

## William and Mary Tribe

Coming off a playoff appearance in 2015, the Tribe, despite a 34-13 win over #7 Richmond in the "Oldest Rivalry in the South" in the season finale, finished a disappointing 5-6 in 2016. They started 2017, 2-1 but then lost their last 8 for a second straight losing season. In 2018 they needed a 4Q 75 yd td pass to get by Bucknell 14-7. After an expected blowout loss to Virginia Tech, their home game vs Elon was canceled due to the approach of Hurricane Florence. They suffered 2 straight shutouts against #2 James Madison (51-0) and #23 Colgate (23-0). They trailed Albany 22-10 mid-4Q before scoring 2 TD's including the GW with :50 left (25-22). They led #18 Towson 13-10 at HT but lost 29-13. They shocked eventual CAA Champ #20 Maine 27-20, thanks in part to a 90 yd IR TD, handing the Black Bears their only conference loss. Against Rhode Island, W&M turned the ball over 6 times including 4 in the 1Q alone and lost 21-10. Up 24-7 into the 4Q, the Tribe hung on for a 24-17 win over Villanova. In the season finale they came up short (10-6) to Richmond. It was HC Jimmye Laycock's finale game as he retired after 39 yrs as HC, leading William & Mary to 10 playoff appearances and finishing with 249 career wins. In 2019 they brought in Mike London, who was the DL cch here from 1991-94. He led Richmond to their FCS Championship in 2008. He was the HC at Virginia from 2010-15 and spent the last 2 yrs as HC at Howard. London brought both of his coordinators with him from Howard in OC Brennan Marion and DC Vincent Brown. The Tribe returned 14 starters but had their first new HC in 40 years and will be learning new systems on both sides of the ball. W&M opened up 2-0 vs FCS with a lost to London's old team Virginia week 2. After a close loss to East Carolina (19-7) they lost their first 4 Colonial games and were -130 ypg. They beat Elon and spanked Rhode Island 55-19 before losing to Towson 31-10. The Tribe beat rival Richmond in the final 21-15 for a 5-7 season and were +9 ypg in those last 4 to finish -60 ypg in Colonial action. Last year the Tribe lost 8 of their top 9 tacklers on defense. They lost a close one to Richmond to open the year but then beat Elon 31-10. With their season disrupted by Covid they lost their QB after week 2 and were banged up and played just one more game. It was versus powerhouse James Madison and lost 38-10 being outgained 460-187 their 5<sup>th</sup> straight losing season.

In 2019 the Tribe returned 6 starters to the CAA's #12 scoring (13.6 ppg) & #12 total offense (242 ypg). They returned all 3 QB's who started last year in Shon Mitchell (6 st, 1281, 59.3%, 6-6), Ted Hefter (3 st, 424, 48.7%, 2-4) and Dean Rotger (1 st, 157, 1-0). They add Coastal Carolina transfer Kilton Anderson, who made 14 career starts for the Chanticleers. Last year in 6 starts, Anderson threw for 1,010 (58.0%, 8.3) and rushed for 251 (4.5). Anderson won the job early, but Hollis Mathis took over and started the last

5 games. Mathis threw for 976 (44.8%, 4-3) while rushing for 546 (3.9). Last year Mathis started the first two and threw for 379 (61%, 2-0) with 85 rush but was injured. Hefter hit 13-20-128-1-1. He is a dynamic dual-threat playmaker that was 4<sup>th</sup> in pass efficiency. He may not be ready for the start of the year but the position was fortified by the addition of Arizona transfer Kevin Doyle (PS#40) and Lafayette's starting QB Cole Northrup (602, 62.3%, 4-3) and they play Lafayette this year. They also add true frosh Darius Wilson who was Gatorade Player of the year runner up in Virginia. This is a deep and improved unit. In 2019 they lost #2 RB Nate Evans (208, 3.0) who started 8 of 10 games. They returned 4 of their top 5 RB's including Albert Funderburke (3 st), who led with just 261 (3.0) and 3rd tm CAA FB Tyler Crist (6 st, 37 rec), whose 1 rush for 27 yds made him their #5 rusher. Owen Wright led in '19 with 584 (4.2) with their QB #2 and Elijah Burns #3 (362, 6.4) and Donavyn Lester #4 (262, 4.2). Wright had just 21 yards in week 1 and was gone. Malachi Imoh was Colonial POW with 137 rush vs Elon but missed the final. Burns had 72 (2.6). This year they return of the top 4 with the only loss being Wright and they should be much healthier. In '19 they lost their top 3 receivers in 3rd tm CAA WR DeVonte Dedmon (7 st, 605, 15.1, 6 td), WR Nick Muse (3 st, 453, 15.1), who transferred to South Carolina, & WR Jack Armstrong (9 st, 195, 10.8). Zach Burdick led with 655 (19.3!), Kane Everson was #2 with 585 (12.7) and Donavyn Lester was #3 with 119 (13.2). In the spring they lost Everson. Illinois St transfer Cole Blackmon led with 194 (16.2) in just 3 games and TE Anthony Mague was #2 100(12.5) with Burdick #3 despite missing the last 2 games. This year they all return including Everson and they add in FIU transfer Josh Guilford and James Madison TE Ry Yates so they are in by far the best shape in 3 years. In 2019 tThe OLine lost 1 starter. They returned three 10 game starters along with 3rd tm CAA LT Mark Williamson (9 st). In 2018 they were last in the CAA in scoring, rushing (55, 1.8) & total offense and allowed 9.2% sacks. In 2019 they switched to a high-tempo offense and improved to 186 (4.2) rush but did allow 10.5% sacks. A mobile QB did help the numbers. In the brief spring season they lost Williamson and had 151 (4.4) with 8.5% sacks. This year the coaches feel this unit is the strength of the team. Three OL are 6<sup>th</sup> year seniors in C Ryan Ripley, G Dan Evers and T Andrew Trainer. The other two starters are seniors Cory Ryder and Colby Sorsdal.

W&M returned 8 starters to the CAA's #8 scoring (26.2 ppg) & #9 total defense (366 ypg) in 2019. The DLine lost 1 starter and moved from a 4-3 to a 3-4 defense, DE Gavin Johnson (6 st, 17 tkl, 3 tfl) moved to LB. They returned their top 3 DL in 2nd tm CAA DT Bill Murray (10 st, 48 tkl, 4.5 sk, 5 tfl), DT Will Kiely (10 st, 43 tkl, 3 sk, 4.5 tfl) and DE Carl Fowler (6 st, 28 tkl, 6 tfl). The LB corps lost 1 starter (#5 tkl'r) in WLB Josh Dulaney (7 st, 51 tkl, 5.5 tfl). They returned 4 of their top 5 LB including 2 starters in MLB

Nate Arkins (10 st, 68 tkl, 5.5) & SLB Arman Jones (10 st, 59 tkl, 5.5 tfl). The secondary lost a starting CB (62 tkl, 9 pbu) and a backup CB (12 tkl, 1 pbu). They returned 4 of their top 5 DB led by 3rd tm CAA FS Isaiah Lester (65 tkl, 4 int, 1 pbu) & 3rd tm CAA CB Corey Parker (10 st, 42 tkl, 10 pd). The defense returns 11 of their top 13 tacklers. Our only major concern was if the high-tempo offense struggled, as that could put the defense right back on the field with the danger of fatigue. William and Mary allowed 355 ypg and 24 ppg in Colonial action in 2018 and despite the veteran defense slipped to allowing 407 ypg and 30 ppg in 2019. In the Spring W&M had to replace 8 of the top 9 tacklers and had just 3 starters back. The numbers actually improved to 324 ypg and 23 ppg despite their top guy Trey Watkins being OFY after 12 tkls in the opener. This year the top 24 tacklers return. The DLine should be a strength led by 1<sup>st</sup> tm Preseason DL Will Kiely and 3<sup>rd</sup> team preseason Carl Fowler. Zyquan Bessant rounds out a solid front. Watkins (#1 tklr '19) is back at LB and joins with 6<sup>th</sup> year senior and captain Tyler Christ who had 3 sack in '19. The secondary was fortified by the additions of Boston College Grad transfer Tate Haynes (son of NFL Hall of Famer Mike) who had 5 starts at BC, Canadian true frosh Ethan Yip and Howard transfer Tye Freeland (144 tkls, 16 pbu, All MEAC).

The Special Teams unit lost their top PR's in '19 and needed to improve as their two K's hit just 6-13 FG and P Will Michael had just a 36.2 avg. New STC Josh Zidenberg, who was the STC at Western Illinois last year made an impact. Jake Johnston hit 7-12 (long 41) FG and Kris Hopper 2-6 but with a long of 54. George Eberle had a 41.8 avg on punts but the star was KR Bronson Yoder who had 913 KR yds (26.9) with 2 TD. Yoder did have just 2.8 on PR's with Jordan Lowery at 9.7. In the 3 game spring Ethan Chang hit 2-3 FG (long 29) while Will Whitehurst avg 39.2 on punts. They only had 100 (14.3) yards on KR's and 7 yds on 8 PR's (0.9). They were at the bottom of the ST rankings last year but with the return of AA KR Yoder this group has potential.

In 2019 for the first time since 1980 they will have a new HC walking the sidelines. In fact after 31 year strength and conditioning coach John Sauer left for the same position at Montana St in July, and the only hold over from Laycock's staff is 5th yr ILB cch Bo Revell. William and Mary had their 4<sup>th</sup> straight losing season and then in a 3 game spring made it 5 in a row. Mike London is a solid head coach that did well at Richmond and did not catch any breaks while with Virginia. This team is vastly improved over the one they put on the field in the spring and I would say improved over their 2019 version as well. William and Mary has 22 seniors including 7 who are coming back for their 6<sup>th</sup> season and they get some solid transfers that should make an immediate impact. Usually coaches hit their stride in year 3 but this is more like year 2.5 for London. The Tribe was picked 11<sup>th</sup> by the head coaches and Media Relations Directors

in the preseason poll and I think they will surpass expectations and perhaps flirt with a winning record if they keep their key players healthy.