

IDAHO ST 2019 PREVIEW

After going 8-4 in 2014, just their 3rd winning season since 2002, the Bengals took a step back with back-to-back 2-9 seasons the next 2 yrs. Two yr WR cch Rob Phenicie was promoted to HC in 2017. He led them to a 4-7 season including their first win over an FBS foe (27 gms), when they beat Nevada 30-28.

Last year they breezed by Western St 45-10 in the opener (led 31-3 HT). They trailed Cal 28-3 at HT but only lost 45-23. They trailed North Dakota 21-19 at HT but scored the only pts of the 2H, on a 67 yd TD pass w/7:42 left. Thanks to 28 pts in the 2Q they led Northern Arizona 35-14 HT & 56-28 4Q holding on for a 56-42 win. In ISU's first win over Idaho since 1995, QB Tanner Gueller had a career high 492 yds pass & set an ISU gm record with 8 pass td in a 62-28 win. They were 3-0 in conf play for the first time since 1981. They led UC Davis 37-22 4Q but allowed a game tying TD & 2 pt conv w/1:09 left & lost 44-37 in OT. They never trailed Liberty by more than 10 coming up short 48-41. They led Montana St 24-7 into the 4Q & held on for a 24-17 win. In a game that featured 4 ties, the last at 38-38, ISU pulled out a 48-45 win to guarantee a winning season. The Bengals were -4 TO's & allowed 17 unanswered pts in the 4Q falling to Cal Poly 37-14. They trailed Weber St 16-0 at HT & lost 26-13 to finish 6-5.

The Bengals return 15 starters in Rob Phenicie's 3rd season as HC (5th overall). They return 2nd yr DC Roger Cooper, who is in his 8th ssn at ISU. Also back is 2nd yr OC Mike Ferriter, who was the WR cch here from '12-'13. They also return 5th yr RB cch David Fiefia, who takes over as STC.

The Bengals return 8 starters from the Big Sky's #3 Scoring (35.3 ppg) & #2 Total Offense (495 ypg). They need to replace 2nd tm BSC QB Tanner Gueller, who departs as ISU's #1 career leader with 74 td passes & #2 all-time passer (9061 yds). Last year he threw for 3,101 (56.8%, 27-10) & was the #3 rusher with 370 (3.2, 3 td). Their only "experienced" QB is former Idaho transfer Gunner Amos (3-5-58-0-0, 35 rush). They lose 2nd tm BSCV RB James Madison (7 st), who led with 974 (5.0, 11 td, 118 rec) & #4 rusher, Oregon St transfer RB Kieran Yancy (64, 4.0). They return #2 rusher, RB Ty Flanagan (803, 6.1, 8 td) but the only other returning RB with Div I experience is Nehemiah McFarlin, who rushed for 156 (5.4, 1 td, 29 rec) in 2017 but missed all of 2018 with injury. They return 8 of their top 9 receivers including their top 3 in 1st tm BSC WR Mitch Gueller (11 at, 1259, 20.3, 9 td), 2nd tm BSC WR Michael Dean (11 st, 863, 17.6, 10 td) & WR Demonte Horton (301, 15.8, 2 td) along with top TE Austin Campbell (11 st, 131, 9.4, 5 td). The OLine loses 2 starters who combined for 11 sts including 1st tm BSC OT Brian Fineanganofu. They return 4 OL who started all 11 last year including 3 yr starting C Dallen Collins. The offense is solid except at QB. How well the new QB does will determine how well this experienced unit will do, but the support is there to help an inexperienced QB to succeed.

Idaho St returns 7 starters to the Big Sky's #7 Scoring (33.0 ppg) & #9 Total Defense (451 ypg). The DLine loses 1 starter in DT Treven Aloia (11 st, 24 tkl, 2 tfl). They return 3 DL who combined for 22 sts led by DE Kainoa Fuiava (6 st, 50 tkl, 5.5 tfl) & DE TJ Togiai (11 st, 44 tkl, 5 tfl). They lose 3 LB's who combined for 30 sts, 207 tkl & 10.5 tfl led by 3rd tm BSC LB Paea Moala (70 tkl, 4.5 tfl) & Christian Holland (101 tkl, 3.5 tfl). They return 3 LB who combined for 14 sts, 162 tkl & 5 tfl led by 3rd tm BSC LB Kody Graves (6 st, 83 tkl, 1.5 tfl, 2 int) & LB Oshea Trujillo (4 st, 47 tkl, 2.5 tfl). The secondary loses CB Koby Lowe (3 st, 35 tkl, 7 pd) & 2 bkp's (25 tkl, 1 pbu). They return 4 who combined for 41 sts in FS Adkin Aguirre (77 tkl, 3 int, 6 pbu), SS Christian McFarland (75 tkl, 7 pd), CB Anthony Ricks (35 tkl, 5 pbu) & CB Caleb Brown (21 tkl, 2 sk, 3 int, 6 pbu). Overall the defense returns 13 of their top 18 tkl'rs including 6 of their top but do have some holes to fill especially at LB. They will be in the 2nd yr of DC Cooper's systems and could actually improve.

The Special Teams loses K Campbell Sheidow (12-18 FG, L/44) & top returnman Kieran Yancy (8.2 PR, 18.5 KR). They return P Kevin Ryan who had a 39.9 avg.

Their non-conference schedule is tough as they must travel to Northern Iowa & FBS foes Utah & BYU. UC Davis, Montana St & Northern Arizona drop off their schedule but they are replaced by Eastern Washington, Montana & Southern Utah. How well they do in their final 3 games (EWU, BYU & Weber St), will likely determine if they have a 2nd straight winning season.