

# YALE BULLDOGS

## POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

**QUARTERBACKS** - In '18 Griffin O'Connor started the last 3 with Kurt Rawlings out. O'Connor topped 400 passing in 2 of those including 465 vs Princeton (58%, 8-6). In '19 Rawlings stayed healthy and threw for 2,999 (62%, 26-6, 314 rush). O'Connor added just 197 (53%, 0-0). Last year they had to replace a 3 year starter in Rawlings, who won the Bushnell Cup. They went from 3 with starting experience to 1 but O'Connor had proven he could put up big numbers. He started the first 5 games, threw for 338 vs Cornell but was HC Reno felt Soph Nolan Grooms distinguished himself in practice and they made the switch. Grooms threw for 330 vs Brown and led with 1,569 (53.5%, 14-8) while also finishing as #2 rusher with 425 (3.9). O'Connor threw for 927 (57.3%, 6-4). This year O'Connor departs. Grooms was their clear starter by season's end and adds a deal threat element that Yale hasn't had recently.

**RUNNING BACKS** - In 2017 Zane Dudek became the first 1st frosh to ever lead the Ivy League in rushing while also setting Yale's frosh rushing record with 1,133 (7.1). In '18 3rd Tm AA Dudek returned, along with '16's leading rusher Alan Lamar (557, 4.3) who missed '17 with an injury. Dudek only played in 6 games due to injuries and slipped to just 380 (5.4). Lamar led with 685 (5.5). In '19 Dudek and 2nd Tm All-Ivy RB Lamar returned again. Dudek ran for 754 (5.6) while Lamar dipped to just 229 (3.3). Lamar departed last year but Dudek returned. Dudek never quite regained his form and battled injuries. Spencer Alston led with 446 (4.6). Dudek only finished with 274 (4.1). This year they lose Dudek but Alston returns along with Elliott McElwain (126, 4.3). If they stay healthy they should see better production.

**RECEIVERS** - Reed Klubnick became the goto guy in '18 and led with 1,143 (15.7). JP Shohfi was #2 with 836 (15.2). TE JJ Howland was #3 with 326 (18.1). Not only did all 3 return in '19, of Yale's 223 receptions in '18, only 5 were gone! This was easily the Ivy League's top WR unit. Shohfi led this time with 1,012 (16.3) and Klubnik added 999 (18.5). Mason Tipton was #3 with 325 (13.5). Both Klubnik and Shohfi departed last year but they did get their #3, #4 and #5 guys back. The unit took a big step back with as Tipton led with just 570 (21.1). Melvin Rouse was #2 with 553 (11.5). Darrion Carrington added 284 (15.8) and TE JJ Howland went for 238 (14.9). Gone are Rouse (10 st, 3rd Tm All-Ivy), Carrington (7 st) and TE Howland (10 st). They do get 5 of their top 8 back and are in much better shape considering they nearly had to replace two 1,000 yd WR's last year.

**OFFENSIVE LINE** - In '18 Yale had 2 starters back and slipped to 164 (4.4, 21 sk) ypg. All 5 Oline starters returned in '19 incl 3 All-Ivy performers. They only allowed 131 (4.3, 24 sk). Last year only two starters returned and this went from a vastly experienced Oline to inexperienced. Yale averaged 133 ypg (4.0) and only allowed 16 sacks. This year Yale loses C Sleenhof (6 st) and 3rd Tm All-Ivy RT Cameron Warfield (10 st). Three starters return and they moved Nick Gargiulo (4 st LY) to C in spring. Seven return with starting experience so they are more experienced.

**DEFENSIVE LINE** - In '18 Yale lost all 4 starters. Their rush defense allowed 102 ypg in their F/8 but were gashed for 755 yds in their L/2 (378 ypg). Three starters were back in '19 and 8 had starting experience. They allowed 131 rush ypg (4.3) and 24 sacks. Last year they only returned 3 of their top 6 and their top 2 DL were both gone (#8 & #9 tkl'rs, combined 16 tfl). Yale held 4 foes under 100 rush yds and only gave up 117 (3.2) with 32 sacks. DT Patterson tied for #1 in the Ivy with 11.5 sacks. This year they only lose DE Christian Sampleton (5 st, #14 tkl'r, 7.5 tfl). 6 return with starting experience including 1st Tm All-Ivy DT Patterson (10 st, #5 tkl'r) and this is clearly the strength of the defense.

**LINEBACKERS** - The Bulldogs returned their whole LB unit in '19 incl their #1, #2, #4, #5, #12, #13 and #14 tkl'rs. Seven LB's had starting experience. The unit made up 4 of their top 7 tkl'rs and combined for 29.5 tfl's. Last year they lost #2 tkl'r Ryan Burke (2.5 sk, 8 tfl) but they did get their #3, #4 and #7 tkl'rs back. John Dean was #4 in the Ivy with 71 tackles. This year Yale loses 3rd Tm All-Ivy LB Dean, Micah Awodiran (7 st, #2 tkl'r) and Jordan Carey (3 st, #13 tkl'r). Only Noah Pope (#11 tkl'r) returns with starting experience. This is the least experienced unit on the defense.

**DEFENSIVE BACKS** - Only returned 1 starter returned in their secondary in '18. They allowed 222 ypg and were 7th in the Ivy League in pass eff D (53.5%, 17-3). In '19 all 4 starters returned and we called this Yale's most improved unit. They allowed just 54.5% (22-11) and were 4th in pass defense efficiency. Last year they lost their #10 tkl'r but their #1, #5, #6, #12 & #13 tkl'rs were all back. Yale allowed 210 pass ypg and slipped to #6 in pass defense efficiency (54.1%, 15-8). SS Rodney Thomas 10 st, #3 tkl'r, 11 pbu, 2 int) was Yale's first player drafted since '18 (#7DC IND). They also lose Deonte Henson (#9 tkl'r, 8 pbu). Four of their top 6 DB's return so they are in much better shape despite losing the best player on defense.

**SPECIAL TEAMS** - In '19 Yale had to replace their do-it-all kicker. Sam Tuckerman hit 14-18 fg's (L/43). Jack Bosman avg'd 34.8 ypg (31.4 net). Melvin Rouse had a 100 yd KR td on the opening KO in '18. Then he avg'd 8.7 PR in '19. Joey Felton avg'd 22.7 KR. Once again Yale had to replace their kicker but the rest of the unit returned intact. Bosman pulled double duty, hitting 7-11 fg's (L/47) and his avg increased to 40.3 (36.0 net). Rouse avg 11.2 PR and David Pantelis avg 26.5 KR. This year they lose Rouse (2nd Tm All-Ivy). Bosman actually improved as a punter in the dual role and he is back so they are in good shape.

**COACHES** - HC Tony Reno is back for his 10th year. He has led Yale to 3 Ivy League titles. He coached DB/ST's at Harvard from '09-'11 and was an asst here from '03-'08. Kevin Cahill started here in '12 as a ST Coor and was promoted to OC in '18. Sean McGowan was a LB and DB Cch before taking over as DC in '19. He as also an asst at BC and Temple. Dennis Dottin-Carter is the new Co-DC/DL Cch. Steven Vashel is the ST Coor.

## FORECAST

**OFFENSE** - Yale had a pedestrian offense in '15 and '16, averaging 23.5 (390 ypg) and 20.3 ypg (303 ypg) respectively. The Bulldogs came out of nowhere in '17, putting up 34.5 ypg and 451 ypg. Only 5 starters returned in '18 but among the returnees were QB Kurt Rawlings 7. They slipped to 29.5 ypg but ypg actually jumped to 480. The entire starting offense returned in '19 so of course they jumped to 38.7 ypg while ypg was basically matched at 483. Last year they brought just 4 starters back from '19. Rawlings returned but lost his job to Soph Nolan Grooms and RB Dudek battled injuries. Yale dipped to 29.9 ypg and 383 ypg. Six starters return this year and their young guys gained valuable experience last year. We have them improved at every unit so they could come close to '19's numbers.

**DEFENSE** - In 2017 Yale allowed 372 ypg in their first 4, then held their last 6 foes to 257 ypg. They allowed 303 ypg on the season. In '18 only 3 starters returned. They slipped from just 16 ppg to 28.5 ypg and 379 ypg. 10 starters were back in '19 and while they held 4 non-conf foes to 345 ypg, they gave up 400 ypg vs Ivy League foes and 428 ypg away from home. They allowed 26.2 ypg and 383 ypg on the season. Last year 7 starters returned from '19. The Bulldogs only allowed 271 ypg and 14 ppg in non-conference but 351 ypg and 29 ppg vs Ivy foes. Overall they improved to 24.7 and 327. Six starters return and they've got excellent depth on the Dline and secondary so they could match last year's season totals.

**2022** - Yale went from a disappointing 3-7 season (3-4 in Ivy) in '16 to 9-1 (6-1 in Ivy) in '17. The Bulldogs won their first Ivy League Title since 2006 and their first outright title since 1980 while they finished the season ranked #24. In '18 Yale entered the season as the Media favorite despite just 7 returning starters. The Bulldogs were 5-3 before suffering B2B losses to Princeton and Harvard to finish just 5-5 (3-4). In '19 Yale was the most experienced team in the FCS with 21 starters back. They started 3-0 before getting blownout 42-10 at Dartmouth but bounced back to win their last 6 games, finishing in a tie for the Ivy League Crown with the Big Green. Last year Yale had 11 starters back from '19. They opened 2-3 with close losses to Holy Cross, Dartmouth and UConn, bounced back to win 3 straight then lose their last 2. They finished +58 ypg despite a 5-5 record (4-3, +45 ypg vs Ivy) and 4 of their 5 losses were by 6 points or less. This year 12 starters are back. They only get 3 Ivy League home games but do get Dartmouth and Princeton at home. If Yale has better luck (-5 TO's LY) then they could ascend back to the top of the Ivy League.