

ALCORN ST BRAVES

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - In 2018 Alcorn St had the SWAC Offensive POY, SWAC Championship Game Offensive MVP, and All-SWAC 1st Team selection in QB Noah Johnson, who passed for over 2,000 yds and rushed for over 1,000 more. Johnson returned in '19 but was injured in the 3rd game which ushered in the era of Felix "Triggerman" Harper. All Harper did was win SWAC Offensive POY after throwing for 2,954 (60.5%, 33-8, 169 rush). Johnson saw the writing on the wall and transferred to USF in '20 while Alcorn St sat the year out due to Covid. Harper returned in '21 and threw for 2,478 (61.7%, 20-5) with 218 rush (2.2). Harper was the only player on the roster to attempt a pass last year. He departs, leaving the Braves completely inexperienced. Memphis transfer Markevion Quinn is a Senior with good size (6'3" 195) and they added Louisiana Tech transfer Aaron Allen, who started 7 games for the Bulldogs, and threw for 1,668 (60.8%) with a 9-13 ratio. Allen's arrival gives them experience but it's tough to imagine him matching the numbers Harper put up.

RUNNING BACKS - Alcorn St lost a 1,200 yard rusher from '18. Niko Duffey stepped in and rushed for 838 (5.2) and was named a Frosh All-American. Duffey in '21 but they lost their next 3 top rushers. Last year Duffey had a string of 3 straight 100-yard performances midseason but was slowed late and only had 83 in his last 3 games. He finished with 805 (5.1) and added 121 rec (6.7). Northwestern St transfer Stadford Anderson made an early impact with 128 vs NC Central and finished #2 with 603 (4.7). This year Anderson departs but Duffey returns. They only have 3 RB's on the roster as of August 1st so don't be surprised if they add from the Portal again. Javonta Leatherwood did play in 9 games as a Frosh (50, 2.3). Depth is a concern but if they add a transfer then they are in the same shape they were in last year.

RECEIVERS - Last year Alcorn St had to replace their top WR in Chris Blair who led with 931 (21.2) but they did return LeCharles Pringle (828, 17.2 '19) and added Vandy transfer CJ Bolar (14 st, 519 2Y). Pringle's 14 TD receptions in '19 were the most in school history and were 4th in FCS. Alcorn returned four of their top six WRs. Pringle led with 686 (15.2) but his td's were cut in half. Bolar was #2 with 668 (16.7). Juan Anthony finished #3 with 433 (12.0). This year they lose 4th Team All-SWAC WR Pringle but every other WR and TE that caught a pass last year returns. Bolar (3rd Tm All-SWAC) should be even better in his 2nd year in the offense. This is the 2nd straight season Alcorn St has lost their top WR but the loss is not as significant and this is their most experienced unit.

OFFENSIVE LINE - Alcorn St rushed for 155 ypg (4.2) and allowed 24 sacks (5.9%) in '19. Last year they returned 2 starters and had to replace both OT's. The Braves moved their line around often last year with multiple linemen starting at 3 or 4 different spots. They had a 4 game stretch in the middle of the season where they put up 221 ypg (4.8) but overall they only rushed for 158 ypg and ypc fell to 3.9. Sacks also rose to 32 and 10.3%. This year they lose Wanya Morris (11 st), Columbus Willis (11 st), Joseph Milburn (6 st) and Darius Smith (5 st). Only 2 starters return again so they are in the same shape as they were entering last year. If they find a consistent lineup then they could improve.

DEFENSIVE LINE - In '19 Alcorn St allowed 143 (3.7) ypg and put up 20 sacks (5.2%). In their last 4 games they allowed 182 rush ypg (4.7). Last year Alcorn St lost 3 starters. They allowed over 200 rush in 2 of their first 3 games but didn't allow over 200 again and even held 4 of their last 8 foes to under 90 rush yards. The Braves allowed 132 rush ypg (3.8) on the season but only put up 12 sacks. This year the losses are heavy. Gone are DE's Jacorian "Kobe" Wren (11 st, #6 tkl'r, 6 tfl) and Solomon Wise (10 st, #5 tkl'r, 2 sk, 2 tfl), DT's Tyreic Martin (2 st, #10 tkl'r, 4 tfl), DT Chris Monroe (2 st, #16 tkl'r, 1.5 tfl), Montrell Huff (#18 tkl'r) and DT Myron Means (8 st, 5 tkl). They only return 1 starter in Devin Dawson (8 st, #15 tkl'r, 4 tfl). This is an inexperienced unit that lacks depth but they are actually in the same shape they were entering '21.

LINEBACKERS - Three of Alcorn's top 4 LB's returned last year though they did lose their top tackler. Claudin Chereled led with 11 tfs and was their #2 tackler. Chereled returns this year but they lose Nichel Herron (3 st, #4 tkl'r, 2 tfl), Daimen Anderson (7 st, #11 tkl'r) and Terrance Edgeston (7 st, #14 tkl'r, 2 tfl). The Braves return their #2 and #13 tacklers. They are less experienced but do return their best guy.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - Alcorn St allowed 211 pass ypg (57.2%) in '19. Senior S Juwan Taylor returned after leading the Braves in tackles with 89, had 5 pbu's and 2 int's. Alcorn St slipped to 231 pass ypg (60.6%) and only finished with 3 int's on the season yet they finished #6 in pass D efficiency in the SWAC. This year they lose their 2x #1 tackler in Taylor (11 st, 4 pd), SS Taurence Wilson (3 st, #9 tkl'r, 5 pbu) and CB Chris Daigre (7 st, #17 tkl'r, 10 pbu). They do return their #3, #7, #8, #12 and #19 tacklers along with 2 others that started multiple games. It won't take much to improve on last year's 3 int's so we will call this unit improved.

SPECIAL TEAMS - This unit needed completely replaced last year. Alcorn St had two kickers combine for 8-13 fg's with Noah Kiani had the better season, hitting 6 of 8. Robens Beauplan averaged 37.5 ypp but they only had a 29.8 net. They only had 7 PR's but 76 yards and a blocked punt for td. Manny Jones averaged 22.6 KR. This year they lose Beauplan but the rest of the unit returns and whoever their punter is can only improve on last year's poor net.

COACHES - Former Alcorn St star QB Fred McNair is in his 6th season as head coach here. He was the SWAC Coach of the Year in '18 & '19 when he led the Braves to Back-to-back SWAC Titles. McNair was the QB Coach here from '13-'15. The 6th year co-OC is Jason Phillips. He was also the OC for 4 years at Mississippi Gulf Coast. Elliott Wratton was promoted to OC in '19 and has coached here for 6 years, currently as the Oline coach. He spent 7 years as Indiana in multiple positions on both sides of the ball. Cedric Thomas is in his 2nd stint at Alcorn St. He was DB Coach here from '12-'15 and DC in '16-'17. He was the head coach at Arkansas Pine-Bluff from '18-'19. The new co-DC is Jonathan Bradley who coached as DC/DLine coach at Ark Pine-Bluff. ST Coor Lane Powell is on his 2nd stint at Alcorn St.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - Alcorn St averaged over 30 ppg every year from '13-'19 including 44 ppg and 494 ypg in '14. The Braves put up 34 ppg and 407 ypg in '19. They sat out the spring season and returned in '21 but dropped below 30 ppg, averaging 26 ppg and 380 ypg. Alcorn St returns 6 starters this year but must replace 2x All-SWAC QB Harper. They get their top rusher back and only lose their #1 receiver. The addition of Louisiana Tech transfer Aaron Allen and Memphis transfer Markevion Quinn gives them two options and McNair has done wonders with his QB's so it wouldn't be surprising if they top 30 ppg again.

DEFENSE - In '18 Alcorn St had a huge improvement, allowing just 289 ypg and 21 ppg. In '19 they slipped to 23 ppg and 354 ypg but did hold SWAC foes to 20 ppg and they held their opponents 27 ypg below their season average (#28 in FCS). The Braves lost three of their top 4 at DLine but brought back 3 of their top 4 LB's and DB's. They allowed 25.8 ppg and 368 ypg. Against SWAC foes they allowed 28 ppg and 373 ypg. They finished 3rd in the SWAC in scoring D and 5th in total D. This year they lose 7 of their top 11 tacklers and only 7 of their top 20 tacklers are back.

2022 - Alcorn St went 9-4 and won the SWAC but lost the Celebration Bowl in '15. HC Jay Hopson resigned to take the job at Southern Miss and former star QB Fred "Air" McNair was promoted from QB Coach. They went 6-5 (+24 ypg) in McNair's first season, losing the SWAC Title to Grambling. In '17 they went 7-5, again losing the SWAC Title to Grambling but they finished +104 ypg. In '18 Alcorn St went 9-4, won the SWAC but lost the Celebration Bowl 24-22 vs NCA&T. They were +183 ypg and +215 ypg vs SWAC foes. They finished 8-4 in '19, returning to the Celebration Bowl but fell to the Aggies again 64-44. They were only +54 ypg and +66 ypg vs SWAC foes. After sitting out the spring, the Braves started 1-2 then won 4 straight. They dropped games at Southern 38-35 and at Bethune-Cookman 35-31 then beat SWAC West Champs Prairie View A&M before losing to Jackson St in their finale to finish 6-5 and 2nd in the SWAC West. Seven of the Braves 11 games were decided by 7 points or less, going 4-3 in those and they were +15 ypg and +33 vs SWAC foes. They only get 4 home games this year and one of those is against Jackson St. They will be favored in their other two crossover games against Bethune-Cookman and MVSU. 10 starters return this year and they have a great chance to be 6-2 or 5-3 heading into Prairie View and we call for them to match last year's 6-5 record.