

NEW HAMPSHIRE 2019 PREVIEW

In 2014 the Wildcats went 8-0 in CAA play and finished 12-2 falling 21-18 to Illinois St in the FCS semi-finals. In 2015 they started 3-4 but won 4 straight to make the playoffs but lost in the 1st round to Colgate. In 2016 they easily won their 1st round playoff game but then lost to JMU 55-22. In 2017 UNH made their 14th straight playoffs (longest streak in FCS) & won their first 2 playoff games but then lost in the quarterfinals, 56-14 at South Dakota St.

Last year with 17 returning starters including QB Trevor Knight, and were expected to easily make their 15th straight playoffs. In the opener they lost to Maine for the first time since 2010. Knight was injured in the 2Q as the Wildcats trailed 29-0 into the 4Q & lost 35-7. Knight would miss the next 3 games. In a defensive struggle, they lost 10-3 to Colgate. They trailed Colorado 35-0 early 3Q and lost 45-14. They only trailed #11 Elon 14-9 in 2Q but trailed 24-9 at HT in a 30-9 loss. Knight returned vs Holy Cross & UNH led 28-0 into a scoreless 4Q. Thanks in part to 2 defensive TD's by the Seawolves, UNH trailed 21-0 2Q & lost 35-7. They only trailed #24 Delaware 10-7 2Q but trailed 31-7 into the 4Q. That 38-14 loss guaranteed a losing season & the end of their FCS longest playoff run, but UNH did not give up on the season. The Wildcats had a 75 yd TD run on the first play from scrimmage vs Villanova and never looked back on a 35-0 win. They shocked #3 JMU leading 14-0 1Q & 35-10 early 4Q and held on for a 35-24 win. They led Albany 17-3 into the 4Q & sealed the 24-10 win with an IR TD. With no hope at a winning season, they never led at Rhode Island but after trailing 17-0 got within 3 twice including 24-21 w/3:15 left but lost their 7th gm. It was the Wildcats first losing season since going 5-7 in 2003.

HC Sean McDonnell returns for his 21st season, he has more CAA wins (98) than any other active HC (3rd all-time). DC John Lyons returns for his 9th sn, and will be joined by 4th yr Run Gm Coor. Alex Miller & 2nd yr Pass Gm Coor Michael Ferzoco. They will have 14 returning starters to work with.

New Hampshire returns 7 starters to the CAA's #11 Scoring & #11 Total Offense. Unfortunately for them, one of those will not be QB Trevor Knight UNH's #6 all-time passer (6345 yds). Despite missing 3+ gms with injury Knight (8 st) threw for 1,074 (56.1%, 7-5, 84 rush, 4 td). They also lose Christian Lupoli, who started the 3 gms Knight missed throwing for 565 (50.5%, 2-2), who transferred in January. Their only QB with gm experience is former Iowa transfer QB Tommy Herion, who hit 25-53-284 (47.2%, 0-2) in limited play last year. They lose #3 RB Trevon Bryant (2 st, 198, 3.0) but return their top 2 in Carlos Washington (582, 5.9, 6 td) & Evan Gray (292, 3.4, 1 td). They must replace their top 2 receivers in 1st tm CAA WR Neil O'Conner (11 st, 814, 11.5, 3 td) & WR Kieran Presley (11 st, 437, 13.2, 2 td). Their top returning receiver is RB Washington (164, 9.6). The receiving unit's top returnees are WR Sean Coyne (9 st, 148, 7.0, 2 yd) & TE Justin Malone-Woods (6 st, 80, 8.9, 1 td). The OL loses 2 who combined for 10 sts LY. They return 7 who combined for 45 sts including C Patrick Flynn (11 st) & RT Noah Robinson (9 st). With the loss of their top 2 QB & top 2 WR's, the Wildcats offense may run more especially as they return 4 starting OL & their top 2 RB's.

The Wildcats return 7 starters to the CAA's #4 Scoring (22.8) & #2 Total Defense. The DLine loses two 11 gm starters in 2nd tm CAA DE Jae'Wue Horton (38 tkl, 3 sk, 5 tfl) & DT Ryan Sosnak (33 tkl, 3 sk, 2 tfl) along with DE Kyle Reiser (3 st, 15 tkl, 3 sk). They return 2 starters in DT Elijah Lewis (11 st, 34 tkl, 5 tfl) & DE Brian Carter (8 st, 22 tkl, 5 sk, 1 tfl). They must replace LB Jared Kuehl (10 st, 48 tkl, 4 sk, 4.5 tfl). They return 2nd tm CAA LB Quinlen Dean (11 st, 79 tkl, 6 sk, 8 tfl) & bkp LB Michael Balsamo (1 st, 35 tkl, 5 tfl). The secondary loses starting SS Rick Ellerson (11 st, 61 tkl, 5.5 tkl, 3 int, 5 pbu) & bkp CB Alonzo Addae (3 st, 25 tkl, 4 pbu). They return 4 of their 5 starters in 2nd tm CAA FS Pop Lacey (11 st, 79 tkl, 2 int, 5 pbu), WS Evan Horn (11 st, 57 tkl, 3 tfl, 4 int, 5 pbu), CB Prince Smith (8 st, 37 tkl, 2 int, 8 pbu) & CB Isaiah Perkins (11 st, 29 tkl, 7 pbu). The defense loses 4 of their top 10 tkl's but returns 8 of their top 12 & 2 of their 3 all-CAA players. This should again be one of the CAA's better defenses once again.

The Special Teams return all their top players including 3rd tm CAA P Drew Sanborn (40.2 avg), K Jason Hughes (5/8 FG, L/41) and their top returnmen.

With 14 starters back the Wildcats have a solid base to build on and both their run game & defense should be strong. Who takes over at QB & how well they do may be the deciding factor in if UNH can return to the playoffs. While they do not play a P5 team in non-conf play they must travel to FIU & Holy Cross & Duquesne will not be push overs. Their CAA schedule is one of the toughest as they host Elon & Maine & must travel to Stony Brook, Delaware & James Madison. While that does not bode well for a return to the playoffs, they had some tough schedules the 14 straight years they did.