

Incarnate Word Cardinals

Incarnate Word made a transition up to Division I football finally become a full fledged member of the Southland Conference in 2014 in football. IWU went 2-9 (-142 ypg conf) in 2014. , 6-5 (-23 ypg), 3-8 (-60 ypg), 1-10 (-174 ypg) their first 4 years in league play. In 2018 After dropping their first 2 games to FBS teams, UIW would go on to win 4 of their next 5 games, including a 45-17 blowout win over #6 McNeese. The Cardinals ended the regular season with wins over #21 Sam Houston State and at Central Arkansas and claimed a share of the SLC championship. UIW clinched their first-ever trip to the playoffs, but lost at Montana State 35-14 and finished the season 6-5 and Morris was the SLC Coach of the year. UIW's offense was woeful in 2017, gaining just 295 ypg while scoring 21 ppg. That all changed when Morris became the HC last year and installed the Air Raid offense. This Cardinals adapted to this system quickly and averaged 323 pass ypg (4th-most FCS) and scored 32 ppg. Freshman QB Jon Copeland was named the starter and would go on to set the UIW record for passing yards (2,984 yards) and TD passes (22) and was the SLC Freshman of the Year & 2nd Team SLC. Copeland did suffer an injury the final week of the season and missed the Cardinals playoff game. The run attack did not suffer with the switch to the Air Raid, as Ra'Quanne Dickens led the Cardinals with 1,117 yards (6.3, 14 TD) and was 1st Team SLC with Ra'Quanne Dickens rushing for 1117 yds (6.3) they improved to 6-5 and were +75 ypg in Southland play! In 2019 they opened 5-2 but lost their last 5 games to finish 5-7 and were -20 ypg. Last year they had to replace their long time QB Joe Copeland (59%, 22-9) as well as their top 3 WR's but did return their top RB Kevin Brown (720, 5.6). Last year they had a frosh QB in Cameron Ward but opened strong with wins over McNeese St and Lamar on the road by 25 ppg and then a home win over SEL for a perfect 3-0. They were stunned by Nicholls 75-45, lost 49-47 to NWST. They had just 5 healthy OL for their matchup vs eventual national champ Sam Houston St in the final and only trailed 21-14 in the 3Q but lost 42-14 to fall to 3-3 (+19 ypg).

The offense was not the problem last year as they put up 552 ypg and 42 ppg! Frosh QB Cameron Ward had quite a debut season as he was the FCS Frosh of the year throwing for 2260 (60%, 22-4) in just 6 games. Ward had actually begun spring as the #3 QB. He returns and is 2nd team Preseason All Southland. RB Kevin Brown led in 2019 with 720 (5.6) and Ameer King was #2 with 505 (5.1). Both returned last year and Brown was even more impressive with 775 (10.5) with Kaleb Ducros #2 with 127 (7.5). King had just 2 att's all year but all three RB's are back and Brown is 1st team Preseason Southland. Last year they had to replace 3 of the top 4 WR's. Robert Ferrel led the way with 474 (13.5) with Tre Wolf #2 (464, 15.0) and Darion Chafin #3 (372, 14.3). Jaelin Campbell was #4 (267, 14.1) and RB Brown was #5. The great news this year is all the top WR's are back (they do not use a TE in the Air Raid) with Ferrel being 1st team preseason Southland. The offensive line paved the way for 175 rush with a solid 6.5 ypc and allowed just 5.6 sacks. The unit returns nearly intact led by three 2nd team preseason Southland OL in Caleb Johnson, Nash Jones and Reid Francis. With 10 starters back this is clearly one of the top offenses in the Southland and FCS overall.

The defense allowed 495 ypg in 2017, cut it to 479 ypg in '18 and 463 ypg in 2019. It appeared in year 4 that the D had turned into a strength allowing just 162 ypg rush (3.2) in their 3-0 start

including just 366 ypg in the first two outings. The D then cratered allowing 268 ypg rush the last 3 games and 6.8 ypc with the unit allowing 638 ypg in their 3 losses. For the season they yielded a new high of 533 ypg including 215 (4.8) on the ground and 318 ypg thru the air. Part of that collapse could be attributed to losing Kai Anyalebechi the last two games to injury as despite just playing in the first 4 games he still finished the teams #1 tackler! This year they return the top 19 tacklers with the only loss being and DL Royce Wellington (#20 tackler). The top two sackmen in DE's Chance Main (4 sk) and Blaine Hoover (3 sack) both return as does. First team preseason Southland was Kai Anyalebechi while on the 2nd team was DE Hoover, LB Isiah Paul (#2 tklr), DB Shawn Holton (#4 tklr, 7 pbu) and DB Elliot Davidson (#6 tklr) who represented the team at media days. This should be a vastly improved defense.

IWU P Keven Nguyen had a solid 43.13 avg with a net of 40.3 while K Carson Morh hit 5-7 FG with a long of 48 and 1 of his two misses was from 50+! Robert Ferrel avg 15.2 on PR's and Ce'Cori Tolds avg 24.9 on KR's. Not only do all 4 return but Tolds, Ferrel and Mohr all on the 1st team Southland preseason team making this the top Special teams unit in the Conference.

Take a top-notch offense and special teams and bring in what should be a much improved defense and a softer schedule and IWU figures to be a legitimate contender in this now 6 man conference. They play 3 conference teams twice and those are Houston Baptist, Nicholls and McNeese. Eric Morris has his best team in his 4 years.