924 yards (60.3%, 19-7). He returned last year after the St. Thomas didn't play in the fall of 2020 or spring of 2021. They did lose his backup Ronnie Jones (24-40-276). Cade Sexauer played in 5 games as a backup in '19 and completed 3 of 4 pass attempts. Both Dolan and Sexauer split reps but it was Sexauer who started all 10 games. He threw for 863 (50.7%, 4-8) and added 160 rush (2.7). Dolan played in 8 games and threw for 605 (50.5%, 1-5). Neither QB topped 200 yards in a game. This year they lose Dolan but Sexauer returns. They once again are experienced at QB and have an FCS season under their belt so they should be improved.

**RUNNING BACKS** - Josh Parks led the team in rushing in 2019 with 1,249 yards and a super 7.1 ypc. Tom Loeffler was #2 with 493 (9.2), Stephen Wagner was #3 with 283 (5.8) and QB Jones was #4 with 234 (7.8). Last year they lost their 1,000 yard rusher and the #3 rusher with Loeffler the top returnee and they also returned FB Josh Komis (162, 4.2). True frosh Hope Adebayo had 182 vs Stetson and 191 vs Marist in back to back games. He led with 693 (6.0). FB Nick Rice was tied for #2 with 255 (5.7) and added 129 rec. Loeffler also had 255 (3.2) and added 147 rec. Shawn Shipman added 155 (5.2). This year they lose Loeffler (6 st) and Rice (4 st). Adebayo (3rd Tm All-Pioneer) was clearly their best RB by season's end and he picked up where he left off with a strong spring game. Shipman adds solid depth.

**RECEIVERS** - In 2019 Gabe Green led in receiving with 698 (15.9), Grant Slavik was #2 with 436 (22.9), Vinny Pallini was #3 with 344 (11.9) and RB Parks was #4 with 214 (19.5). Last year the top 3 receivers were all gone and the leading returnee was TE Max Zimmerman (59 yds). Xavier Thurman led in 2 of their first 4 games but was OFY. Wesley Juszczak led with just 239 (15.9) as no TE/WR caught more than 4 passes in a game. Andrew McElroy was #2 with 190 (13.6). This year they lose Xavier Thurman (138, 15.3) and Isaiah Hall (5 st, 121, 10.1). They get their top 2 back and can only get better after a rough transition year into FCS.

**OFFENSIVE LINE** - In 2019 the Oline opened holes for 305 ypg and 6.6 ypc rush while allowing just 13 sacks. The good news here was that four starters returned to the Oline including two all conference players in Eli Wawracz and Matt Weimann. While they couldn't match their production in D3, they did put up a solid 168 rush ypg (4.0) and allowed 20 sacks. This year three starters return including 1st Tm All Pioneer C Matt Weimann and 3rd Tm All Pioneer LT Alec Rasmussen. They lose 3rd Tm All Pioneer LG Mike Ruggeri and RT Eli Wawracz. This is once again one of the top Olines in the Pioneer.

**DEFENSIVE LINE** - St. Thomas had a dominant run D when they were in division 3, allowing 22 rush ypg (0.7) in '17, just 31 rush ypg (1.1) in '18 then in '19 they 'slipped' to allowing 59 (2.1, 38 sk). Last year they lost their top DL and had a huge step up in competition. They still held 7 of their 10 foes under 100 rush yds but were gashed by Davidson's option for 392 yards which drove their total up to 123 (3.9, 24 sk). In their other 9 games they allowed just 94 ypg. The Tommies run a 3-4 and all 3 starters return including DE Brent Robley (10 st, #14 tk'l'r, 3.5 sk). The only loss is abackup Alex Panos (14 tk'l, 4.5 tfl). They proved the step up in competition wasn't too big and if they learn to defend the option then this will be one of the best Dline's in the Pioneer.

**LINEBACKERS** - Last year St. Thomas lost 3 LB's who were all in their top 7 tk'l'rs. They did return their #10 & #11 tk'l'rs so they weren't totally without experience. This unit made up 5 of their top 6 tk'l'rs and the group accounted for 14 of their 24 sacks. This year they lose 2nd Tm All Pioneer OLB Luke Herzog (10 st, #3 tk'l'r, 4 sk) and Sam English (#10 tk'l'r, 6 tfl) but get their #2, #4, #5 and #6 tk'l'rs back. Both OLB Jonathan Bunce and ILB Jack Mohler were All-Pioneer last year and this is the strength of the team.

**DEFENSIVE BACKS** - This was the only position where St. Thomas returned an all conference player last year in Joe Hird (#8 tk'l'r, 1 int) but they lost 3 starters. The Tommies held 8 of 10 foes under 200 pass yds and finished #1 in the Pioneer with 22 int's (8 more than #2!). St. Thomas was #1 in the conference in pass defense efficiency (56.8%, 9-22). This year they lose Tommy Fuller (#7 tk'l'r), 4th Tm All-Pioneer CB Hird (5 st, #8 tk'l'r, 5 int), 3rd Tm All-Pioneer CB Isaiah Hall (4 st, #11 tk'l'r, 3 int), CB Johnson Fallah (10 st, 16 tk'l, 3 int, 7 pbu) and Nick Ektaniphong (21 tk'l). Their depth took a hit and CB is a big concern with their top 3 all gone but they do get their #1, #9 and #12 tk'l'rs back and are actually more experienced than they were entering last year.

**SPECIAL TEAMS** - St Thomas did use 4 punters but came up with a 40.7 net with FB Josh Komis having a solid 44.1 avg. Return specialist Tom Loeffler was all conference in '19 with 13.2 on PR's and 21.7 on KR's. The kicking was not good as Tyler Knutson and Vinny Pallini combined to hit just 2-7 FG's with a long of 32. The top guys were back last year. Kolby Gartner, expected to compete for the starting punter job, pitched for the Tommies' NCAA runner-up baseball team last spring as a true freshman and made two impressive postseason starts. He came back and averaged 44.4 (40.1 net). Louis Hyde made 5-8 fg's (L/44). Isaiah Hall averaged 20.4 KR and 11.0 PR. This year they lose their K and return man but Gartner (3rd Tm All Pioneer) returns.

**COACHES** - HC Glenn Caruso is a 6x D3 National Coach of the Year. This is year 15 as HC of the Tommies. He has finished with at least 7 wins each season including last year when he oversaw an unprecedented jump from D3 to the FCS. Jake Landry is the new OC/QB Cch after spending the last 3 years as QB Cch at Temple. He was also RB Cch at Northern Illinois in '18. Wallie Kuchinski has been the DC each year under Caruso and guided 13 All-Americans as St. Thomas had one of D's most dominant defenses. Doug Lichtenberger is the 4th year ST Coordinator.

## FORECAST

**OFFENSE** - In 2019 St Thomas put up 47.9 ppg in Division III play and 526 ypg. They returned two all conference players last year but QB Dolan split time with Cade Sexauer who actually started all 10 games. St. Thomas struggled early in their transition as they only scored 1 td in their first 2 games. They played much better at home, avg 34 ppg while only putting up 19 ppg in 6 road games. St. Thomas averaged 25 ppg and 320 ypg, a far cry from their dominance in D III. This year they get 7 starters back including their top QB, RB, top 2 WR's and 3 Oline including the Pioneer OL of the Year C Matt Weimann.

**DEFENSE** - The defense allowed a paltry 10.2 ppg in 2018 and just 207.2 ypg!!! In 2019 they were top notch again allowing just 14.7 ppg and 243.7 ypg. Last year they lost their top 7 tacklers and moved up to the FCS from Division III. While they couldn't match the Georgia-like numbers they posted in D III, they proved they belonged, by holding foes to 17.8 ppg and 300 ypg. This year they get 8 starters back. They've got one of the top DL and LB units in the Pioneer and are a year into their transition so they should be even better!

**2022** - This team was the first ever program to jump from Division III to Division I FCS. They were involuntarily removed from the MIAC after spring of '21, citing "athletic competitive parity". The Pioneer is a non-scholarship league so the jump wasn't overwhelming. They were indoctrinated into the FCS in a 44-3 loss to Northern Iowa but beat Butler 36-0 the following week. They lost to San Diego by 3 then won 5 of their last 6. St. Thomas finished 6-2 in Pioneer play and were +55 ypg vs conference foes. This year they return 15 starters. They host both of last year's League co-champs in San Diego and Davidson. They've had a year to adapt to the FCS level and we think they will do much better against Davidson's option the 2nd time around so they are our call to win the Pioneer League Title.