

AUSTIN PEAY

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS -The QB for the fall of 2020 was Jeremiah Oatsvall & he hit just 49% for 479 yds (0-3 ratio) but 2 games were vs good FBS foes. True frosh Draylen Ellis took over at QB in the spring of 2021 and for the season he threw for 1,270 yds (52%, 14-4) but only ran for 84 yds. Coming into the fall season in '21 Ellis was named preseason OVC offensive POY! Ellis began the fall '21 season with 325 yds (70%, 4-2) vs Chattanooga and threw for 226 vs Ole Miss. The next week Ellis had 345 yds (58%, 3-0) vs Morehead St. Ellis played in 10 games (started 8 gms) and finished with 2,626 pass yds (54.2%, 19-8). The backup was Memphis transfer Sheldon Layman & he started 3 games but only threw for 353 yds (59.7%, 3-1). Ellis was suspended from the team in January and entered the transfer portal in April, so Layman is the top guy back. Soph Neyland Jean threw 2 passes LY and he is back this season too, but the loss of a 2nd Tm OVC QB will be tough to overcome.

RUNNING BACKS - Going into the 2020 fall season Austin Peay lost their RB from 2019 (895, 5.1, 11 td) but Tanner Ahmaad was back (408, 3.7 in '19). However RB Brian Snead led the team in rushing during the 2020-21 season (522, 5.5, 4 td) but CJ Evans (365, 5.4, 4 td) and Tanner (283, 5.1, 3 td) also were solid contributors in the run game. Last season the top 3 RB's all returned and Ahmaad led with 801 (11 st, 4.5, 11 td) and 4th Tm OVC. Snead was the #2 RB (494, 5.4) and was also 4th Tm OVC. Evans started 5 games and finished with 150 rush (4.4) and 242 rec yds (8.1). Both Ahmaad and Snead depart this season, so Evans is the top RB returning and they will need to get production from other RB's such as Jariel Wilson and Jevon Jackson if this unit is to match the production from a season ago.

RECEIVERS - The top WR in 2020-21 season was DeAngelo Wilson (619, 14.1, 3 td, 1st Tm OVC) who was the OVC offensive POY! Overall, there were 4 WR's overall that topped 200 catches and 200 yds in that fall/spring season including Baniko Harley (28, 387, 5 td) and former Arkansas St WR Eugene Minter (21, 253, 4 td). Coming into the fall of 2021 Austin Peay lost Wilson, but returned Harley, Minter and Jay Parker (223, 10.6 in '20-21 ssn). However, it was freshman Drae McCray (5'8" 175) that led the way with 53 catches for 867 yds (16.4, 8 td) and he was 1st Tm OVC. Harley was #2 with 800 yds (16.7, 7 td) and was also 1st Tm OVC while Minter finished #3 (447, 19.4). While McCray returns this unit loses Harley (9 st), Minter (2 st), and DJ Render (8 st, 332, 8.5). The top 2 guys back alongside McCray are Joshua DeCambre (107, 17.8) and Trey Goodman (66, 13.2). With 3 of the top 4 gone and a new QB taking over, this unit won't match last season's output.

OFFENSIVE LINE - The Austin Peay OL gave up 15 sacks in the 9 game '20-'21 season but 12 of them came in the first 5 games. Austin Peay's OLine would also pave the way for 135 ypg (3.8) and that number was 154 ypg (4.1) vs conference foes. Last season this unit returned 4 started with the lone loss being their 2nd Tm OVC RT. Last season Austin Peay topped 100 rush yds in their F/7 games including 371 (6.9) vs Murray St. Overall they ran for 150 ypg (4.0) and gave up 28 sacks but 17 were in the F/5 games. The losses for this unit in 2022 are massive, as they lose all 6 players who started on the OLine last fall, including 1st Tm OVC LT/LG Bucky Williams along with 3rd Tm OVC RG Colby McKee and 3rd Tm OVC RT Joe Ware. With this unit undergoing as massive overhaul, they will need to get their new starting 5 up to speed quick if this unit is going to have any hopes of coming close to matching LY's numbers.

DEFENSIVE LINE - Austin Peay gave up 142 rush ypg (3.6) and collected 21 sacks in the '20-'21 season. Coming into the fall of last season they lost 4 of their top 6 tacklers but the run defense was still pretty solid as they allowed 148 rush ypg (3.9) but they only recorded 18 sacks (4.5%). Terrell Allen led the unit with 36 tackles (10 st, 5 sk, 6 tfl) and was 1st Tm OVC. Allen does depart this season along with backup Damion Barber (2 st, 13 tkl), but they do bring back Eric Bentley (9 st, t-#12 tkl'r, 3 tfl) along with Jau'von Young (8 st, t-#12 tkl'r, 3 tfl). This is one of the few units on this 2022 Governors team that brings back experience, they'll just have to work on increasing the sack production this season.

LINEBACKERS - The Governors defense gave up 356 ypg in the '20-'21 season. Jack McDonald led with 70 tkl (9 tfl, 3 pbu) and Troy Henderson was #2 with 57 tackles (5 tfl). Last fall the top 2 LB's returned and the defense allowed 358 ypg including just 335 ypg vs OVC foes. Henderson (11 st, 4 tfl) and McDonald (11 st, 6 tfl, 2 int) both were #2 on the team with 71 tackles and Henderson was 1st Tm OVC while McDonald was 3rd Tm OVC. Both of them are gone this season along with Demetries Ford (24 tkl, 4 pbu) and Hunter Scholato (3 st, 14 tkl). The top LB's back are Darryl Rogan (L/6 st, 31 tkl, 3.5 tfl) and Joshua Rudolph (21 tkl). With just 3 of the top 7 LB tacklers back and the top 2 gone, we anticipate this unit taking a step back.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - In '19 Austin Peay allowed 203 pass ypg and held opposing QB's to just 54.8% passing and they collected 15 int's. In the '20-'21 season the Governors allowed 187 pass ypg against OVC foes and held those QB's to just 49.4% and collected 9 int's. Last fall 3 of the top 4 DB's returned led by Kordell Jackson (101 tkl, 14 tfl, 3.5 sk, 8 pbu, 8 int last 2 ssn's). However it was S Koby Perry who led the team in tackles (10 st, 85 tkl, 8 tfl, 2 int) and was 2nd Tm AA and OVC Defensive POY! Shamari Simmons also had a good season (9 st, 50 tkl, 10 pbu, 4 int) and was 2nd Tm OVC while K. Jackson had 41 tackles (4 sk, 3 tfl) and CB Jonathan Edwards (11 st, 29 tkl, 6 pbu, 7 int) was 1st Tm AA! The bad news for Austin Peay is that they lose Perry, Jackson, and Edwards. Their top returnees are Simmons along with Kory Chapman (7 st, 39 tkl, 4 tfl, 4 pbu) and Kam Ruffin (2 st, 30 tkl, 2 pbu). The cupboard is not bare for the Governors secondary, but losing 3 All-OVC players limits are over all expectations for this unit in '22.

SPECIAL TEAMS - Kicker Grant Paulette hit 5-6 FG's in the '20-'21 season, but was not back for the fall '21 season. The new kicker was Max Trujillo and he connected on 14-18 fg's (L/45) and 2 of his kicks were blocked. Former Middle Tenn P Matt Rigney avg'd 36.1 yds per punt & the team net was just 30.3 in '20-'21. Last season Rigney averaged 40.7 yards per punt (38.8 net). WR Jay Parker led the team with 204 KR yds and the Governors had just 40 PR yds all season in the '20-'21 season. Last fall WR Kam Thomas led with 120 KR yards and he also led with 65 PR yards for the season. All 3 specialists return this season and this unit should remain consistent.

COACHES - Austin Peay named Scotty Walden the new HC going into the spring '21 season. Prior to taking over here, Walden was the interim HC at Southern Miss in the fall of 2020 & was WR coach at Southern Miss from '17-'20 and was the co-OC in '19-'20. Walden was the youngest FBS/FCS HC coming into the 2021 season at just 31 years old. Ryan Stancheck is the new co-OC here and before coaching here he was the co-OC and OL coach at Florida A&M in '21. Stancheck was also OL coach at SMiss from '19-'20. Chris Kappas is the 3rd year DC for the Governors and before here he was a coach

at D-III powerhouse Mount Union and spent time as both the OC and DC there. Akeem Davis is in year #2 of the co-DC role here. Before here Davis spent 4 years at Southern Miss as an assistant. The special teams coordinator is Joe Pappalardo.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - In 2017 Austin Peay went with a 2 QB system and saw their offense put up the best numbers of the decade (387 ypg, 27 ppg). The Governors went with that same 2 QB system in '18 and their offensive numbers jumped up 419 ypg and 31 ppg. The Governors offense put up 419 ypg again in '19 and they averaged 35 ppg. In the '20-'21 season Austin Peay's offense only put up 343 ypg and 24 ppg. Last season those numbers took a big jump up to 423 ypg and 33 ppg. With just 2 returning starters this season on offense, a big drop in production could be in store.

DEFENSE - In 2017 Austin Peay allowed 311 ypg and 25 ppg, which was their best mark of the decade. With 7 starters back in '18, those numbers surprisingly jumped up to 384 ypg and 31 ppg allowed. The defense in '19 only allowed over 350 yds in 3 out of their 15 games and for the season they allowed just 308 ypg and 21 ppg. In the fall portion of the Governors schedule in 2020 they allowed 468 ypg and 45 ppg, granted they did play 2 FBS teams on the road in Pitt and Cincinnati. In the OVC portion of the schedule in the spring of '21 they improved to allowing just 300 ypg and 28 ppg. 6 starters were back last fall for Austin Peay and they allowed 358 ypg and 25 ppg. This season 5 starters are back for the Governors defense but they do lose 5 of their top 7 tacklers so they make a step back in ypg.

2022 - In their magical season of 2019 the Governors had their first 11-win season in program history and won the OVC for the first time in 42 years. Austin Peay made it to the third round of the FCS playoffs, as they defeated #16 Furman and #3 Sacramento St before ultimately losing at #5 Montana St. Austin Peay went 0-3 in the fall of '20 and went 4-2 in the spring season. Last fall Austin Peay opened 2-1, then lost 4 of 5 games, but finished with 3 straight wins and went 6-5. This season they open with WKU but then take on two lesser FCS foes at home. Austin Peay is now a member of the Atlantic Sun Conference but will still face familiar foes such as Eastern Kentucky and Jacksonville St who both move to the ASUN too. They do end their season with 3 straight road games including ending the season at Alabama. With just 7 starters back, Austin Peay will likely take a step back and may take a year to build things back up and be in contention for a league title.