

## DELAWARE BLUE HENS

After finishing just 4-7 in 2016, the Blue Hens 3rd straight losing season, Delaware hired away Richmond HC Danny Rocco, who had led the Spiders to 3 straight playoff appearances. In 2017, the Blue Hens were 7-3 but lost the season finale 28-7 at Villanova and just missed the playoffs. In 2018 expectations were up. They were upset by Rhode Island in the opener, as they failed to convert a 2 pt conversion with 6:45 left 4Q and lost 21-19. They cruised past both Lafayette (37-0) and Cornell (27-10). They trailed 38-0 in the 4Q at North Dakota St before scoring 2 TD's in the final 4:12 including a 92 yd FR. They never trailed Richmond, leading 43-10 late 3Q before allowing 3 TD's. They trailed #5 Elon 16-14 into the 4Q but scored 14 unanswered to pull the upset. They led New Hampshire 31-7 into the 4Q and won 38-14. Delaware took their first lead 33-28 over Towson with 8:17 left and scored the GW TD with :30 for a 40-36 win. They had another 4Q come from behind win over Albany, scoring the GW TD with :18 (21-16). They were ranked #11 at 7-2 but trailed #12 Stony Brook 10-0 into the 4Q, but got no closer than 10-3 in a 17-3 loss. Still ranked #17, their only lead was 7-0 over Villanova as they trailed 28-21 into 4Q and lost 42-21. For a the 2nd straight season they lost the season finale to finish 7-4 but this time made the playoffs for the first time since 2010. After avoiding James Madison in the regular season, they drew them in the first round and trailed 12-0 2Q in a 20-6 loss. In 2019, they had their QB back and high expectations. They opened 3-1 and took Pitt to the wire only losing 17-14. They had a hangover and lost at Elon 42-7 and would drop 5 of the last 7 for a final 5-7 record. Delaware was much improved in 2021 and they went a perfect 5-0 in CAA play and were +163 ypg in CAA play. They best Sacred Heart in the first round of the playoffs, then beat Jacksonville St 20-14. They took on #1 South Dakota St but it was no contest in a 33-3 loss. HC Rocco returns for a fifth season. The Blue Hens brought in a new OC in '19 Jared Ambrose, who was the OC at Towson the previous 6 years.

In '19 Delaware returned 6 starters from the CAA's #7 scoring (24.4 ppg) & #10 Total Offense (300 ypg). New OC Ambrose brought in an up-tempo offense, with run/pass options. They returned starting QB Pat Kehoe (2075, 49.3%, 17-9) and backup QB Nolan Henderson (152, 60.0%, 1-0). Kehoe was 2-9-11-0-1 vs NDSt and Henderson took over tht game and started the next 2. Kehoe returned to start 3 then missed two more game which Henderson started before returning to start the last 2. Kehoe led with 1335 (59.8%) 11-8 while Henderson threw for 933 (56.3%, 9-1!). Henderson also added 189 rush. In the spring they had to replace Kehoe. Henderson threw for 1482 (70.7%, 10-4) and had 101 (1.4) rush. He was injured early and banged up all year but played thru it. Zach Gwynn originally signed with East Carolina but played here as a frosh backup (6-10-59-0-0) and

Anthony Paoletti has hit 2-3 passes in 2 years. All 3 return and Hederson should be 100% healthy this year and improved. In '19 they lost 2 of their top 3 rushers in RB Kani Kane (8 st, 595, 4.0, 10 td) and WR Joe Walker (120, 5.7, 1 td). They returned their #1 RB DeJoun Lee (originally at Army), who led with 606 (4.9 2 td) despite starting just 4. Will Knight emerged and took the top spot with 919 (7.4) almost double the yards of Lee despite just 125 carries to Lee's 107. Lee was #2 with 463 (4.3). Andre Robinson was #2 with 211 (3.6). In the spring they had to replace Knight and Lee led again with 564 (4.7) while Khoury Spruill emerged as #2 (350, 4.1). QB's were #3 and #4 rushers. Lee was actually the CAA preseason Offensive Player of the year and the unit returns in tact. In '19 the receiving corps needed to be rebuilt as they lost their top 6 in receptions, who combined for 2,147 yds (17 td) including 3rd tm CAA WR Joe Walker (670, 4 td) & AA TE Charles Scarff (498, 11.6, 7 td). Their top returning receivers were Gene Coleman (8-135) FB Owen Tyler (56, 6.2), who in the new offense moved to TE. Their top returning WR is Thyrick Pitts (31, 15.5). Pitts led with 647 (15.8) with Gene Coleman (8-135 '19) #2 with 325 (10.2). Will Knight was #3 9275, 13.8) and Chichi Amachi was #4 (251, 19.3) while TE Bryce DeMallie was #5 (243, 15.2). In the spring they had to replace Knight and Amachi. Pitts led again and in just 8 games had 451 (15.6) with Coleman #2 (433, 9.6) and TE DEaille was #3 (169, 10.6). All 3 return making this a veteran group and vastly more experienced than they were heading into 2019. In 2019 the OLine lost former Penn St transfer, 3rd tm CAA RT Noah Beh (12 st), their C (5 st) & a bkp (1 st). They returned 4 OL who combined for 42 sts led by AA RG/C Mario Farinella (12 st). In 2018 the O-line had just 105 ypg rush (3.0) with 8.4% sacks. The more veteran '19 unit opened holes for 156 (4.2) but did allow 11.5% sacks. In the spring they had to replace Mario Farinella, Brandon Nixon, Connor Lutz, MJ Kehoe, and Chuka Ezeuzoh. They returned Carter Lynch and the Oline was banged up all spring. After a solid start with 224 rush vs Maine and 361 vs Rhode Island the banged up unit had just 84.5 ypg rush and 2.0 ypc over the last 4 games with 15 sacks after just 7 sacks the first 4. The line returns in tact and is much more experienced than the spring. The offense had 294 ypg and 24 ppg in 2019 in CAA play, improved to 372 ypg in '19 and 397 ypg and 33 ppg in the spring and should be even stronger after playing with a banged up QB and Oline in the spring.

In '19 the Blue Hens returned just 4 starters to the CAA's # 3 scoring (21.5 ppg) and #9 total defense (217 ypg). The DLine only lost a DE (6 st, 15 tkl, 2 tfl). They return 8 of their top 9 including former Cincy transfer DE Caleb Ashworth (12 st, 56 tkl, 3.5 tfl), 3rd tm CAA DT Cam Kitchen (11 st, 47 tkl, 3.5 tfl), former Ball St transfer DE Frank Burton (3 st, 27 tkl, 3 sk, 2 tfl) & DE Branden Hall (6 st, 22 tkl, 4 tfl). The LB unit lost 4 who combined for 36 sts, 278 tkl & 24 tfl including former Penn St transfer, AA MLB Troy Reeder (131 tkl, 13.5 tfl). They returned OLB Colby Reeder (11 st, 51 tkl, 4 tfl) but the next

most experienced returning LB was Drew Nickles (11 tkl, 1 sk). They do add Penn St transfer Dae'lun Darien, who played 9 gms LY (4 tkl). The secondary lost 4 who combined 41 sts, 227 tkl, 26 pd. Their biggest loss was AA Tenny Adewusi (12 st, 87 tkl, 4 int, 7 pbu), who became the Blue Hens highest draft choice (#2 LAC) since Joe Flacco. Their top returnees are CB Nijuel Hill (5 st, 16 tkl, 2 int, 3 pbu) & S Joey Carter (6 tkl). With the loss of 7 of their top 10 tkl'rs including their top 5, one of which a high draft pick, the defense will be in rebuild mode and went from allowing 352 ypg and 22 ppg to 401 ypg and 29 ppg. In the spring 17 of the top 21 tacklers returned only losing a DT (#3 tklr), DB (#5 tklr), DL (#9 tklr) and DE (#12 tklr). In the spring the much more veteran defense played like it and allowed just 239 ypg and 14 ppg! The unit returns in tact led by 1<sup>st</sup> team Preseason CAA LB, Johnny Buchanon, DB Nijhuel Hill, DB Kendrick Whitehead, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tm DL Chase McGowan, and 3<sup>rd</sup> team LB Colby Reeder and DB Noah Plack. This unit will challenge JMU for best defense in the FCS.

In '19 the ST unit lost K Frank Raggo (12-17 FG) & their top 3 PR's. They returned 1st tm CAA P Nick Prichard (42.0 avg) and KO/K Jake Roth (1-1 Fg, 37 TB/62 KO). Pritchard avg 42.7 and Jake Roth hit 12-20 FG with a long of 42 and 1 miss from 50+. Jourdan Townsend was the top PR (9.0) and Dejoun Lee was the top KR (18.7). In the spring they had to replace both specialists. Tyler Pastula did the punting and avg just 39.6 but Ryan Coe hit 12-17 FG with a long of 53 and THREE misses from 50+ so he is one of best K's in CAA. Townsend had just 3.7 on PR's but Lee had 26.9 on KR's. If Pastula improves at P this is one of CAA's top ST unit.

In 2019 they advantage of avoiding both James Madison & Maine. After finally getting back to the playoffs in '18, expectations are high for Delaware in '19 but they had just 10 returning starters overall, the change in offense & the loss of 7 of their top 10 tkl'rs, all from the back 8 including a #2 DC. The Blue Hens went just 5-7. In the spring the much more veteran defense led the way allowing a paltry 239 ypg and they went 5-0 in CAA play and +163 ypg then won a pair of playoff games before losing to #1 seed South Dakota St. Almost everyone is back from that squad. Delaware was picked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the CAA Coaches/Media Relations poll and #6 in the HERO sports preseason poll. They do have to face James Madison, Villanova and Richmond in the regular season but they get JMU at home and will contend for the CAA title and should easily make the playoffs again.