

# VALPARAISO BEACONS

## POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

**QUARTERBACKS** - Chris Duncan saw action in 10 games as a rFr in '17. He was Valpo's leading passer in '18 when he started 7 games and threw for 1,781 (50.8%, 14-9) and rushed for another 142 (3.0). He returned in '19 and was Valpo's leading rusher with 386 (3.4). He threw for a career high 304 vs Morehead St and finished with 1,658 but his completion % dropped to 49.2 with a 10-13 ratio. Duncan was back in the spring and started the first 5 but after 1-5-11-0-1 vs Morehead St he was replaced by Ben Nimz. Duncan led with 361 yards pass (47%, 3-3) and was #2 rusher with 167 (3.8). Nimz threw for 304 (47%, 1-2). Weber St transfer Teryn Berry got the start at QB in the opener but threw 4 int's so Nimz started vs North Dakota St. Berry was back in the lineup for the next two but after 3 more int's vs Drake it was Nimz job the rest of the season. Nimz threw for a career high 241 vs Butler with 3 td's but against San Diego he hit just 2 of 16 passes for 2 yards. He finished with 1,299 (58.9%, 9-7). Berry threw for 430 (53.5%) but a 1-8 ratio. Jeffery Jackson added 67 pass yards (42.9%, 1-1) and Mason Kaplan saw action in 2 games (38 yds). Nimz departs this year so Berry is competing with Jackson and Kaplan. Clearly the coaches like Berry's talent, and he has good size at 6'3" 200. If he can cut down on the turnovers then the dropoff isn't significant

**RUNNING BACKS** - Valpo's top RB in '19 only had 347 (4.3). They got a huge addition in spring when well-traveled transfer Robert Washington (PS#20, orig Cuse commit, Char, ODU). He ran for 199 in his debut vs Butler, had 180 vs Morehead St and finished with 653 (4.7) in just 6 games and was named the PFL Offensive POY. Washington was back last year. He only had 24 yards in their first 2 games then topped 100 in 3 straight. He had 234 vs Presbyterian and finished with 1,105 (5.2) and 14 td's. He also led the Beacons with 39 catches for 338 yards (8.7). Nick Orekoya had his best performances down the stretch, rushing for 54, 69 & 72 yards in the last 3. He was #2 with 301 (4.6). No other RB topped 100 yards. Both Washington and Orekoya depart so they lose a 2x 1st Team All PFL RB and his backup. They add Central Conn St transfer Aaron Dawson (400, 4.1) but this unit is down quite a bit in talent and experience.

**RECEIVERS** - In '19 Valpo's top receiver is Ollie Reese who had 545 (16.0) and Deuce LaRose was #2 with 484 (16.1). In spring they flip-flopped with LaRose leading with 159 (12.2) and Reese was #2 with 129 (9.9). Braden Contreras was #3 with 108 (13.5). Last year LaRose was gone. Reese led with 457 and had an 18.3 ypc. RB Washington was #2 with 338 (8.7). Contreras was #3 with 316 (16.6). Jordan Bingham had 291 (11.6). This year they lose Reese and Connor Hebbeler (118, 9.1).

Three of their top 5 are gone so this is another unit that is down a notch.

**OFFENSIVE LINE** - Valpo rushed for just 97 ypg (2.8) in '19 but only allowed 14 sacks. The line was completely rebuilt in the spring with 3 RS Frosh, a True frosh and a Junior. They improved to 152 (3.7) in spring although sack % went from 3.6 to 8.8. Last year they returned in tact and rushed for 143 (4.0) but allowed 23 sacks and 8.5%. This year they return 3 starters including 2nd Tm All-PFL LT Aaron Byrd. Gone are RG Jeremiah Orr (11/15) and RT Jon Stone (11/11). They didn't add any transfers but they are still experienced with 66 career starts back and a few backups that saw action last year.

**DEFENSIVE LINE** - Valpo had a rough start to '19, allowing over 300 rush yards in each of their first 2 games. They were much better over their next 5 and only allowed 184 (4.9) on the season but produced just 14 sacks (4.2%). They lost 2 starting DL's heading into spring but gave up just 111 (3.5) and in their last 3 they only allowed 83 (2.8). The Beacons DL returned in tact in spring. They gave up 293 (7.3) in their non-conference games held PFL foes to 116 (3.2) and they totaled 31 sacks (9.1%). This year the Beacons lose 3rd Team All-PFL DE Austin Martins (#6 tkl'r, 4.5 sk, 55 tfl), 1st Team All-PFL DE Trejuan Purty (#10 tkl'r, 6.5 sk, 8.5 tfl), DT Nathan Orlandini (#11 tkl'r, 1.5 sk, 4.5 tfl) and Nicholas Price (#14 tkl'r, 4.5 sk). With 4 of their top 5 gone this unit needs rebuilt and goes from their strength to a weakness.

**LINEBACKERS** - This unit lost their #2, #10, #12, #13 and #14 tacklers so this unit was a big concern heading into their spring season. Jaxon Peifer led with 42 tackles and Evan Annis was #2 with 41 tackles. Peifer and Annis returned last year but it was Trey Psota who led with 71 tackles and was 4th Team All-PFL. Annis was #2 with 68 tackles. Peifer was #4 with 60 tackles and had 6.5 tfl's. This year they lose Psota and Peifer as well as Gavin Twigg (#9 tkl'r, 4.5 tfl). Only one of their top 4 return and they are playing behind a rebuilt Dline so this is another unit that is down a few notches.

**DEFENSIVE BACKS** - Valpo allowed just 197 pass ypg in '19 (61.3%). In spring Valpo improved to 172 pass ypg allowed and 56.4%. Last year they lost their #5, #7 and #9 tacklers but did return Keyon Turner who had 4 int's in spring. They were allowing 198 pass ypg until giving up 544 to Presbyterian and 402 to Morehead St in two of their last three. Overall they gave up 239 pass ypg (59.6%, 21-9). This year their top 5 DB's all return. Austin Chilton led the Beacons with 3 int's and was their #3 tackler last year. Turner had 7 pd's and was their #7 tackler while Jadarius Horton was #8 tkl'r and led with 9 pd's. This is their most improved unit and we think they will more resemble the unit from the first 9 games than those last 3 games.

**SPECIAL TEAMS** - Brian Bartholomew hit 7 of 8 field goals including a game-winning kick in their spring season. He made 12 of 16 field goals last year (L/45). Ben Niesner averaged 43.6 in spring with a 29.4 net. Last year Niesner returned and averaged 43.2 on 56 punts. He had a net of 38.6. Diminutive WR Chuck Maxwell (5'5" 130 lbs!) averaged 25.0 on KR and had 599 yards. All 3 were 1st Team All-PFL. Only Niesner departs so this is still one of the best ST's units in the PFL.

**COACHES** - Landon Fox is in his 4th year as Head Coach here. He was DC at Dayton from '10-'18. 1st year OC Will Fleming was an asst QB Coach

for Boston College the last 2 years. He was the OC/QB Coach at Rhode Island from '14-'19. Brian Dougherty is in his 4th year as DC. He was the DB Coach at Tiffin in '18 and DB Coach at Dayton in '16-'17. Valparaiso doesn't have a designated Special Teams Coordinator.

## FORECAST

**OFFENSE** - Valpo averaged 26 ppg and 333 ypg in '18. They also put up 30 ppg and 342 ypg vs PFL foes. Landon Fox entered as Head Coach in '19 dropped to 16 ppg and just 259 ypg. They played 6 games in spring and averaged 19 ppg and just 265 ypg. Last year 10 starters returned. The Beacons increased to 27.1 ppg and 34 ppg vs PFL foes. They also averaged 311 ypg and 337 vs PFL. They were 5th in Scoring Offense but only 9th in Total Offense. Only 4 starters return this year and they lost the PFL Offensive POY from their spring season in RB Washington. This offense has some major question marks at QB, RB and WR so we expect a decent drop in production.

**DEFENSE** - In HC Fox's first year Valpo allowed 32 ppg and 382 ypg. They were a little better against PFL foes (29 ppg/375 ypg) and did hold their foes 11 ypg below their average. Seven starters were back and they made huge strides in spring, allowing just 18 ppg and 283 ypg. Last year 8 starters were back and they allowed 31.5 ppg and 390 ypg. Six of their top 11 tacklers are gone this year. Their DL and LB's are young but the secondary should be improved. They were 7th in Total and Scoring D last year in the Pioneer and we think they slide down a few spots this year.

**2022** - Valparaiso has had 15 losing seasons over 17 years with only a 6-5 season and a 4-2 Spring campaign being their winning seasons. Last year the Beacons lost their opener to DII Indiana Wesleyan 28-10. They followed that with a 64-0 scrubbing at the hands of eventual FCS National Champs North Dakota St. They led Dartmouth 5-0 but ultimately lost 28-18. Valpo got their first win, beating Drake 24-21 despite being -5 TO's. They scored the Game-Winning td with 1:05 left. Valpo was just 1-5 after a 3 point loss to Marist in OT and a 7 point loss at St. Thomas. They trailed Dayton 20-14 at half but pulled away in the 2nd half and won 45-28. They led 14-0 in the 1Q against San Diego but never scored again. They gave up the game-winning td with 1:05 left to lose 21-14. Valpo beat Presbyterian 65-55 then crushed Butler 47-3. They closed the season with a 51-38 loss to Morehead St to finish 4-7 and were -79 ypg and -44 vs PFL Foes. They had 3 close losses and were -5 TO's last year so a little luck and they were a 6 win team. This year they are much less experienced. Only 10 starters return. They trade NDSU for Illinois St in Non-Conference play. The Beacons host St. Thomas, Drake and Butler, all winnable games in PFL play and they should be favored at Presbyterian. It's hard to imagine Valpo breaking the mold and winning 6 games this year but we do think they at least match last year's 4 win total.