

# UT MARTIN SKYHAWKS

## POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

**QUARTERBACKS** - Dresser Winn started the F/7 games in 2018 (1601, 66%, 12-9) before going OFY with an injury. Winn played in 2 games and redshirted in 2019 and John Bachus took over and threw for 2,549 yds (57%, 18-9). Winn was back in 2020 but was OFY after 4 games and Bachus was the #1 QB again, throwing for 1,697 yds (59%, 14-7) in the 7 game season. Last year Tulane transfer Keon Howard won the starting job and started the first 10 games, throwing for 1,811 yds (59.7%, 15-7) and also ran for 472 yds (4.9, 10 td). Howard missed the L/3 games with a foot injury and Winn started both playoff games and threw for 272 yds (54%, 2-1) in the win at Missouri St but then threw for just 98 yds in the loss at Montana St. This season Howard (OVC Offensive POY, 1st Tm OVC) is gone, and Winn returns for his final year, but they add Georgia St transfer Cornelious Brown, who started 12 career games & threw for 2,792 yds (56%, 17-15) and also ran for 365 yds (2.8, 9 td). UT Martin has two quality options at QB this season as they try to repeat as OVC champs.

**RUNNING BACKS** - Peyton Logan led UT Martin with 784 rush yds (7.2, 6 td) with 119 rec yds in 2019. Logan started all 7 games in 2020 and was the #1 rusher (340, 4.0) and Zak Wallace was #2 (1 st, 113, 2.9). Last fall both Logan and Wallace returned again and Wallace started all 13 games and ran for 1,121 yds (7.2) and also caught 29 passes for 267 yds & 3 td and was 1st Tm OVC. Wallace was a great #2 RB as he finished with 807 yds (5.5, 15 td) and was 2nd Tm OVC. This season UT Martin loses their top RB, but Wallace is capable of being the #1 RB and Jordan Castleberry (154, 5.1) or Sam Franklin (67, 9.6) will step into a larger role and this unit should still have a productive season.

**RECEIVERS** - Colton Dowell led the Skyhawks with 765 yds (10.2, 4 td) in 2019. Dowell again led UT Martin in receiving in 2020 (7 st, 40 rec, 459 yds, 4 td, 1st Tm OVC) while Donnell Williams was the #2 receiver (6 st, 29 rec, 445 yds, 3 td, 2nd Tm OVC). Overall the top 4 receivers and 5 of the top 7 returned at receiver last season for UT Martin including 2nd Tm OVC TE Rodney Williams (30 rec, 327 yds, 4 td). D. Williams took over as the #1 receiver last season (478, 14.9, 2 td) while TE R. Williams was #2 (417, 14.4, 3 td) and Dowell was the #3 receiver (398, 18.1) despite missing the L/7 gms with an injury. This season 4 of the top 5 receivers are gone, with leading returnee being Dowell. Other returnees are Deray Lawrence (2 st, 120, 15.0) and former WVU WR Randy Fields (3 st, 82, 10.3). They also JUCO Ajay Smith (6'4" 190) but this unit is less experienced than a year ago, however they do have experience at QB which could help this younger unit out in 2022.

**OFFENSIVE LINE** - The UT Martin OLine paved the way for just 110 rush ypg (3.3) but allowed 38 sacks (11.0%) including 14 sacks the L/3 games. The OLine in 2020 only paved the way for 76 rush ypg (2.6) and allowed 16 sacks in 7 games (5.6%). This unit came back strong in 2021 as every player who started a game in 2020 returned including 2nd Team OVC C Matthan Hatchie. UT Martin's experienced OLine paved the way for 231 ypg (5.7) in the regular season but ran for 155 yds (2.5 ypc) in 2 playoff games and 8 of their 16 sacks allowed last season were given up in the final three games. This season Hatchie (1st Tm OVC) returns along with 2nd Tm OVC RT Lamar Morgan and 2nd Tm OVC RG Gavin Olson. They do lose 1st Tm OVC LT Michael Shanahan and LG Chris Jackson. Three starters are back on the OLine this season, but will need a new replacement to step up at LT and UT Martin loses their top RB as well, so the rushing numbers may take a step back in '22.

**DEFENSIVE LINE** - UTM's rush defense allowed 130 ypg (3.5) but only collected 9 sacks (4.4%) in the 7 game spring season in '21. Three starters were back in the fall LY, but the rush numbers actually took a small step back, as UTM allowed 148 rush ypg (4.5) and collected 21 sacks in 13 games (5.0%). NT Austin Pickett led the DLine in tackles (13 st, 42 tkl, 4 sk, 3 tfl) and was 2nd Tm OVC. David DuBose started all 13 games at DE and finished with 37 tackles (4.5 tfl, 2 sk) and was also 2nd Tm OVC. Both Pickett and DuBose are gone this season along with DT Korbin Harmon (5 st, 23 tkl). UTM does return DT Jay Rogers (8 st, 21 tkl, 4 tfl) along with JACK's Eyabi Anoma (5 st, 36 tkl, 6 sk, 3.5 tfl) and Giovanni Davis (4 st, 18 tkl, 3 tfl). This unit returns a good bit of talent, but the loss of two all-OVC players may be tough to overcome, at least early on in the season.

**LINEBACKERS** - Going into the fall of '21 this unit returned the top 5 tacklers where UTM allowed 331 ypg and 22 ppg. John Ford (43 tkl, 3 tfl, 2 int in spring) was the top LB tackler in the fall as he recorded 88 tackles (12 st, 5 tfl, 4 pbu, 4 int) and was 1st Tm OVC. D'Carrius Stephens started all 13 games and finished with 77 tackles (7 tfl, 4 pbu, 2 int) and was 4th Tm OVC. Jaquez Akins was the ROVER and finished with 42 tackles (9 st, 4 sk, 3 tfl). Akins and Stephens depart this season with Ford being the lone starter back. Robert Hicks (38 tkl) and Chris Hunter (21 tkl) are back at LB and will have to help fill the void, and overall this unit should still have a solid season.

**DEFENSIVE BACKS** - UTM's pass defense gave up 201 pass ypg (51.7%) in the spring of '21 and grabbed 4 int's. Last fall 4 of the top 5 tacklers returned for UTM's secondary. The Skyhawks allowed 478 pass yds in the opener to WKU and 318 to Jacksonville St in game #4. In the final 9 games of the season they allowed under 200 pass ypg 5 times and overall gave up 212 pass ypg (56.3%) and collected 17 int's! This unit was led by 1st Tm OVC safety Deven Sims, who led the team with 93 tackles (13 st, 6 tfl, 2 pbu) and Oshae Baker was the #4 tackler (10 st, 68 tkl, 3.5 tfl, 9 pbu, 4 int) and was 3rd Tm OVC. Both Baker and Sims are back this season, but they do lose S Takeem Young (8 st, 44 tkl, 4 pbu), CB Jay Woods (12 st, 30 tkl, 5 tfl, 11 pbu, 2 int) and CB Shawn Shamburger (L/9 sts, 37 tkl, 8 pbu). With a trio of players gone that had significant start time last season, this unit may take a small step back, but having their top 2 tacklers back will help.

**SPECIAL TEAMS** - Tyler Larco hit 10-12 fg's (L/47) in the spring of 2021 and also averaged 41.8 yds per punt on 10 punts. QB Dresser Winn attempted 22 punts in the spring and averaged 41.1 yds. As a team in the spring their net was 36.1 yds. UTM only had 104 KR yds in the spring and 2 PR yds. Last fall Larco only hit 7-15 fg's (3 blocked) with a long of 42 yards. Larco was the only punter last fall & he averaged 40.0 yds per punt (35.7 net). The return game wasn't a big factor again as they only totaled 184 KR yds and 51 PR yds. With their do-it-all K/P back UTM needs someone to step up in the return game is this unit is to show significant improvement.

**COACHES** - Jason Simpson enters his 17th season as the HC of the UT Martin Skyhawks. Simpson is 100-80 during his tenure here and has won at least 6 games in 11 seasons. UT Martin made the FCS Playoffs in his first season here back in 2006, and finally made it back again last season as UT Martin went 10-3 and made it to the 2nd Round. Kevin Bannon has been an assistant coach here since 2013 and has been the OC since 2015. Bannon played OL here with 43 career starts and was a 2x All-OVC player. Chris Polizzi joined UT Martin's staff in 2018 and enters season #3 as the DC. Prior to joining UTM, Polizzi was an assistant coach for Tennessee Tech

from 2016-17 and spent 2015 at Western Carolina as the CB's coach. Aidan Panni and Anthony Gore are both listed as ST assistants.

## FORECAST

**OFFENSE** - UTM's offense took a step back in '17 as they averaged 298 ypg and 20 ppg. In '18 the offensive numbers jumped up to 408 ypg and 26 ppg. In '19 those numbers would take a dip back down to 332 ypg and again averaged 26 ppg. In the spring '21 season they only averaged 76 rush ypg (2.6) but threw for 260 ypg. Overall the offense averaged 335 ypg and 25 ppg. Last fall with plenty of talent back, UT Martin averaged 420 ypg & 34 ppg in their F/10 gms but just 272 ypg & 18 ppg in the F/3 gms. Overall the offense put up 386 ypg and 30 ppg. The offense returns just 4 starters (3 OL, 1 WR) and this unit will likely take a step back this season, but do add a transfer at QB with FBS start experience.

**DEFENSE** - In 2017 the Skyhawks allowed just 274 ypg and 14 ppg for the the season. After returning 5 st's in 2018 the defense did take a step back as they allowed 363 ypg and 34 ppg! In 2019 UTM again saw an increase in the ypg allowed (384) but the ppg allowed dropped by nearly 10 pts (25 ppg allowed). Last spring, the defense gave up 331 ypg and 22 ppg. Last fall this unit returned 9 starters and against non-conference teams they allowed 417 ypg/31 ppg but against OVC foes they allowed just 310 ypg and 20 ppg & held them to 36 ypg under their season average. This season UTM returns 3 of their top 4 tacklers, but return just 5 starters and they may not be as strong overall on defense this season.

**2022** - UT Martin played no games in the fall of 2020 but did play 7 OVC games in the spring of '21. The Skyhawks finished the spring season with a 3-4 record and this included a win over Austin Peay on the road and 3 losses by 5 pts or less. Last fall after a loss to WKU in the opener the Skyhawks won 9 straight games before losing the season finale. Despite getting outgained in their 1st playoff game, UTM won 32-31 (+5 TO's!) but then were outgained by 260 yds in a 26-7 loss at Montana St. After returning 18 starters last fall UTM returns just 9 starters this season, and while they are under the guidance of a long-time HC this team may struggle to match LY's record and they do face both Boise St and Tennessee on the road, they also have a rematch from the playoffs LY when they travel to Missouri St in week 3. Despite the tough stretches in the schedule the Skyhawks still should be in the mix to compete for the OVC as long as they can remain healthy.