

Merrimack

Merrimack was a Division 2 school from 1997-2018 then made the jump to the FCS in 2019. They went 6-5 in their first year in the FCS but 3 of their wins came against lower division schools. The Warriors did finish +65 ypg and 2 of their losses in the FCS were by 7 pts but they also finished -64 ypg against NEC foes. They lost all 3 of their spring games and were -111 ypg. Dan Curran is in his 9th season as HC. He was also the OC for 3Y.

In '19 Merrimack put up 29 ppg and 376 ypg but that number dropped to 20.4 ppg when you remove 3 games vs lower division schools. In spring they only put up 12 ppg and 220 ypg in 3 contests. Christian Carter was a returning starter in '19 and led with 2,095 (56%, 15-10, 304 rush). Last year Carter departed. Malakai Anthony started the opener and threw for just 91 (63%, 1-0). He was replaced by Jack Esquivel who had just 2 attempts the prior year. Esquivel started the last 2 and threw for 293 but only hit 49.3% (3-5 ratio). Prince-Dru Bey also saw action in 2 games, hitting 50% for 20 yards. This year all 3 return but they also added significant upgrade with the addition of Louisiana Tech transfer Westin Elliott (6'5" 235) who saw action in 12 games over the last 4 years for the Bulldogs. Matt Brehon returned in spring after leading Merrimack with 666 (6.4) rush in '19. Brehon struggled to get going, and finished with just 61 (3.1). Their top 3 return in spring. Both Brehon and Jamari Venter (599 '19) averaged over 6.0 ypc in '19. This is a very experienced unit and could post much better numbers, more akin to 2019. In '19 Merrimack had 2 WR's top 600 yards in Johnny Rosario (637, 16.8) and Marquis Spence (760, 10.4). Spence was gone in spring and Rosario only played in 1 game. Anthony Norcia led with 111 (10.1). Tyler Roberts was #2 with 73 (12.2). Jelani Mason added 72 (7.2). This year they get their top 5 back including Rosario so this will be their most improved unit. In '19 Merrimack ran for 164 ypg (4.8). They lost 3 starters in the spring and fell to just 88 ypg (3.0) and their sack % rose from 6.4% (24) to 9.7% (9). This year they are led by RT Clay Legault but the other 4 starters from '19 are gone and only 3 return with starting experience. This is a very young OLine that gained minimal experience in the spring. 6 starters return from '19. They've got experience at the skill positions but the Oline is their biggest question entering '21.

Merrimack only allowed 21 ppg overall and 26 ppg against FCS foes in '19. Last year they returned 9 of their top 15 tk'l'rs and allowed 24 ppg and 331 ypg in 3 spring contests. The Warriors only allowed 121 (3.4) rush ypg in '19. They also had 35 sacks including 10 in their finale vs Rhode Island! Last year they brought back 2 starters. Gone were their #9 and #12 tk'l'rs and they allowed at least 173 rush yds in all 3 contests (192, 4.0, 7 sk). All 4 starters from the spring return DE's Cory Hagerman who led with 9.5 sks in '19 (#2 tk'l'r last year) and Nicholas Lenon (7 sk 2Y). They won't match '19's rush D but their sack numbers should still be excellent. All 3 starting LB's left after the spring, along with their top backup. They had to replace their #1, #4, #5 and #6 tk'l'rs at LB. This year they get their #1, #4, #5 and #15 tk'l'rs back but this is still a young unit that only saw significant action in 3 games last year. Merrimack only lost 1 starter in their secondary from '19 when they allowed just 191 pass ypg and 49.7% (16-16). They return their #6, #7, #9, #10, #11 and #14 tk'l'rs. Three are multi-year starters and this is the strength of the defense.

Matt Sokol took over fg duties in spring and missed both of his chances to cement the job. Cole Peterson avg'd 34.7 ypp (31.7 net). Jacari Carter avg'd 14.0 PR and Shaka Males avg'd 32.8 KR. All 4 ST's members are back but they've only got a few games of experience.

The Warriors made a successful transition in their jump from Division 2, going 6-5 in their first season in FCS but that was derailed in the the spring when they went 0-3 and were -111 ypg. They only get 1 game against a lower division team, travel in 3 other non-conference games and only get 5 home games. They won't match 19's 6 wins but they should win a few games and anything is better than last year's 0.