

## LEHIGH 2019 PREVIEW

Lehigh went to the playoffs in B2B seasons in '16 and '17 under HC Andy Coen. In '17 the Mountain Hawks lost their first 5 games, thanks in part to a -8 TO ratio and they were only -17 ypg. They won 5 of their next 6 and took the Patriot League Title before losing in the playoffs to finish 5-7. Lehigh finished -11 ypg but +84 ypg in Patriot League play. 14 starters were back last year so they were the favorites to win another Patriot League Title. After starting 1-0, they lost 7 straight, getting severely outgained in all but one of the losses. Lehigh won 2 of the last 3 and finished 3-8 and let go of HC Coen. This year Tom Gilmore takes over. Gilmore spent 14 years as HC at Holy Cross and was 2x Patriot Coach of the year. He was an asst at Wake Forest LY.

Lehigh had the most explosive offense in the Patriot League from '15-'17. They averaged 36 ppg and 465 ypg over a 3 year period. Last year the Mountain Hawks brought back 6 starters on offense including Patriot League POY Brad Mayes (3886, 64%, 31-12) and 1st Tm Patriot RB Dom Bragalone (1388, 5.6). They had the pieces in place for another dominant offense. It was beyond baffling that they plummeted to 16.6 ppg and 302 ypg, only once topping 400 yards, which they did so 10 times in '17. Mayes struggles were the biggest issue. He threw for just 2,083 and. His completion % dropped to just 51.5% (10-13). Backup Tyler Monaco threw for 74 yards (46.7%, 1-0). Mayes departs but his poor performance last year mitigates the loss. Addison Shoup and Alec Beesmer are also in the mix. Bragalone rushed for 757 last year and saw his ypc drop to by over 2 ypc to 3.5. Rashawn Allen was #2 with 328 (4.8). Bragalone departs but Allen's ypc was much better last year so this could be an improvement. In 2017 Lehigh's top 3 WR's combined for 2,875. Their top 2 departed last year. Jorge Portorreal led with 794 (14.4). Devon Bibbens was #2 with 576 (17.5). Luke Christiano was #3 with just 276 (10.6). The Mountain Hawks top 3 combined for just 1,646. This year they lose 3 of their top 6 but their top 2 are back incl 1st Tm All-Patriot Portorreal. Gone are Christiano, Raymond Falcone (1 st, 150, 11.5) and Sasha Kelsey (1 st, 135, 8.4) as well as TE Dan Scassera (9 st, 1 rec). Lehigh returned 2 starters on their Oline last year and fell to 105.9 rush ypg (3.1, 22 sk). This year all 5 starters return so this will be the strength of the offense.

Lehigh's defense struggled mightily in '17, allowing 500+ yards on 6 occasions and they gave up 41 ppg and 478 ypg (32 ppg and 408 ypg in conf). Last year they had similar struggled (allowed 500+ on 4 occasions) but did improve to 35 ppg and 446 ypg (32 ppg, 390 ypg in conf). In '17 Lehigh was gashed for 247 (6.7) ypg but they did fair better in conference action, allowing 186 (5.6). Last year they improved despite losing 3 of their top 5, allowing 226 (5.2, 15 sk) and 187 (4.2) in Patriot League play. Gone this year are 2 starters, DT Harrison Kauffman (#10 tkl'r) and DT Julian Lynn (#14 tkl'r). They return their #11, #12 and #18 tkl'rs. 3 of their top 5 are back. Last year Lehigh's entire LB unit returned. The unit made up 5 of their top 9 tacklers. This year 5 of the top 6 return incl 3rd Tm All-Patriot Keith Woetzel (#1 tkl'r, 6.5 tfl), Jon Seighman (#5 tkl'r) and Pete Haffner (#6 tkl'r). Divine Buckrham (#9 tkl'r) also returns at Rover but could move to CB where he started 2 games LY. Gone are Mark Walker (6 st, #7 tkl'r, 5 tfl) and ROV Jaylen Floyd (15 tkl). 7 of the top 9 DB's returned last year. They improved from 231 pass ypg to 220 and compl % went from 60% to 52% (11-13) but still finished 6th in the Patriot in pass eff D. This year they get 3 starters back and they will have experience at all 4 spots if Divine Buckrham moves to CB to replace departed CB Donavon Harris (#4 tkl'r, 6 pbu, 2 int).

Last year Lehigh returned both their K and P. Ed Mish once again handled both P and K duties. He improved to 41.4 avg (35.8 net) made 6-7 fg but his long was just 27 yards! This year Mish departs.

15 starters return this year. Lehigh's fall from an offensive juggernaut seemed to happen overnight. They should have a strong run game with 4 Oline back and the defense should continue to improve under a more defensive minded HC and they've got 8 starters back. Their schedule lightens up considerably (no FBS opponent) and they get both Holy Cross and Georgetown at home and travel to Colgate. Expect them to improve their win total and get back in contention for a Patriot League Title.