

DELAWARE ST HORNETS

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - DSU's leading passer in '18 threw the ball for a staggering 702 yds, thus began the ushering in of 6'5", true freshman QB Tylik Bethea for '19. Passing ypg improved from 128 ypg in '18 to 143 ypg in '19, but Bethea left lots of room for improvement, only completing 46.5% with a 10-11 ratio (1,148 yds). Bethea only started one game in the shortened spring '20-'21 season, throwing nine passes before going down with injury. This may have been a positive though, backup QB Jared Lewis gained valuable experience. Lewis threw for 510 (51.2%, 7-5) and rushed for 219 (2.7). Last year Bethea started the first 2 games and threw for 227 (57.1%, 1-1) but it was Lewis who started the last 9. Lewis threw for 1,364 (51.5%) with an excellent 20-4 ratio. This year both Lewis and Bethea both return so they have depth and Lewis is one of the top QB's in the MEAC.

RUNNING BACKS - Although DSU is losing two of its top three rushers from '19, they returned their leading rusher from '19, Thomas Bertrand-Hudon. Bertrand-Hudon was sixth in the MEAC with 508 (4.6). True freshman Sy'veon Wilkerson was mixed in during the shortened spring '20-'21 season, leading DSU with 262 (5.0). Last year Wilkerson was their workhorse. He had 40 carries vs Wagner (169 yds) and finished with 220 carries for 848 yards but only a 3.9 ypc. Michael Chris-Ike was #2 with 262 (3.9). Wade Inge had 207 (4.7) and was also their #4 receiver with 123 (11.2). Bertrand-Hudon only played in 3 games and had just 28 yards. This year they lose 2nd Team All-MEAC RB Wilkerson but the rest of the unit returns and if Bertrand-Hudon comes back to '19's form then they are deeper than last year and could top the overall production.

RECEIVERS - WR Bizzet Woodley was #2 with 413 receiving yds (15.3) despite only starting in six games as a true freshman. Trey Gross was #3 with 339 (14.7). In Trey Gross led with 248 (14.6) while Woodley only had 79 (13.2). Gross led last year with 625 (13.0). Kwannah Kollie was #2 with 304 (13.2). Jerriah Halsey added 187 (14.4) while Woodley only had 7 catches for 103. This year the Hornets will need Woodley to get back to his production from '19 as they lose their top 3 including 1st Tm All MEAC WR Gross. Four of their top 7 receivers are gone so this is their biggest issue heading into fall.

OFFENSIVE LINE - DSU had to replace 4 starting OL heading into spring with the only returnee being LG Matthew Derks. The Hornets rushed for 141 (3.9) and allowed 22 sacks in '19. The younger unit struggled in pass protection, allowing 22 sacks (17.2%) in 5 spring games and rushed for 152 (3.5). Last year Derks came back and DSU was much better in pass pro with 5 games of spring experience. They allowed 25 sacks (9.8%) and rushed for 142 (3.4) ypg. This year they lose LT 3Y starting LG Derks (11 st, 2nd Tm All-MEAC), RT James King (11 st, 3rd Tm All-SWAC) and LT Brandon Bradford (7 st). Only two starters return but last year they only had 1 with a full season of experience so they aren't as down as one would expect.

DEFENSIVE LINE - In '19 DSU allowed 142 rush ypg (3.9) but against MEAC foes they allowed 161 (4.1). They finished with just 15 sacks (4.2%). Corey St. John made two starts along the DL in '19, but St. John aside, this was an entirely new DL in the spring. The Hornets allowed 154 rush ypg (4.1) with 11 sacks while % improved to 7.7%. Last year the Hornets held 4 of their first 7 foes under 90 rush yards. They allowed 133 (4.3) with 24 sacks (8.4%) but in their last 4 they gave up 172 (4.8). This year they get their top 6 back including 1st Tm All MEAC DE Isaiah Williams who led the Hornets with 3.5 sacks and 6.5 tfl's. They have an experienced Dline and this is one of the better Dline's in the MEAC.

LINEBACKERS - Last year DSU not only returned '19's top tackler in Brooks Parker (52 tkls, 9.5 tfl) but they had 4 of their top LB's from their last full season back. Kamari Jackson led with 26 tackles in the spring. RFr Mario Goings was the surprise leader in the fall, nothing 55 tackles (3.5 tfl) while Jackson (52, 5 tfl) and Parker were #2 and #3. All 3 return this year along with their #8, #9 and #10 tacklers. With their top 6 LB's all returning this is a deep unit and the strength of the defense.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - The DBs had their work cut out for them in '21, as they lost their top two DBs from '19 and were relying on converted WR Charles Peeler to play a big role. Peeler made his transition in the middle of the '19 season, starting the first four games at WR before starting four games at DB. Peeler got more starts last spring and his progression was huge for the DSU secondary that lost four full-time starters from '19. The DBs did return three of their top five tacklers from '19 and held opponents to 52% passing in spring. Last year they allowed 55.6% (21-14) and 193 pass ypg. All 4 starters return to the secondary this year. S Esias Guthrie las twith 4 int's and was 1st Tm All-MEAC. He returns so this goes from a weakness to a strength with their #5, #6, #7 and #11 tacklers.

SPECIAL TEAMS - DSU had 3 kickers combine for just 2-8 on field goals (L/25) last year. Matt Noll averaged 40.5 ypp and had a 31.9 team net. Charles Peeler averaged 11.5 PR (1 td) while Kwannah Kollie averaged 26.1 KR. This year Noll and Peeler return. They are hoping the addition of CCSU transfer K Jordan Lane can improve their abysmal kicking. If he does then this is a much improved unit and they have only one way to go.

COACHES - Former DSU star Football player and NFL vet Rod Milstead was hired in 2018 and is in his 5th season at the helm. Milstead played eight seasons in the NFL and was a starting LG for the San Francisco 49ers. Milstead won three MEAC championships as a player and won a Super Bowl with the 49ers, The Hornets don't have an OC listed on their staff. LeAndre Creamer is their 3rd year DC and has been on staff for 5 years. He also was a defensive assistant at Alabama St, Morgan St and Howard. This is actually his 2nd stint here, having coached DB's from '03-'05.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - DSU averaged less than 20 ppg each year from '13-'18. They finally broke through and put up 20 ppg in '19 but ypg dropped from 316 to 284. Against MEAC foes DSU was held to 15 ppg and 257 ypg. Their offense averaged 103 ypg less than their foes allowed on average. In spring they put up 21 ppg but ypg actually dropped again (260) and they put up 23 ppg but only 278 ypg vs MEAC foes. Last year they put up 23 ppg and ypg actually went up this time as they put up 294 ypg and 317 ypg vs MEAC foes. Only 4 starters return this year. They lose their top rusher, their top 3 WR's, 3 starting OLinemen and their TE. They have an experienced QB but the supporting cast is completely turned over and they may not hit 20 ppg again.

DEFENSE - DSU allowed 38 ppg and 435 ypg in '17. They improved in '18, allowing 34 ppg and 358 ypg and was much better against MEAC foes, allowing 29 ppg and 369 ypg. They improved again in '19, allowing 31 ppg and 353 ypg. They lost were young on the Dline and secondary in the spring yet against 5 spring opponents they allowed just 24 ppg and 348 ypg. The experience helped as they continued that level of play in the fall, allowing 25 ppg, 325 ypg and held their foes 8 ypg below their season average (#34 in FCS). All 11 starters return this year! Their top 15 tacklers are back and they have 19 of their top 20 back. DSU had the #1 scoring and #1 total defense in the FCS and we see no reason that won't continue with everyone back.

2022 - Delaware State made a habit out of being cellar-dwellers in the MEAC. Former HC Kermit Blount ('11-'14) was 16-29 in four seasons but went 2-10 in his final season. Kenny Carter ('15-'17) took over and was a woeful 3-30 in three seasons, including going 0-19 on the road. In stepped former DSU standout Rod Milstead, who had spent a year under Blount in '14 as the OL coach. In his first season in '18, the team won at least three games for the first time since '13 and was -42 ypg, and went 0-7 on the road. DSU was outgained by 69 ypg in '19 and went winless on the road for a fifth straight season (0-5). In a shortened spring season, DSU improved to 2-3 (both wins vs Howard) and snapped their 34-game road losing streak (DSU 37 Howard 28). Last year the Hornets nearly opened 2-0, losing to Georgetown in OT. They were no match for ETSU and Merrimack but pulled out a 2OT win at Wagner then beat an NCCAA team. They lost 13-7 to South Carolina St then beat Howard 30-23. They lost their last 2 road games by 6 points each but did beat Norfolk St and finished 5-6, -31 ypg and were -6 ypg vs MEAC foes. Seven of their 9 FCS games were decided by 7 points or less. This year they have 15 starters back including their entire defense which was their strength already last year. They get 7 home games this year which is key considering their prolonged road struggles. They don't play any FBS teams and will be favored against Morgan St at home. They need to win road games at Norfolk St and Howard if they want to get over the hump and have their first winning since since 2012.