

# Nicholls Colonels

Nicholls entered 2019 off of back-to-back winning seasons after going a decade without a winning season (6-5 in 2007). The Colonels went 14-4 in conference play in '18 & '19 and had come close to beating teams like Texas A&M (24-14 loss) in '17 and Georgia (26-24 loss) in '16. Nicholls did beat Kansas in '18 26-23 and finished 9-4 after a 41-24 second-round playoff loss to Eastern Washington. Expectations were high under 5th year HC Tim Rebowe (25-22), who had truly turned this program around in his time here. Going into the 2018 season, the Colonels offense was coming off a season where they averaged over 400 ypg (402) for the since '13. The experienced offense took off last year, averaging 474 ypg and 32 ppg. SLC Player of the Year QB Chase Fourcade returned in '19 for his senior season after throwing for 2,930 yards (60.8%, 21-8) and rushing for 659 yards (4.3, 13 TD). The explosive Colonels offense returned their top rusher from '18 in Dontrell Taylor (12 starts, 990, 7.2, 9 TD, 2nd Team SLC) along with PS#42 RB Kendall Bussey (1 start, 563, 4.4, orig Texas A&M) and Julien Gums (544, 6.8, 6 TD). Nicholls kept the momentum in 2019. They did open 4-2 then lost 2 in a row. At 4-4 they reeled off 4 straight wins to make the playoffs then beat North Dakota in round one 24-6. Unfortunately, they ran into North Dakota St the next week and lost 37-13. Last year Nicholls lost their QB and top RB Julien Gums was banged up. They still opened 3-0 including wins over Lincoln (87-3) and Lamar (55-0). They only beat NW St 31-24 despite a 29-12 FD edge and +241 in yards and appeared ready for their showdown with Sam Houston St. Despite only being out FD'd 23-19 they were pounded 71-17. Nicholls recovered and beat Incarnate Word to move to 4-1 but lost their last two to finish 4-3. They had a 3-0 start where the Colonels were +385 ypg but they were actually -47 ypg in their 1-3 finish.

Lindsay Scott stepped into the starters role at QB last year and was dynamic with 1684 pass (58.1%) with a 18-7 ratio and was also the teams leading rusher with 557 (6.1). The 5'11 220 lb Senior is back as is his backup Kohen Granier (123, 47%, 2-0). Julien Gums rushed for 1232 (5.8) in 2019 and QB Fourcade was #2 (635, 3.7). Last year they lost their #2 and #3 (401, 5.3) and Gums was banged up (467, 5.1). This year Gums should return to form and they return their #3 rusher in John Carrington (271, 6.2) and #4 Collin Guggenheim (133. 7.4) so should be vastly improved. Last year they returned their #1 WR in Dal'Jean Dixon (1044, 19.3) and #3 WR KJ Franklin (338, 12.5) only losing their #2 (579, 19.3). Dixon was solid again with 514 (14.7) in a shortened season, Franklin was #2 with 303 (15.2). Dontaze Costly was #3 (280 (21.5) and Devonta Jason was #4 (198, 15.2). This year the top 4 return and Dixon and TE/HB David Mosley are 1<sup>st</sup> team preseason Southland with Franklin preseason 2<sup>nd</sup> team. All 5 starters return on the offensive line led by THREE 1<sup>st</sup> team preseason OL in PJ

Burkhalter, Evan Roussel and Jair Joseph. The Oline opened holes for 5.9 ypc rush (mobile QB) and had just 5.1% sacks and could be the premier Oline in the Southland. They have all 11 starters back from an offense that put up 522 ypg and 49 ppg!

The Defense was highly productive in 2018 as they improved to allow just 337 ypg & 22 ppg and collected 41 sacks (#1 SLC) in 2018. In '19 the Colonels had back 6 starters on D. The numbers slipped to 406 ypg and 27 ppg. Last year they allowed just 168 ypg in their 3-0 start but 544 ypg over the last 4 games. For the season they allowed just 383 ypg but the 34 ppg was the highest since their 0-12 season in 2014 (50 ppg!). This year they only lose LB Pig Cage (#4 tklr, 2.5 sk, 3 qbh), DL Dellary Oubre (#13 tklr, 0 sk) and DL Chris Thomas (#14 tackler, 1 sk). Overall, 14 of the top 17 tacklers return and 9 starters so this unit should have much more bite in 2021.

P Craig Walker avg just 39.7 on punts with a net of 37.3 and is back. Gavin Lasseigne hit 6-7 FG but with a long of just 31 and is back. He hit 5-7 in '19 with a long of 35. KJ Franklin had just 1.2 per PR last year and top KR Tevin Bush just 14.2 on KR's so this unit ranked low on the ST ratings and can only improve.

This year they have a brand new Indoor Athletic complex and played 12 true frosh last year who normally would not have played but had to for depth reasons. That should improve this years' depth. Nicholls has 11 starters back on Offense and 9 on Defense with 3 ST starters back. Tim Rebowe is 38-30 in his 6 years and have the most continuity of any coaching staff with his OC and DC both back for their 7<sup>th</sup> years. Nicholls got 4 first place in the media poll and was a close 2<sup>nd</sup> pick in the preseason media poll. They do open with Memphis and Louisiana. They do get a home and home with the preseason favorite Southeastern and also play Incarnate Word and HBU twice each this year. Nicholls won the Southland with a 7-2 record in 2019 in the last full regular season of conference play and are clearly one of the favorites this year!