

Duquesne

Jerry Smith enters his 17th season at the helm of Duquesne. The Dukes have won 8 conference titles under Smith including 5 in the NEC and 2 playoff berths ('15 & '18). In '18 the Dukes went 8-3 in the regular season (+80 ypg vs FCS) with 2 losses vs FBS foes and a 1 pt loss. They won their first FCS playoff game vs Towson then were blownout by SDSU, finishing 9-3. In '19 the Dukes started 2-2, won 4 straight then lost their final 3, their 6-5 record was their worst since 2014. They won their first 4 games in spring but lost the NEC Title game to Sacred Heart, who they beat in the opener, despite a +91 yd edge.

In '18 the Dukes were averaging 31.2 ppg and 383 ypg until they were shutdown in the 2nd rd of FCS playoffs and slipped to 29.2 ppg and 373 ypg. In '19 they were held under 300 yards on 4 occasions and only put up 22.3 ppg and 342 ypg but in the spring they improved back to 25.8 ppg and 409 ypg. In spring Duquesne replaced a 2Y starter (FAU transfer) with Ohio transfer Joe Mischler (PS#140). He threw for 385 vs LIU and 335 vs Sacred Heart. He finished with 1,195 (65%, 9-4). Mischler returns and Bowling Green transfer Bryce Veasley (PS#126) adds depth. In '19 Duquesne returned AJ Hines 1st Tm AA RB AJ Hines (1520, 5.7, 236 rec '18). Hines missed 2 games and dipped to just 780 (4.1). Mark Allen was #2 with 689 (5.0). Both Hines and Allen were gone in the spring as well as their #3 rusher. They added Garrett Owens who rushed for 2,743 yds in 3Y at D2 Mercyhurst. Owens led with 411 (4.7). Billy Lucas ran for 110 in each of the L/2 games. He was #2 with 297 (4.5). This year they go from losing their top 3 to returning their top 3 and they added FIU transfer DeMarcus Townsend (PS#67). In '19 Duquesne had four who topped 200 yards. Two of those returned for spring and they added Cyrus Holder from St Francis (692, 14.7 '18). Holder led with 491 (21.3). Davie Henderson was #2 with 282 (12.8). Joey Isabella added 194 (11.4). All 3 return plus they added Kansas St transfer Wykeen Gill (273, 17.1 '19). The Dukes nearly repeated '18's numbers by rushing for 172 (4.0) in '19 but did nearly cut sacks in half with 16. All 5 starters, who started all 11 games in '19, departed in the spring. Despite the inexperience they again matched their numbers, avg 170 (4.2) ypg with 8 sacks. All 5 starters from the spring are back and they should finally surpass the 170-178 rush ypg they've basically hit for 3 straight years.

This has been an impressively consistent defense highlighted by stellar play in the secondary. Duquesne gave up 28.3 ppg in '18 but when you remove their playoff loss vs SDSU and 2 FBS losses they only all'd 20.7. In '19 they allowed 23.6 ppg and only 298 ypg. In spring they gave up just 17.6 ppg and 324 ypg. The Dukes allowed 6 teams to rush for 214+ in '18 and allowed 182 (4.9, 19 sk) on the season. In '18 they only let 2 teams top 200 yards and gave up just 130 (3.9, 19 sk). All 4 starters were gone in spring including their #3, #8 and #11 tkl'rs. They dropped to 201 (4.9) rush ypg and had just 5 sacks. This year 3 starters return including their #6, #8, #10 and #11 tkl'rs. Their only loss is Lucas D'Orazio (4 st, 6 tkl LY). The Dukes had their #1, #9, #10 and #12 tkl'rs at LB in '19. All 4 were gone in spring. Their replacements finished as their #3, #4, #12 and #13 tkl'rs. This year their top 4 all return plus they get back Connor Barrett (8 st, #8 tkl'r '19) who sat out spring. Duquesne hasn't all'd a team to top 55% completions since before 2010 and have kept foes under 200 pass ypg in 9 of the last 11 seasons. Duquesne lost all 4 starters prior to spring but still only allowed 123 pass ypg (54.9%, 6-4). The Dukes get 4 starters back from spring and this is one of the most consistent position group's we've ever seen.

Brian Brudewicz made 4-6 fg's in spring (L/33). Mike Smigley avg'd 40.3 ypp and improved the Dukes net to 38.2. Joey Isabella avg'd 9.0 PR and Ezekiel Daure avg'd 18.2 KR. All 4 return so their ST's are in solid shape.

Only 7 starters returned in the spring for Duquesne, yet they were 4-0 before losing the NEC Title game despite a +91 yd edge. HC Smith is a veteran and has loaded his roster with 14 FBS transfers and with 16 starters back including 10 on defense, they will make another run at an NEC Title. Their game at Sacred Heart will likely determine the conference title.