

COLUMBIA LIONS

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - Josh Bean started the first 4 games in '19 but hit 50% or less in 3 games and the offense sputtered to just 245 ypg so they switched to Ty Lenhart for the last 6. Under Lenhart, Columbia improved to 333 ypg. Lenhart led with 1,278 (60.5%, 8-6, 193 rush) while Bean threw for 534 (57.1%, 3-4). Lenhart returned in '21 along with John Foreback (8 pass att, 70, 50%, 0-1 '19). They added San Diego St transfer Joe Green (PS#152). Green started all 10 games, threw for 1,590 (55.8%, 10-3). Gabriel Hollingsworth played in 8 games (7 attempts, 113 rush). This year they only lose Lenhart (6 attempts, 25 yds). Green was the first Columbia player to win Ivy League Rookie of the Year since 2007. Hollingsworth adds a dual threat dimension. This is one of the top QB units in the Ivy League.

RUNNING BACKS - In '18 Ryan Young was Columbia's #1 rusher with just 365 (3.7). Their top 3 rushers returned in '19. Young improved to 460 (4.3). Dante Miller started 2 games and had 150 (2.9) and Broderick Taylor added 118 (2.7). Last year the only loss was Marquavious Moore (#3, 192, 3.2). Miller rushed for 187 vs Penn and finished #2 in the Ivy League with 814 (5.6). Young was #2 with 498 (3.9, 194 rec). Miller (1st Tm All-Ivy) transferred to South Carolina and Young and Taylor (92, 3.2) depart as well. Columbia must replace their top 2 rushers. They only have 4 RB's on the spring roster and the only one to see action last year was Ty'son Edwards (43, 3.9) so this is their biggest question mark.

RECEIVERS - WR Josh Wainwright was 1st Tm All-Ivy with 1,001 (12.8) in '17 but was OFY in the opener in '18 and their top WR, Kyle Castner only had 430 (10.5) while Ronald Smith was #2 with 399 (11.). In '19 they lost their top guy but Wainwright returned from injury. Wainwright started 8 and led with 571 (12.4). Mike Roussos was #2 with 395 (8 st, 11.3). TE Rory Schlageter started all 10 and was #3 with 329 (10.0). 4 of their top 5 departed last year and Roussos was the only returnee that topped 100 yards in '19. Ernest Robertson averaged 20.0 ypc and tied Marcus Libman (8.5) for their top spot with 280. Wills Meyer was #3 with 267 (17.8). This year they only lose Roussos (5 st, 104, 6.5). They now have 5 returning that topped 100 yards last year and should be much better with experience.

OFFENSIVE LINE - In '19 Columbia had 4 starters returning on the Oline but was only able to repeat '18's performance, rushing for 109 ypg (2.9, 21 sk). Last year only 2 starters returned and they lost 5 of their top 8 including 2x All-Ivy C Parker Coogan. They increased to 158 rush ypg (3.9) and allowed just 12 sacks! They did only rush for 123 (3.3) in Ivy League play and 238 (5.1) in non-conference. This year they lose C Tyler Worrell (3rd Tm All-Ivy) and bkp RT Zach Minch (2 st). Four starters are back and 5 have starting experience. LG Will Hamilton is a 2 year starter. This is a much more experienced unit and could be much more productive.

DEFENSIVE LINE - In '19 Columbia had 3 starters back on the Dline including Daniel DeLorenzi who led the Ivy with 9.5 sks in '18. They held 4 opponents under 100 rush yds and improved to 151 (4.4) vs Ivy foes and 141 (3.9) overall but sacks slipped to 23. Last year they lose all 4 Dline starters including 2x All Ivy DE DeLorenzi (10 st, #8 tkl'r, 5.5 sk) along with DT Arman Samouk (10 st, #14 tkl'r), DT Alex Robin (9 st, 13 tkl) and Cooper Wilson (8 st, 13 tkl). Their top 6 DL departed. Columbia allowed just 75 rush ypg (2.2) in non-conference but gave up 157 (4.0) vs Ivy League foes. They actually improved overall to 132 (3.5). 2nd Tm All Ivy DE Paul Akere (10 st, #5 tkl'r, 5 sk) transferred to Virginia and they also lose Xavier Thibault (5 st, #15 tkl'r) and Mitchell Shinskie (7 st, 13 tkl). They do get Xavier's brother Thomas Thibault back (5 st, co-#13 tkl'r) and DT Ben Corniello (3 st, #7 tkl'r, 5.5 tfl). DE Mitch Moyer also returns after starting all 10 games last year (#6 tkl'r, 5 sk). They go from 0 of their top 6 returning to 3 of their top 4 so this unit is improved.

LINEBACKERS - In '19 only 1 starter returned at LB and they got Justin Woodley back from injury (3 st, 11 tkl '18). Cam Dillon started the first 3 but was hurt and OFY. Scott Valentas, John Harris, Michael Murphy and Jalen Williams all topped 30 tcls. Last year they lost Murphy (10 st, #4 tkl'r, 4.5 tfl) and Williams (4 st, #6 tkl'r) but Valentas and Harris were back (#2 and #3 tkl'rs) along with Dillon (22 tkl) who returned from injury. Valentas and Dillon finished as their top 2 tkl'rs and Columbia improved by nearly a td and 20 yds per game. This year they lose 2nd Tm All-Ivy LB Dillon (9 st, #2 tkl'r, 8.5 sk) who transferred to Duke. Also gone is Woodley (4 st, #9 tkl'r), John Harris (1 st, co-#13 tkl'r) and Cameron Brown (17 tkl). 3rd Tm All-Ivy Scott Valentas (#1 tkl'r) returns along with CJ Brown (9 st, #10 tkl'r) but they aren't nearly as deep as last year.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - In '18 the Lions streak of improving their comp % allowed for 5 straight years ended with them giving up 59.1% (16-8). In '19 they had 4 back with starting experience and allowed 55.9% (12-6). Last year Columbia returned 3 starters, but did lose their #5 and #7 tkl'rs. 4 of their top 6 were back including #1 tkl'r Ben Mathiasmeier and this was the most experienced unit on the defense. Columbia slipped to allowing 57.1% and fell to 5th in the Ivy's Pass Efficiency Defense rankings (229 ypg, 11-12). This year they lose 3rd Tm All Ivy FS Jordan Colbert (5 st, #4 tkl'r, 2 int), CB Bryan Bell-Anderson (7 st, #8 tkl'r, 6 pbu), 2nd Tm All Ivy CB Will Allen (10 st, #12 tkl'r, 11 pbu, 2 int), FS Fara'ad McCombs (5 st, #11 tkl'r) and Ryan Rhoden (1 st, 17 tkl). Their only starter returning is 1st Tm All Ivy S Mathiasmeier (#3 tkl'r, 4 int) so this is the least experienced unit on the defense.

SPECIAL TEAMS - In '19 Alex Felkins made 9-14 fg's (L/51). Drew Schmid avg'd 36.2 ypg (32.7). Mike Roussos avg'd 17.3 PR and 23.8 KR. All 3 returned last year. Felkins made 16-24 fg's (L/42). Schmid avg'd 39.9 (34.6 net). Roussos avg'd 26.5 KR and 9.5 PR. This year they lose their P and return man but Felkins does return.

COACHES - Al Bagnoli has the most career wins of all active FCS Coaches (264) and needs 6 more Ivy League wins to tie Carmen Cozza of Yale for #1. He was HC at Penn from '92-'14 and here since '15. Mark Fabish is in his 7th year as OC. Justin Stovall takes over as DC after spending the last 6 years as ST Coor/LB Cch. Paul Rice is the new ST's Coor.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - In 2013 Columbia hit rock bottom, avg just 7 ppg in a winless campaign. They made small incremental improvements each year from '14-'17, topping off with 24 ppg in '17. In '18 they lost a 2nd Tm All-Ivy QB and 4 QB's started at least 1 game. They slipped to 23.1 ppg. In '19 they brought back 9 starters on offense but only avg 298 ypg and 19.3 ppg. After no football in '20, they returned 5 starters on offense in '21 and averaged 25.1 ppg and 321 ypg. This year they've got 9 starters back including QB Green. This is a much more experienced offense and one of the most improved in the Ivy League.

DEFENSE - In 2017 Columbia was #2 in the Ivy League in scoring defense, allowing 18.6 ppg in conf play. In '18 the Lions had 8 starters return on defense but allowed 418 ypg in Ivy League play and gave up 25.2 ppg on the season (388 ypg). Columbia only had 6 starters return in '19 and while they improved to allowing 380 ypg, they also slipped to 28.6 ppg allowed. Last year the Lions returned 5 starters on D. They had experienced LB and DB's and improved to just 22.5 ppg (360 ypg) and only gave up 24 ppg (363 ypg) in Ivy League play. This year they return 6 starters including 4 of their top 7 tkl'rs. Depth at LB and DB are a concern but they could match last year's numbers.

2022 - When Columbia hired Al Bagnoli, they were coming off B2B winless seasons. Bagnoli quickly turned the Lions around. After posting 5 wins in his first 2 years, the Lions made a remarkable turnaround, going 8-2 in '17 (+30 ypg) and tied for 2nd in the Ivy. In '18 Columbia was considered a contender to win the Ivy but slipped to 6-4 and were -82 ypg. In '19 the Lions returned 15 starters including 9 on offense but had major question marks at QB, lost their top 4 tkl'rs and their star K. They finished 3-7 and were -82 ypg. Last year 10 starters returned. They opened 2-0 and only trailed Princeton 10-7 4Q but lost 24-7. At 5-1, they led Yale 23-14 3Q but lost 37-30 then were crushed by Harvard 49-21 (-208 yds). They won their L/2 to finish 7-3. HC Bagnoli is the winningest active FCS Head Coach and owns the 2nd most Ivy League Titles with 9 from his stint at Penn ('92-'14). This year 15 starters return. They get 4 Ivy League home games including Princeton and Yale and will be in the mix for a share of the Ivy League crown.