

Chattanooga Mocs –

Randy Wright enters his third season as head coach and is 9-8 in his two years. Chattanooga brought in Tom Arth as head coach in 2017 and he was just 3-8 but only outgained by -27 ypg in Southern action. Arth did a great job turning the ship and they opened 2018 6-2 but had losses by 6 and 4 then lost to South Carolina 49-9 in the finale for 6-5 season. Arth left for his hometown Akron squad and they hired Rusty Wright. Wright spent the previous two seasons on Shawn Elliot's staff at Georgia State coaching inside linebackers, special teams and serving as recruiting coordinator. They guided the Panthers to the 2017 AutoNation Cure Bowl Championship. In his first year with the Panthers, the 2017 GSU defense set season records for fewest points per game (24.75), fewest rushing yards per game (136.4), fewest yards per rushing attempt (4.13) and most sacks (24). Prior to that, Wright was a member of Russ Huesman's staff at UTC during one of the most successful runs in school history. He was the linebackers coach and special teams coordinator for four seasons (2013-16). Chattanooga won three straight Southern Conference titles and made three consecutive FCS Playoff appearances during his time in the Scenic City. Wright's return showed immediate promise with the Mocs competing for the Southern Conference title into the final week of the 2019 season. His charges completed the campaign at 6-6 overall and was third in the league with a 5-3 conference tally. Six overall wins and five in SoCon play stacks up well with other first-time head coaches during the program's SoCon era (since 1977). He tied Buddy Nix (6-5, 5-1 in 1984) and Bill Oliver (8-3, 5-2) for most league wins in a debut season. Wright also tied Nix and Russ Huesman (6-5, 4-4 in 2009) for second-most total wins in a debut over the last 40 years.

Chattanooga played just one game last fall. The Mocs had 9 starters back on offense but did lose QB Nick Tiano. Old Dominion transfer Drayton Arnold hit 5-10-36 in '19. They did return top RB Ailym Ford (1081, 5.2). The defense has 8 starters back from a D that allowed foes 18 ypg above their season average and 205 (4.9) ypg rush. They added a Georgia Tech DL and a Purdue transfer at DT in Giovanni Revere plus a Rhode Island transfer in Montez Wilson up front. In '19 Chattanooga was 6-6 but were -89 ypg. They were +68 ypg in Southern action. They were a large dog to WKU but only lost 13-10 and were only outgained 254-225. In the Spring they opened 3-0 with wins over Wofford (24-13), The Citadel (25-24) and Furman (20-18. The D allowed just 213.2 ypg in those 4 games. They were hit hard by covid and lost to Mercer and were not able to play any more games for a 3-1 conference record.

The Offense not only put up 444 ypg in SoCon play in 2019 and had 9 starters but did lose QB Nick Tiano (2710, 62%, 15-6). Drayton Arnold was an ODU transfer in 2019 that

hit 5-10-36-0-2 here. Last year he threw for 783 (48%, 3-3) and Cole Copeland threw for 196 (65%, 1-1). They add in Mercer transfer Robert Riddle who threw for 1453 (57.3%, 15-11) in '19 and 747 (68%, 4-2) in '18. The QB position is much more experienced than last year. In 2018 Tyrell Price led with 697 rush (3.7) and was 2nd Tm SoCon. He was injured in 2019 and Ailym Ford led all D-I Frosh with 108.1 ypg rush and led with 1081 (5.2). Last year Ford rushed for 92 yds vs the tough WKU defense but did not see action in the spring. Price had 111 vs Furman and led with 226, 4.3). Gino Appleberry was #2 with 194 (4.1) and all 3 return and should be solidly improved. Last year they had to replace their #1 WR (794, 13.9). Reginald Henderson (381, 18.1, #2 '19) led with 285 (19.0) while Jamoi Mayes was #2 (165, 18.3), Andrew Manning #3 (115, 19.2) and Tyler Walker #4 (91, 18.2) and they all return this year. The Offensive Line paved the way for 4.8 ypc rush and allowed just 4.1% sacks in '19 and practically returned in tact last year. The numbers slipped with a new QB and banged up RB's as they paved the way for 3.3 ypc rush and allowed 8.8% sacks. This year all 5 return with Cole Strange voted 1st team Preseason All SoCon and McClendon Curtis, Harrison Moon both voted 2nd team. Strange is a preseason All American and Jacobs Blocking Award candidate.

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Last year Skyler Wilson took over the K job and hit 4-6 FG with a long of 42. P Gabe Boring avg 42.4 on punt and QB Drayton Arnold punted 6 times for 42.2. Those two combined for a solid net of 40.7 and while both return they also add in Jacksonville St transfer Jason Pierce. They also add in Arkansas St transfer Aaron Spears at K. Chattanooga had just -2 yds on 3 PR last year but did average 24.2 on 6 KR's last year. This is an above average unit.

This team won 3 straight SoCon titles from 2014-16 when Wright was an assistant here. and had 6 players on NFL rosters in the spring. They return all 11 starters on both offense and defense and get their 1000 yard RB Ailym Ford back to full health. With all

11 starters back on Offense and all 11 on defense plus good competition and experience at K & P this is a very solid team and the preseasaon favorite to win the Southern Conference this year drawing 18 of the 30 first place votes from the media and 4 of the 9 first place votes from the coaches.