

In 2016 the Black Bears were coming off back-to-back losing seasons and were under new HC Joe Harasymiak. They opened 0-3 losing to 2 FBS foes & eventual FCS Champion James Madison. Maine won 6 of their next 7 and were hosting New Hampshire with a playoff bid at stake but allowed a GW FG with :07 left to lose 24-21. In 2017, after starting just 1-3 (gm vs UCF canceled due to weather), they won 3 straight. They then lost their last 3 including allowing a final play TD in the season finale vs Stony Brook to lose by 1 and finish 4-6. In 2018, the Black Bears started the season with a bang upsetting #7 New Hampshire 35-7 and FBS foe WKU 31-28. They only trailed Central Michigan 10-3 into the 4Q but lost 17-5. Without QB Chris Ferguson, they lost at Yale but thanks to a last play 52 yd FG got past #19 Villanova 13-10. Ferguson returned against Rhode Island and they again hit a final play FG (39 yd) and won 38-36. They were then upset by William & Mary 27-20 thanks in part to a 90 yd IR TD (14 pt swing). They won their final 4 regular season games including 35-28 over #15 Towson & 27-26 over #14 Elon to **claim their first outright CAA Title since 2013**. After a first round bye, they opened the playoffs with a blowout 55-27 win (led 42-7 HT) over Jacksonville St. Then on the road at #3 Weber St, they won 23-18 to make their first ever semifinals. Unfortunately, they trailed #4 Eastern Washington 28-0 at HT and lost 50-19. After finishing #4, the CAA COY Harasymiak (lowest paid HC in CAA) left to take the DB cch job at Minnesota. Third year DC Corey Hetherman who led the FCS's #1 rush defense (79.2 ypg) also left, taking the DC job at James Madison. New HC Nick Charlton entered his 5th year at Maine. He started as the WR cch in '15, added Special teams in 2016 and was the OC in 2018. He led the offense to the most ppg (26.5) since 2013. New OC Andrew Dresner joined the Maine program last year as the WR cch. New DC Michael Ryan entered his 6th year as a defensive coach here. The Black Bears returned 15 starters and added 2 FBS transfers on offense. 2019 did not go as expected as the Bears opened just 2-5 and Ferguson was OFY week 6. Joe Fagnano threw for 1835 (65.8%, 17-3) over the last 7 games and Maine rattled off 4 straight wins to get to 6-5 before losing at New Hampshire for a 6-6 season but they were +43 ypg in Colonial action. This past spring Maine was shutout in the opener 37-0 with just 112 yards. They rebounded with a 38-34 win over Albany and a 35-19 road win at Stonybrook. Despite a 27-21 FD edge they lost to Villanova at home 44-17 for a 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive .500 season and were -29 ypg in conference play.

Maine returned 7 starters in 2019 to the CAA's #5 scoring (26.5 ppg) and #8 total offense (349 ypg). QB Chris Ferguson (12 st) threw for 2,372 (56.3%, 22-11) in '18. Ferguson started the first 6 in 2019 and threw for 1655 (58%, 8-8) but was OFY and then transferred. Joe Fagnano threw for 1835 (65.8%, 17-3) over the last 7 games and Maine rattled off 4 straight wins at one point. He also rushed for 192 (2.2). Last year Fagnano started all 4 and threw for 795 (57.8%, 8-1). His backup is Derek Robertson (4-4-28). In 2018 Ramon Jefferson became the first Maine Frosh RB to rush for over 1,000 yds (1037, 5.7, 8 td) and was the CAA ROY. He was suspended in the spring of 2019 & then transferred to a JUCO and was at Sam Houston St last year. The only experienced

returning RB was #2 rusher Joe Fitzpatrick (476, 4.0, 4 td). They add 2 FBS transfers in Northern Illinois RB Jordan Rowell (PS#106) and Buffalo transfer Emmanuel Reed, who rushed for a combined 1,211 yds (4.3, 12 st) over the previous 2 yrs. Fitzpatrick led in 2019 with 531 (4.50 and Reed was #2 with 467 (4.2). Both had to be replaced in the spring. Frosh Freddie Brock led with 178 (5.9) and Rutgers transfer Elijah Barnwell was #2 with 112 (3.0). Tavian Banks was #3 with 73 (3.2). They add in Lafayette transfer John Gay making them much more experienced. The Black Bears lost 2 of their top 4 receivers in 3rd tm CAA WR Micah Wright (11 st, 539, 11.5, 6 td) & 2nd tm TE Drew Bletcher (14 st, 357, 7.8) in 2019. They returned 4 of their top 6 including their top 2 in 2nd tm CAA WR Earnest Edwards (14 st, 839, 15.8, 10 td) & WR Jaquan Blair (6 st, 572, 13.3, 5 td). Those two were dominant in 2019 with Edwards leading with 1097 (22.4) and Blair #2 with 839 (12.9). Devin Young was #3 with 593 (14.50 and Andre Miller was #4 with 529 (18.9). In the spring they had to replace their top 2 and then Young opted out due to injury. Miller led with a super 348 (16.6) in just 4 games and #2 was UConn transfer Zaiver Scott (101, 14.4). This year the top guys are back plus they get the return of AA WR Andre Miller and the additions of UConn transfer Garrison Burnett and Rutgers transfer Jalen Jordan making the unit much more experienced. In 2019 the O-Line lost just 1 starter in 3rd tm CAA RT Cody Levy (14 st). They return 5 OL who started 8+ in '18 led by 2nd tm CAA G Liam Dobson. The O-line paved the way for 134 (3.8) in 2018 with 5.8% sacks but only had similar numbers in 2019 with 129 (3.9) and 7.7% sacks. In the spring they lost LT Tyler Royal to injury and had just 127 ypg rush (3.6) but did only allow 5 sacks in 4 games (4.1%). This year they get back Royal and add in some solid transfer like PJ Barr from Bucknell, Michael Gerace from John Carroll and Jack Webb from Sacred Heart. This should be the best O-line in Charlton's 3 years.

The Black Bears returned 8 starters to the CAA's #5 scoring (23.4 ppg) & #4 total defense (313 ypg) of 2018. The DLine returned all 4 starters led by 1st tm CAA DE Kayon Whitaker (13 st, 50 tkl, 9.5 sk, 2 tfl) & 2nd tm DT Charles Mitchell (11 st, 23 tkl, 3.5 sk, 3.5 tfl). The LB corps lost AA ROV Sterling Sheffield (14 st, 84 tkl, 9.5 sk, 8.5 tfl) but returned the other 2 starters in MLB Deshawn Stevens (13 st, 120 tkl, 9 sk, 8 tfl) and WLB Taji Lowe (13 st, 85 tkl, 3 sk, 12 tfl). The secondary lost two 14 game starters in SS Jerrery DeVaughn (74 tkl, 3 int, 8 pbu) & FS Darrius Hart (72 tkl, 2 int, 4 pbu). They return AA CB Manny Patterson (14 st, 47 tkl, 3 int, 22 pbu), CB Kaffey Joseph (8 st, 34 tkl, 1 int, 12 pbu) & CB Shaquille St-Lot (5 st, 14 tkl). They returned 15 of their top 21 tacklers. After allowing just 263 ypg and 19 ppg in Colonial play in 2018 they surprisingly slipped to yielding 366 ypg and 29 ppg in 2019. In the spring they had to replace DE Whitaker, LB Lowe and DB Patterson and then all conference CB Katley Joseph opted out. The D allowed 362 ypg and 34 ppg in their brief 4 game conference season. This year they return 8 of their top 10 tacklers and 15 of the top 20 losing #1 tackler LB Deshaw Stevens, #6 tackler LB Myles Taylor and their #11 and #12 tacklers. DL Jamehl Wiley was #2 tackler and they add Arkansas Pine Bluff transfer DL Xavier Mitchell (119 tkl, 11 sk, 11.5 tfl) and BYU transfer DT Austin Chambers. The biggest addition on the D is LB Ray Miller who played 5 years at Campbell (129 tkl, 14.5 tfl). The secondary gets back Katley Joseph and adds in Maryland transfer Fofie Bazzie, Duquesne transfer Harvey Clayton, Northern Colorado transfer Jamond DuBose and Portland St transfer Arin Mannery. The defense

will not be back to 2018 standards but will be improved. Surprisingly not a single player on the D made the 3 deep preseason all conference list.

The Special Teams returned P Derek Deoul (37.1 avg), K/KO Kenny Doak (11-18 FG, 8 TB/71 KO) and 1st tm CAA KR Earnest Edwards (25.7 ypr, 2 td in 2019. Deoul av 41.9 on punts and Doak hit 14-21 FG with a long of 45 in 2019. Jaquan Blair avg 14.0 on PR's and Edwards a super 28.5 on KR's. This spring they had a new P in David Gelb who avg just 36.1 per punt. New K Stetson transfer Johnny Messina hit 2-3 FG with a long of 33. Jordan Swann avg 16.0 on just 3 PR and Freddie Brock just 11.6 on 11 KR. This year they only lose Swann but add in FAU K Vladimir Rivas who hit 8-10 FG in '20 and 27-42 with a long of 48 the two years prior. This unit should be much improved especially in the return game.

Maine made it to the FCS semi-finals in 2018 but lost the CAA's COY and their DC. In Nick Charlton's first two years they have had their ups but also their downs and are just 8-8 in his two seasons. Coaches usually hit their stride in year 3. They had ZERO positive tests last year which is a good sign of a team buying in. They get back two key players who opted out and add in some top-notch transfers to go with a veteran squad with very few losses. Maine was picked just #9 in the Colonial preseason poll. To me the key will be the defense as when Maine has made the playoffs in the past it has been due to the strength of the defense. Like most teams in the Colonial and throughout the FCS this is now a veteran team. They should top that .500 barrier.