

Presbyterian

Presbyterian makes the move to the Pioneer League after spending 12 years in the Big South and prior to 2008 was a Division 2 school. They went 2-10 in 2019 (-101 ypg) in their final year in the Big South. They started the spring 1-3 but 2 of their losses were by 3 & 7 point. They won their L/3 games to finish 4-3 and were +14 ypg. After the spring they hired Kevin Kelley as their new coach. Kelley had been HC at Pulaski Academy, a HS in Arkansas and gained fame for his unconventional strategy of never punting and almost always electing for onside kicks. He won 9 state titles in Arkansas and was named the USA Today COY in '16.

Presbyterian failed to put up 300 ypg in both '18 and '19, finishing with 275 & 294 while averaging just 14 & 17 ppg. Last year they benefited from a move out of the Big South and put up 26.1 ppg and 358 ypg. QB Tyler Huff split time in '19, throwing for 871 (58.4%, 7-8) and was also their #2 rusher with 327 (4.4). Brandon Thompson led in passing with 1,021 (52.7%, 3-7). Huff was the clear starter in the spring. He threw for 1,465 (62.1%, 10-5) and was again their #2 rusher with 206 (2.6). Thompson added 337 (46.2%, 2-1). Huff returns while Thompson departs. The Blue Hoes lost their top 3 RB's going into spring. Delvecchio Powell had 104 vs Morehead St and led with 311 (4.0). Jarius Jeter was the only other RB to make an impact, finishing with 152 (3.5). Keith Pearson led Presbyterian with 777 (10.9) in '19. He returned in spring but they lost their #2, #3 and #4. Pearson led with 831 (12.8) but he transferred to Charlotte after the spring. Lawson Bachelder was #2 with 243 with an excellent 24.3 ypc. Kiaran Turner added 155 (10.3) and Matthew Rivera had 153 (25.5). Presbyterian ran for 131 (2.3) ypg in '19 with 21 sacks allowed. In '21 they slipped to 100 (3.1) and sacks jumped to 28. This year the Blue Hoes lose 3 starters on the line but 4 return with starting experience. Overall they get 7 starters back with an experienced QB and RB returning so they should be more productive.

In Presbyterian's final season in the Big South they allowed 395 ypg and 33.2 ppg. In the spring they returned their top 7 tkl'rs. The Blue Hose went from allowing 193 (4.6) rush ypg to 176 (4.1) but sacks dropped from 20 (7%) to 7 (3.6%). They improved despite losing 2 starters and a backup then DT Tyler Wilhelm (11 st, #6 tkl'r '19) was lost for the season after 1 game. Presbyterian did have a mix of excellent performances, holding 3 teams under 100 rush yds and 3 poor performances, allowing over 220 rush yds. This year they lose all 4 starters including their #7, #9, #11 and #13 tkl'rs. They do have Alex Sudderth coming back after starting the first 2 games last year (#12 tkl'r), but this unit is extremely inexperienced. Presbyterian returned all 3 starters at LB in the spring which were also their #1, #2 and #4 tkl'rs. LB's were the strength of the defense led by #1 tkl'r Colby Campbell (96 tkls, 7 tfl). Jarrett Nagy was #2 (52 tkls, 6.5 tfl) and Jeffrey Smyth did everything at NB (#3 tkl'r, 44 tkls, 7.5 tfl, 3 int). This year they lose both Campbell and Smyth. Nagy leads a much younger LB corps that didn't give much playing time to the backups the last 2 years. Presbyterian lost 1 starter in their secondary heading into spring. They only allowed 202 pass ypg (57.7%) but allowed a 27-10 ratio in '19. The Blue Hose improved to just 53.1% allowed and 167 pass ypg with just a 9-9 ratio. Only 1 starter returns this year in CB Isaac Crisp (#8 tkl'r, 5 pd). Keegan Halloran did start 3 games as well (#10 tkl'r, 2 int). They lose their #4, #5 and #6 tkl'rs. Presbyterian returns just 1 starter on defense and only 5 of their top 15 tkl'rs return for the spring.

Parker Maddrey made 5-6 fg's (L/35) in the spring. Aaron Winn avg'd 39.5 punt (35.2 net). Keith Pearson led with a 15.0 KR avg and Oka Emmanwori avg'd 22.8 KR with an 88 yd td. The entire unit departs this year so it will be tough to match last year's solid production.

Presbyterian had an experienced defense last year and managed to win 4 games in their first year of Pioneer League play. It will be interesting to see if HC Kelley's unique style translates to the college game. They start the season with 2 lower division schools. Only 8 starters return and now their defense is extremely inexperienced so we don't see a .500 finish this year.