

# James Madison 2021

The Dukes have made the FCS playoffs every year since going 6-6 in 2013. In 2014 & 2015 they were knocked out in the first round. In 2016 they won the FCS Championship 28-14 over Youngstown St. In 2017 they lost the FCS Championship game 17-13 to North Dakota St. In 2018 they were knocked out in the 2nd round. In 2019 they lost in the FCS Championship 28-20 to NDSU. Last year because of Covid Cancellations they were just 5-0 entering the playoffs. In the playoffs they never trailed vs VMI allowing a td w/:09 left to only win 31-24. The only led North Dakota 17-14 2Q but led 34-14 before allowing a final 4Q td. In the semi-finals they led Sam Houston St 24-3 at HT but in a 2:22 span in 3Q gave up 3 td's to fall behind 31-27 and missed a would be game tying FG with 2:09 left to lose 38-35.

Curt Cignetti enter his 3rd year as HC with a 21-3 record. He spent '2017-'18 as HC at Elon (14-9) after 6 winning ssns at IUP finishing with a 53-17 record. Corey Hetherman will be in his 3rd ssn here. They lose there OC Shane Montgomery to the FBS. Two year WR cch Mike Shanahan was promoted to OC this year.

In 2018 JMU was #2 in the CAA in both Scoring (33.9 ppg) & Total Offense (407 ypg). In '19 with 9 starters back on offense, they were #1 in the CAA in both scoring (40.0 ppg) & Total Offense (466 ypg). Despite 3 of their 8 gms being in the playoffs JMU in the spring was once again #1 the CAA in both scoring (33.6 ppg) & Total Offense (448 ypg). This year the Offense returns 9 starters from the spring but will be under a new OC. JMU returns QB Cole Johnson, who in his first season in 8 starts threw for 1,663 (65.7%, 11-7, 81 rush). They lose backup QB Gabe Maloney (7-13-86-1-0, 10 rush). They lose former UCF transfer RB Jawon Hamilton who was the #2 rusher in both 2019 (919, 5.5) & last ssn (542, 6.1). The Dukes return 7 of their top 8 rushers led by Percy Aguei-Obese who led in both 2019 (1216, 4.7, 19 td) & last ssn (717, 4.9, 8 td). They return their top 12 receivers led by WR's Antwane Wells (603, 18.3, 6 td), Kris Thornton (428, 14.5, 3 td) and former Duke transfer Scott Bracey (180, 16.5). The OLine lose 2 starters from a line that paved the way for 233 ypg rush & 4.7 ypc but did allow 16 sacks (9.6%). They return 5 OL who combined for 24 starts last season. Overall this is a solid unit & despite having a new OC should once again be near the top of the CAA.

In '18 The Dukes had the CAA's #1 scoring (14.6 ppg) & #3 Total Defense (185 ypg). In '19 they were #1 in both scoring (15.7 ppg) & Total Defense (270 ypg). In the spring JMU slipped to #2 in the CAA in scoring (16.5 ppg) & #3 in Total Defense (243 ypg). This year the Defense returns 18 of their top 20 tacklers including their top 9 and 11 starters. The DLine held foes to just 72 ypg rush & 2.6 ypc while having 21 sks (9.0%). This year the unit only loses DT Garrett Grouix (4 st, #10 tkl'r, 3 tfl). They return 6 DL who combined for 28 starts led DE Mike Greene (7 st, #6 tkl'r, 10.5 tfl), DT James Carpenter (7 st, #7, 5 tfl) & DE Mikail Kamara (6 st, #9, 4.5 tfl). they also add 2 FBS transfers. The LB Corps returns all three 8 game starters in MLB Kelvin Azanama (#1 tkl'r, 4 sk, 2 int), WLB Diamonte Tucker-Dorsey (#2, 2.5 tfl) & ROV MJ Hampton (#3, 6.5 tfl). Last year the Secondary allowed just 52.8% completion & an outstanding 6-12 ratio. They return 6 DB who combined for all 32 starts LY, led by FS Que Reid (7 st, #4 tkl'r, 2 int), former Ohio St transfer SS Wayne Davis (8 st, #5, 1 int, 4 pbu), CB Wesley McCormick (7 st, #8, 3 int) & former North Carolina transfer CB Greg Ross (5 st, #17, 4 pd). They also look to add 2 FBS transfers. With all 11 starters back from the FCS's #5 Total & #8 Scoring defense the Dukes should once again have one of the top defenses in the FCS.

The Special Teams Unit looks to return all their top players including K Ethan Ratke (14-14 FG, 31-31 PAT), P Harry O'Kelly (33.1 net) & KO Conner Madden (25 TB/52 KO) giving them a solid unit.

While many teams would be happy to just make it the FCS Semifinals, but blowing a 20 point in the game & then missing a late would be game tying FG left the Dukes disappointed. This year they return 20 starters including their starting QB, top rusher, top 12 receivers & top 9 tacklers. They also add several FBS transfer. They have a tough road schedule with games at Weber St, New Hampshire, Richmond & Delaware but do host both Maine & Villanova. They are again the favorite to win the CAA. This is clearly a playoff team that has an excellent shot to make it to their Fourth FCS Championship game in the past 6 years.