

Lamar 2019 Preview

Lamar first joined the Southland Conference in 1963, but left in 1986 and the Cardinal football team was dormant for 20 years. Since their return in 2010, Lamar only recorded 1 season with more than 5 wins. Last year Lamar was off a 2-9 season, and 2nd-year HC Mike Schultz was looking to right the ship. However, the Cardinals began last season with a 1-4 record before LU turned their season around by winning 6 straight games, including wins over #14 Sam Houston State and SLC co-champion Incarnate Word, which earned them a spot in the playoffs for the first time in school history. LU traveled to Northern Iowa and barely lost (16-13) to the Panthers, and finished their season 7-5.

Lamar's offense in 2017 was a slight improvement from the previous year, as they averaged 374 ypg and 22 ppg. Six starters returned last season and the offense took another step forward. LU averaged their highest offensive totals since 2015, as they gained 431 ypg and scored 31 ppg. This season 8 starters return, but LU will be without starting dual-threat QB Darrel Colbert (9 starts, 1611, 52.7%, 14-8) who also was the #3 rusher (597, 3.8, 10 TD). The Cardinals will return another dual-threat QB Jordan Hoy, who started 3 games and threw for 654 yards (59.7%, 6-2) while running for 516 yards (6.4, 7 TD). Transfer QB Will McBride (PS#14, orig Tennessee) joins the Cardinals as well. The LU run game returned their top 2 RB's and saw improvement in the run game last year. Myles Wanza led again with 683 yards (6.2) while JC transfer A.J. Walker was #2 with 623 yards (4.3). This RB tandem returns in '19 and should put up even better numbers as long as they are healthy.

Last season LU returned their top 5 receivers, but ran the ball over 2 times as much as they passed the football (615 runs, 273 passes), and Jawun Ruffin (6 starts) led with just 322 yards. This season 3 of the top 4 receivers are gone as Ruffin, Isaiah Howard (6 starts, 276) and Dorian Gaston (6 starts, 239) all depart. The leading receivers returning for LU this season are TE Case Robinson (8 starts, 269, 5 TD) and Kirkland Banks (9 starts, 231) and LU adds Camorni Green (PS#106) a transfer from Illinois. The Cardinals OL had to replace 3 starters going into last season, and despite that, LU's OL paved the way for 242 yards (#13 FCS). However, the OL did allow 28 sacks (10.3%) again despite LU throwing the ball 119 fewer times. This unit returns 4 starters, but loses the SLC OL of the Year in RG Garrett Bowery. Kicker Elvin Martinez returns after hitting 8-13 FG's (L/48) last season.

LU entered the 2018 season having allowed over 400 ypg and 30 ppg for the past 3 years. Last season the ypg improved a bit to 442, and the ppg allowed dropped to under 30 (28 ppg) for the first time since 2010. The Cardinals defense improved tremendously against the run, giving up 148 rush ypg (4.4) last season after surrendering 254 (5.5) rush ypg in '17. That stout DL, which recorded 26 sacks (up from 14 in '17), returns three 12 game starters in 2nd Team SLC DE Daniel Crosley (#5 tackler, 9 sacks, 5 TFL) as well as DT's Reggie Boseman (#8 tackler, 2 TFL) and James Jeffery (12 starts, 6 TFL). The Cardinals play a 4-2-5 scheme, and will lose their MLB Chaston Brooks (12 starts, #4 tackler, 7 PBU), but return SLB Isaiah Spencer (9 starts, #6 tackler, 8 TFL).

Lamar's pass defense allowed a completion rate of 56% or less 5 straight seasons from '13-'17 and last year LU returned 6 of their top 8 DB's. However, the LU pass defense allowed 354 ypg through the first 8 games, but improved that mark to 179 pass ypg the last 4 games. For the year they allowed 294 ypg, which was #121. Safeties Davon Jernigan (8 starts, 11 PBU, 4 INT, 3rd Team All-American) and Lane Taylor (12 starts, 4 PBU) were the #1 and #2 tacklers while CB Rodney Randle (12 starts, #3 tackler) led the team in PBU's (12) and rover Garrison Mitchell (10 starts, #7 tackler) tied for the team lead in INT's (4). All 4 of those players along with CB Tyler Rios (8 starts, #15 tackler, 4 PBU) depart this season, leaving no returning starters back in the secondary. Darius Guillory (2 starts, 10 tackles, 1 PBU) is the only player back who started at all in '18 and this pass defense is definitely a concern. LU will have to find a new P as Tyler Slaydon (41.1 avg) moves on.

The Cardinals open the season against an NAIA school (Bethel) and Mississippi Valley State (9 wins the last 6 seasons) before playing at Texas A&M. Lamar does not play defending SLC champion Nicholls, but will face

Sam Houston State and rival McNeese on the road. The defense is a concern with just 4 starters returning, but if that unit can come together the offense should be good again with 8 starters back. Playoffs are not out of the question for Lamar in 2019.