

SOUTHERN JAGUARS

POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2022

QUARTERBACKS - After missing the entire '19 season, former starting QB John Lampley returned for the shortened '20-'21 season and posted an impressive 66% with a 7-3 ratio. Ladarius Skelton started every game at QB for SU in '19 and completed 61% of his passes with a 13-9 ratio. Skelton posted an impressive 10/2 ratio in '18 while splitting time with Lampley, who he outplayed. Skelton proved to be a legit running threat with 1,778 rush yards and 28 TDs on the ground (5.1) dating back to '18. Skelton was the second leading rusher in '18 and the team's overall leading rusher in both '19 and spring. Glendon McDaniel was a QB with starting experience and a former SWAC Offensive Player of the Week giving this unit excellent depth. McDaniel started 8 games and led with 1,317 (61.8%) with a solid 10-3 ratio and added 145 rush (2.7). Skelton started the other 3 games and added 456 (56.7%) but only a 4-5 ratio and 119 rush (2.8). Lampley only had 8 attempts and 2 int's. Skelton and Lampley depart, leaving McDaniel as the Senior starter. They added JUCO transfer Besean McCreary and Grambling transfer Noah Bolden. Depth is a much bigger concern but McDaniel was clearly the best of the 3.

RUNNING BACKS - Last year Southern returned their top three rushers from both '19 and '20-'21, as well as the top two RBs from '19 and '20-'21 as well. Devon Benn was #2 in '19 with 806 (5.3) and added 194 (3.1) in spring. Jarod Sims had 397 (8.3) in '19 then 311 (5.5) in spring. Benn started 7 games and finished #2 with 533 (4.9). Sims only played in 5 games and had 259 (4.0). JUCO transfer Kobe Dillon was the surprise leader with 629 and a team high 8.0 ypc! In Dillon's first career start he rushed for a school and SWAC record for rush yards in a game with 267 vs Pine-Bluff. This year they lose Benn and Craig Nelson (#3, 283, 6.4, 131 rec). Dillon was 2nd Tm All-SWAC last year despite playing in just 8 games and he could be a 1,000 yard rusher this year. If Sims stays healthy then this is a potent 1-2 punch and the best combo in the SWAC.

RECEIVERS - Southern had to replace their top WR heading into spring. SU's leading WR was TE Ethan Howard (240, 17.1). Jamar Washington sat out the spring after being the team's third leading receiver in '19 (341, 13.6). SU have two full-time starters and three overall returning from the '19 season. Marquis McClain led last year with 400 (14.3). TE Howard had 351 (12.1). Washington was #3 with 258 but only an 8.6 ypc. This year Southern loses McClain (11 st) and Washington. They add 2 JUCO transfers and Rice transfer August Pitre (PS#388) who started 6 last year (494, 15.9). This is a more experienced unit with 3 of their top 5 back and Pitre is a nice addition with FBS experience.

OFFENSIVE LINE - Southern lost 2 starters heading into spring. Back in '19 they rushed for 229 (5.3) but allowed 31 sacks (9%). In spring they only slipped to 211 (4.8) with just 7 sacks (5.6%). Last year they fell to 198 rush ypg but only allowed 16 sacks (5.8%). All 5 starters were in the lineup for all 11 games last year. Once again they lose 2 starters in 1st Tm All SWAC LT Ja'Tyre Carter and RG Johnathan Bishop. Once again 3 starters are back and they add Ohio transfer Bryce McNair (PS#380) and JUCO transfer Eli Fields (PS#241JC, orig FAU). They didn't have need to develop depth last year and the transfers are inexperienced so we are calling this unit down a notch.

DEFENSIVE LINE - In '19 Southern improved to allowing just 128 rush ypg (3.7) with 25 sacks (6%). They only gave up 125 (3.4) in spring and posted 19 sacks in just 5 games (13.1%)! Last year they still had 3 starters back from '19 but fell to 181 rush ypg (4.8) and only 20 sacks (6.6%). This year they lose Davin Cotton (8 st, #4 tkl'r, 4.5 tfl), Tyran Nash (5 st, #11 tkl'r, 2 sk, 5.5 tfl) and Letrelle Johnson (#16 tkl'r). With 3 of their top 6 gone this unit is less experienced but they did add 2 JUCO transfers and Nicholls transfer Tahj Brown (24 tkl 2Y).

LINEBACKERS - This unit made up Southern's top 3 tacklers in '19 but the only one to return last year was Kennen Tate. They did bring back all 3 starters from the spring. Tate only started 1 game but still finished as their #5 tackler. Ray Anderson was their #2 tackler and led the Jaguars with 10.5 tfl's. This year both Anderson and Tate depart as well as Keyshawn Aker (3 st, #15 tkl'r) and Lyston Barber (#19 tkl'r, 4.5 tfl). They get JLB Jordan Lewis back who led with 5.5 sacks last year and Derrick Williams who was listed as the starter in 9 games but only finished with 16 tackles. Only 2 of their top 6 return. They add JUCO transfer Marcus Cunningham (orig Oregon) and Iowa St transfer Daeshawn Davis (PS#226JC, 16 tkl 2Y). They are just as experienced as they were heading into spring.

DEFENSIVE BACKS - Chase Foster led an impressive secondary that had all 4 starters back from the '19 season. Taumaurice Smith had 5 int's and 8 pbu's in '19. They were only 9th in pass D efficiency in '19 after finishing last in completion % allowed (61.8%, 20-15). They moved up to 5th in the spring (58.6%, 8-3). Last year the Jaguars allowed 63.4% completions (19-10) and fell to 9th in the SWAC in pass defense efficiency. The Jaguars lose 4th Team All-SWAC S Chase Foster (#1 tkl'r, 3 int), Brian Jordan (2 st, #6 tkl'r), CB Jakoby Pappillion (6 st, #9 tkl'r) and NB Taumarice Smith (9 st, #10 tkl'r, 9 pbu). This year they return their #3, #12, #14 and #17 tacklers. They add Terrance Dunlap who had 19 starts at Troy (PS#187, 96 tkl 3Y), Benny McCray who had 10 starts at FIU last year (50 tkl), Keylin Roach from Marshall, Kolby Phillips (PS#304) from Tulane and Cornelius Dyson from Tulsa. They lost 4 of their top 8 but add 2 with FBS starting experience and are coming off a disappointing season so we are calling this their most improved unit.

SPECIAL TEAMS - Martell Fontenot made 5 of 7 fg's in '19. Last year he returned but only attempted 2 fg's (2-2, L/31). Luke Jackson made 9 of 12 fg's (L/49) including the GW vs Alcorn St. Fontenot concentrated on punting, avg 37.0 and their team net was 33.2. Southern had just 14 PR yards and averaged 17.9 KR. This year they lose Fontenot while Jackson returns and unless their return game improves then this is a below average unit.

COACHES - Southern hired Eric Dooley away from Prairie View A&M. Dooley was the head man for the Panthers from '18-'21. He was also OC/QB Coach at Grambling from '14-'17 and Ark Pine-Bluff from '11-'13. The Jaguars don't have an OC listed on their staff. Henry Miller is the 1st season DC after leading Prairie View A&M's D the last 4 seasons. He coached Southern's DB from '00-'05. Terrence Graves is a 24 year coaching veteran in the SWAC. He is in his first year as ST Coor.

FORECAST

OFFENSE - Southern improved to 33 ppg and 405 ypg in '19 but they averaged 13 ypg less than their opponents allowed on average. Against SWAC foes they averaged 29 ppg but 415 ypg. The Jaguars improved to 38 ppg and 430 ypg in spring. Last year they lost their star WR, 2 starters on the OLine and switched QB's after the opener. They fell to 26 ppg and 367 ypg. This year Southern has 8 starters back including QB McDaniel and RB Dillon. They return 3 starters on the Oline and should be improved but will be running a new system.

DEFENSE - In '18 Southern allowed 25 ppg and 369 ypg but against SWAC foes they only gave up 19 ppg and 337 ypg. Their defense held foes 18 ypg below their season average. In '19 they gave up 26 ppg and 388 ypg and slipped to 27 ppg and 419 ypg against SWAC foes. In spring Southern allowed just 20 ppg and 317 ypg. Last year they had 8 starters back from '19. The Jaguars still slipped to 31 ppg and 400 ypg. They allowed 54 ypg more than their opponents averaged on the season. Only 5 starters return this year but they added a ton of talent including FBS transfer in all 3 units. Despite the inexperience they could actually be improved.

2022 - Dawson Odums was the head coach at Southern from '13-'20. In his first year he took the Jaguars from 3 wins to 9 and won their first SWAC Title since 2003. In '14 they went 9-4, losing in the SWAC Title game to Alcorn St. They won 6, 8, 7, 7, and 8 games over the next 5 seasons and reached the SWAC Title game again in '19 but lost to Alcorn St again. Southern went 4-1 in spring and blew out Grambling St in the Bayou Classic for their 3rd straight win over their rival. Last year Southern had an experienced team with 13 starters from '19 back. They opened with a blowout loss at Troy, beat a DII school then lost to McNeese St 31-24 despite a 355-263 yard edge. They continued alternating losses and wins and were 4-4 after hitting a GW fg over Alcorn St but lost their last 3. They led FAMU 17-13 at half but lost by 12, led Jackson St 17-7 3Q but allowed 2 td's in the last 5:42 and lost 21-17 then led Grambling 20-19 4Q but lost on a fg with :02 left. Southern finished 4-7 and were -34 ypg (-31 vs SWAC). They were -3 net close losses. Odums left for the Norfolk St job and they hired Eric Dooley who led Prairie View A&M to the SWAC Title game last year. Southern has 11 starters back this year. The Jaguars host two DII teams and get MVSU, Pine-Bluff and Alcorn St all at home while their toughest games are on the road. They do draw the two best teams from the SWAC East in Jackson St and FAMU on the road in back-to-back games but they have a good shot to finish above .500 and challenge Prairie View A&M for the West Title. It could come down to their season finale in the Bayou Classic.