

San Diego

HC Dale Lindsey was a long time NFL assistant who spent 2 years as the DC for the San Diego Chargers. He was DC here in '12 then took over as HC the following year. The Toreros won 8 games in his first year then followed that up with 9, 9, 10, 10, 9 and 10 win campaigns. Last year San Diego started 3-0 but had 2 close losses down the stretch including a 20-19 loss at Valpo where they finished with a 302-191 yd edge which ended their streak of 6 straight conference titles. Lindsey has led the Toreros to 5 FCS playoff appearances including two first round victories. He has a 50-4 record in the Pioneer league and had won 40 straight conference games until last year.

From 2015-2019 San Diego averaged at least 31 ppg each season. In '18 they averaged 37.8 ppg and 471 ypg and basically repeated that feat in '19, putting up 37.6 ppg and 474 ypg. Last year the Toreros had to replace their QB, top RB and 4 of their top 5 receivers. They slipped to just 23.7 ppg and 369 ypg. In '19 San Diego had to replace their All-Pioneer QB who finished with a 39-7 ratio. Their new starter, Reid Sinnett threw for 3,538 (66.9%, 32-10). Sinnett departed last year so for the 2nd straight year San Diego had to replace an All-Pioneer QB but this time with added Covid disruptions. Mason Randall started all 6 games and threw for 1,561 (63.4%) but only a 10-11 ratio. Randall returns and they added Colorado St transfer Judd Erickson. San Diego's top rusher departed last year but they did get back Emilio Martinez who was a 2x All-Pioneer RB that led with 1,033 (5.3) in '17 and 710 (5.4) in '18. Also back was Terrence Smith (473, 6.5, #2 '19) Martinez had 122 vs Stetson and led with 486 (4.9, 125 rec). Smith only finished with 117 (3.0). Their top 3 RB's all return and Martinez is one of the top RB's in the Pioneer. San Diego had to replace 2x FCS AA WR Michael Bandy last year. Four of their top 5 were gone and the only returnee, Alex Spadone only played 1 game. Michael Carner led with 538 (15.4). Christian Brown was #2 with 347 (13.9) and Derek Kline added 287 (13.0). This year they return 4 of their top 5 but their top guy, Carner, departs and Spadone isn't returning either. Still, they are clearly in better shape than last year when they broke in an entirely new WR corps. San Diego rushed for 191 (5.4) ypg with just 15 sacks in '19. The Toreros slipped to just 109 (3.3) in spring, but they did only allow 7 sacks. This year San Diego returns 4 starters so they are more experienced and should be improved. Overall 9 starters return from the spring and they've got solid depth at both RB and WR.

In '15-'17 San Diego allowed 18, 16 & 17 ppg. In '18 they slipped to 29.2 ppg and 461 ypg. They rebounded in '19, allowing 19.1 ppg and 331 ypg. Last year San Diego returned 8 of their top 15 tkl'rs. They only allowed 17.5 ppg and 266 ypg. San Diego allowed 128 rush ypg (3.7) with just 16 sacks in '19. They lost 2 starting DL (#6 & #9 tkl'rs). In spring they allowed just 79 rush ypg (2.4) and had 19 sacks in 6 less games! This year San Diego loses 2 starters again in DT Kevin Glajchen who led with 6 sks (#5 tkl'r) and DE Chris Reese (#7 tkl'r, 6 tfl). Four of their top 6 return but it will be tough to match last year's numbers without their top 2 guys, still this is a solid unit. The Toreros lost their #2 and #10 tkl'rs at LB last year but returned 2 starters (#1 & #4 tkl'rs). Kyle Bilchik led with 38 tkls. '19's leader, Kama Kamaka posted 32 tkls. This year they Bilchik and Kamaka along with David Ambagtsheer (#6 tkl'r). With all 3 starters back, including 2 multi-year starters, this is the strength of the defense. The Toreros were excellent against the pass in '19, allowing just 54.8% (16-19) but in the spring they had to replace their top guy, CB David Tolbert, who posted 6 int's in '19. Four of their top 6 were gone yet they still only allowed 52.8% (8-5). This year their top 6 all return and this will be the most improved unit on the defense. Nine starters return, and this will be one of the top defenses in the Pioneer League.

Brandon Eickert made 8-10 fg's in spring (L/36). Connor Strobe avg'd 39.8 ypp (36.9 net). San Diego's avg'd 8.1 PR. Hunter Nichols avg'd 26.8 KR. Strobe departs but the rest of the unit returns and will be among the best in the league.

It only took a pandemic to end San Diego's dominance of the Pioneer League. Now the Toreros have 18 starters back and will be hungry to get back on top of the conference. They've got a strong running game and QB play should be improved with Randall back as a 2 year starter. They get Davidson on the road which will be a key game if they want to make it back to the FCS playoffs again.