

# Tennessee Tech 2021 Preview

Going into 2018 first-year HC Dewanye Alexander inherited 13 returning starters, but had some obstacles to overcome with the loss of some key players at crucial positions and the Golden Eagles finished 1-10 and 0-3 in the Sgt. York Trophy games. Tenn Tech returned 12 st'rs in '19 and began the season 4-1 but finished the season 2-5 to end the year 6-6 (3-5 in OVC). Last season TTU played all 7 games in the spring vs OVC foes. TTU opened the season with a win against Austin Peay 27-21 despite getting outgained 373-156. The key in this win was TTU being +3 in TO's and scoring 17 points off TO's. In their next 4 games TTU would outgain 3 of those foes but dropped all 4 games. TTU picked up a win vs Tenn St (369-159) and despite a 40-7 loss to UT Martin they would win the Sgt. York trophy for just the 2nd time. Alexander returns for year No. 4 this season with an experienced Golden Eagles squad.

TTU put up just 300 ypg and 16 ppg on offense in 2017. Moving ahead to '18 those numbers increased slightly to 330 ypg and 18 ppg and again in '19 when the Golden Eagle offense averaged 366 ypg and 26 ppg. Last season QB's Willie Miller (4 st, 879, 54%, 5-8) and Bailey Fisher (3 st, 367, 61%, 2-3) split time at QB with Miller starting the L/4 gms and he is back this season. Kurt Taylor (5 st, 264, 3.9) led the Golden Eagles in rush yds and QB Miller was #2 (243, 4.0, 4 td), while Jordan Brown was #3 with 150 (4.1). Taylor departs but Brown returns along with David Gist (2 st, 98, 3.4). For the season the rush attack struggled at times as they were held under 75 yds 4 times, but in the other 3 gms topped 185 rush yds including 201 yds against Tenn St.

Last season TTU averaged only 180 pass ypg after throwing for 222 ypg in 2019. The receivers were led by Quinton Cross (4 st, 255, 11.1) and Metrius Fleming (5 st, 187, 15.6) along with Brad Clark (4 st, 176, 13.5) and Justin Oden (5 st, 175, 15.9). All 4 of the top receivers return this season and overall the top 6 receivers are back and with a steady QB in place this season this unit should show some improvement. The TTU OLine has the 5 players start at least 6 games, but despite this they did pave the way for just 114 rush ypg (3.3) and gave up 19 sacks. The OLine does bring back 3 starters from last year but one of their losses is 2nd Tm OVC LG Mike Rhoades. It may be tough to replace an all-conf OL but this unit is still in decent shape with a trio of starters back.

In 2018 despite returning 6 starters they allowed a decade-worst 525 ypg and 46 ppg! TTU's defense collected just 10 sacks in '17 and that number only increased to 13 last year. In '19 TTU returned 4 starters on defense, but there was some improvement as they allowed 398 ypg and 31 ppg. Last season TTU's defense held foes to 304 ypg and 24 ppg in the F/6 gms before allowing 436 yds and 40 pts in the finale to UT Martin. The DLine was led by DE Chris Tucker (7 st, 34 tkl, 3.5 sk, 3.5 tfl) and DT Jale'n Gladney (6 st, 21 tkl, 4 tfl). TTU only had 11 sks for the season and 4 of them were in the opener, and they allowed 130 rush ypg (4.0). The DLine brings back all 4 st'rs and should be able to get to the QB more often this season.

The TTU defense was led by LB's Seth Carlisle (7 st, 50 tkl, 3 pbu) and Jack Warwick (7 st, 45 tkl, 3.5 tfl, 3 pbu) who both return this season and Xavier Washington (12 tkl) and Heath Price (10 tkl) are both back as solid backup LB's. The TTU pass defense did improve to allowing 193 pass ypg last season (224 in '19) but allowed QB's to hit nearly 64% of their passes. The TTU secondary was led by SS Marcus McMeans (4 st, 5 tfl, 2 pbu) along with FS Josh Reliford (7 st, 41 tkl, 5 pbu, 2 int, 2nd Tm OVC) and CB Cameron Hudson (7 st, 23 tkl, 2.5 tfl, 7 pbu). The secondary returns 4 st'rs and the only starter gone from the entire defense is NB Jamaal Thompson (5 st, 29 tkl, 2.5 tfl). With 10 st'rs back on defense this unit should be stout again after allowing just 323 ypg last season. Hayden Olsen handled both the FG kicking and punting for TTU LY and he was 7-12 on FG's (L/52) with 2 blk'd while he avg'd just 35.7 yds per punt (L/51) and the team net was just 33.1.

The Golden Eagles do open the season on the road at Samford (4-3 LY) on a Thursday night then face another SoCon team for their home opener in Furman (3-4 LY). TTU then faces Tennessee. TTU opens OVC play with a game vs EIU and then faces SE Missouri before another non-conf game at NC Central. TTU then travels to Tenn St before playing D-II Virginia-Lynchburg at home. Off a bye week the Golden Eagles travel to Murray St and the host UT Martin for senior day. In their final OVC game TTU travels to Austin Peay. With 17 starters back, this an experienced Tenn Tech team, but the OVC is pretty stacked at the top this season and while TTU may be improved they don't look like a contender for the OVC crown.