

Drake

In '18 Drake went 7-4 (+53 ypg) and nearly upset Iowa St in their season finale. Drake promoted DC Todd Stepsis to HC after the 2018 season. In Stepsis' first season the Bulldogs lost their first 3 games including a loss to D2 Truman St. They bounced back, won 4 straight and finished 6-5 (-16 ypg). All 3 of their losses in the spring were by 4 points or less and both of their wins were by DD's.

In 2019 Ian Corwin threw for 2,101 (59%, 20-14). Corwin started the opener but was 0-8 with an int and was benched for Ben Nienhuis. Nienhuis struggled vs Valpo so Hunter Wendling started the last 3 and was more effective. Wendling led with 479 (59.1%, 2-3). Corwin finished with 75 (38.9%, 3-1) and Nienhuis added 49 (39.1%, 0-1). Nienhuis departs but both Wendling and Corwin return. If Corwin gets back to his 2019 form he will get the job back, but Wendling was clearly the best of the 3 last year. In 2019 Drake returned their top rusher Drew Lauer who led with 511 (3.5) in '18. Lauer more than doubled his output, rushing for 1,127 (4.9, 233 rec). Cross Robinson was #2 with 243 (4.1) and Caden Meis added 184 (4.8). Last year they had to replace 2nd Tm All-Pioneer RB Lauer but Robinson and Meis both returned. Robinson led with just 287 (4.3) and Meis followed with 199 (5.4). Both Robinson and Meis are back again so they are in better shape than last year. In '19 Drake lost their 1st Tm All-Pioneer WR who nearly hit 1,000 yds in '18. They did get back their #2 and #3 receivers in Devin Cates (570, 12.7 '18) and Mitch McFarlane (346, 11.2 '18). Cates led with 627 (12.3). Last year they lost their top 5, making this the weakness of the offense. Colin Howard led with 256 (17.1) but no one else topped 90 yards. This year Drake gets 5 of their top 7 back including their top 2 so they are in much better shape. Last year Drake had to replace all 5 starters on the Oline. They avg'd 119 (3.5) rush ypg with 10 sks allowed but 6 came in the opener. This year they get all 5 starters back from the spring and should be significantly improved.

In 2018 Drake allowed just 19 ppg and 296 ypg. In '19 they allowed 32 ppg in non-conference games but only 23 ppg in Pioneer play. Overall they allowed 25 ppg and 359 ypg. Only 5 of their top 15 tk'l'rs were back last year. They only allowed 274 ypg but gave up 443 in their only non-conference game. Drake only allowed 97 rush ypg (2.7) in '18 with 29 sacks. They took a nose dive in '19, allowing 185 rush ypg (4.6) and sacks were cut in half to 14. Last year the Bulldogs lost all 4 starters yet they held 4 of their 5 foes to 81 rush yds or less and only allowed 77 (2.2). They finished with 12 sacks but 8 of those came in their finale vs Presbyterian. This year they get all 4 starters back from the spring. They've got 5 with starting experience and all 5 were among their top 15 tk'l'rs last year including DT Jake Hoper who led with 3.5 sks. Only 1 starting LB returned last year so this was another position that needed rebuilt. Declan Carr led the spring with 34 tkls and Ryan Kricer stepped in with 30 tkls and was #2 with 5.5 tfl's. The Bulldogs return all 3 starters including their #1, #2 and #4 tk'l'rs along with their #12 tk'l'r so this unit goes from inexperienced to experienced. In '19 Drake allowed 174 pass ypg (59.7%, 10-8). In conference play they held foes to just 51% completions but allowed 73% against non-conference foes. Last year they got 2 starters back including their #2 and #3 tk'l'rs. The Bulldogs allowed 197 ypg (54.7%, 2-4). This year they get their top 5 DB's back including 4 starters and their #3, #5, #6, #10 and #15 tk'l'rs. With all 11 starters back, this defense is much more experienced.

In '19 Nathan De Bruin made 3-5 fg's (L/41). He returned in spring and made 2-3 fg's (L/43). Shane Dunning avg'd 38.9 ypp (tm net 36.7). Andrew Kasten avg'd 8.3 PR and Danny Morales avg'd 19.0 KR. Drake allowed just 11 PR yds all season. Their ST unit remains in tact this year.

Drake had a streak of 4 straight winning seasons broken last year. They were unlucky with all 3 losses coming by 4 points or less, but were also severely outgained in 2 of those, including a 3 point loss to San Diego where they were outgained 267-25! With all 22 starters back, they've got a great chance to get back to their winning ways. They do have 2 tough non-conference games but also play 2 lower division teams and should have a winning record in the Pioneer.