

ELON 2019 PREVIEW

After a 2-9 finish in 2016, the Phoenix's 6th straight losing season, they hired HC Curt Cigetti. They started 2017, 8-1 and despite losing their final 2 regular season games to #16 New Hampshire & #1 James Madison, they made the playoffs. In a back and forth game against #22 Furman, they looked to have tied the game early 4Q but the extra point was blocked and they lost 28-27.

Last year Elon started the season ranked #12 but opened with an expected loss USF (trailed 31-0). Then they got revenge for their playoff loss, destroying #21 Furman 45-7. Their game vs William & Mary was canceled due to threat of a Hurricane. They trailed Charleston Southern 22-10 in the 3Q before scoring 21 unanswered to win 31-22. They only led New Hampshire 14-9 late 2Q but scored the final 16 to win by 21. Elon led #2 James Madison 10-9 with 7 min left 3Q. The lead changed hand 4 times, with Elon scoring the GW TD with 1:17 left. Off that Huge win they were ranked #5 but allowed Delaware 14 unanswered in the 4Q and lost 28-16. They never trailed vs Richmond but the game was tied 3 times including 21-21 before Elon pulled away for a 38-28 win. They almost fell apart again after leading Rhode Island 21-7 at HT as they kicked a game winning 19 yd FG with 2:41 left in a 24-21 win. For a 2ns straight year they lost their final 2 regular ssn games to ranked foes. They never led in a 41-10 loss to #20 Towson, allowing the final 20 pts. Against #16 Maine, which was playing for the CAA Title, they trailed 27-13 late 3Q and their comeback came up just short, losing 27-26. Ranked #17, they made their 2nd straight playoffs and lwd #12 Wofford 7-6 at HT but were outscored 13-0 in 2H. They finished ranked #19 but were just 6-5. Unfortunately for the Phoenix, HC Cigetti jump on the coaching carousel, replacing James Madison HC, Mike Houston, who left to take the HC job at East Carolina.

Two year DC Tony Trisciani was promoted to HC after Cigetti's departure. OC Drew Folmer returns for his third season. The new DC is Billy Crocker, who was the DC at UConn the last 2 yrs and previously was the DC at Villanova from '12-'16. The new STC/RB cch is Tony Lucas who was RB cch at Temple '17-'18 and at Delaware from '13-'16.

The offense gets back 6 starters to the CAA's #8 scoring (24.4 ppg) & #4 total offense (374 ypg). They lose backup QB Daniel Thompson (459, 50.7%, 1-2) who made 1 start in the season finale. They return starting QB Davis Cheek (6 st, 1018, 65.8%, 4-2) and backup QB Jalen Greene (4 st, 436, 41.1%, 2-0), who was their #4 rusher (256, 4.0, 5 td). Elon loses 3rd tm CAA RB Malcolm Summers, who was the #2 rusher (591, 6.1) despite being OFY with injury after starting the F/5 last year. They return 3 of their top 4 RB led by CAA OROY Jaylan Thomas (761, 6.6, 4 td) & De'Sean McNair (377, 3.7, 6 td). The receiving corps only loses 1 of their top 8 receivers in WR Corey Joyner (320, 15.2), who led the team with 2 of their 7 receiving TD's. They get back their top 2 in WR Cole Taylor (524, 16.9) & WR Kortez Weeks (484, 13.4). The OLine takes some huge losses as they lose three 11 gm starters in AA RT Olisaemeka Udoh, 1st tm CAA LT CJ Toogood & C Alex Higgins. They return RG Matt Kowalski (11 st), LG Chad Nelson (10 st) & backup LT Cooper Cromer (1 st). Losing all 3 offensive all-CAA players, including 2 from the OLine that paved the way for 4.6 ypc, may have them struggling some early, but in the 3rd year of the system they should put up similar numbers.

The defense returns 6 starters to the CAA's #7 scoring (23.6 ppg) & #7 total defense. They return their top 5 DL including all 3 starters led by 3rd tm CAA DE Marcus Willoughby (11 st, 58 tkl, 2.5 sk, 4 tfl) & DE Jordan Dollerson (33 tkl, 3.5 tfl). They lose their top 2 LB in 1st tm CAA MLB Warren Messar (11 st, 93 tkl, 4 sk, 7 tfl) & 3rd tm CAA WLB Matt Baker (11 st, 50 tkl, 7.5 sk, 4.5 tfl). They return 6 of their top 8 including 3 that combined for 11 sts led by SLB Zack Monson (5 st, 45 tkl, 3.5 sk, 1.5) & Jarquez Bizzell (31 tkl, 1.5 tfl). The secondary loses 4 of their top 7 DB, who combined 33 sts, 160 tkl, 11 int & 18 pbu including 2nd tm CAA CB Greg Liggs (65 tkl, 4 int, 9 pbu) & 3rd tm CAA FS Tyler Campbell (33 tkl, 2 int, 4 pbu). They return 2 of their top 3 DB in BAN Cole Coleman (62 tkl, 2 tfl) and CB Daniel Reid-Benneett (55 tkl, 8 pd). While they lose 3 of their top 6 tacklers including their top 2, they return 16 of their top 21 giving them depth but the loss of 4 of their 5 all-CAA players could have them taking a step back this year.

The Special Teams return all their top players including P Hunter Stephenson (40.0 avg), K/KO Skylar Davis (17-22 FG, 2 TB/17 KO) and K/O Christian VanSickle (5 TB/41 KO).

While they avoid Stony Brook & Villanova in conf play 3 of their CAA home games are vs JMU, Delaware & Maine. Despite returning 6 starters on both sides of the ball, the loss of their HC and 7 of their 8 all-CAA players could make it tough for Elon to make their 3rd straight playoff appearance.