

RHODE ISLAND 2019 PREVIEW

While the Rams doubled their 2015 win total in 2016, that only meant going from 1 win to 2. In fact, they had not had a winning season since going 8-3 in 2001. In 2017 they won 2 of their final 4 games to finish 3-8 their best record since going 3-8 in 2011.

Hopes were high for Rhode Island last year and the season could not have started much better. They held on to win their opener over #15 Delaware, then the Blue Hen's 4Q 2 pt conversion failed. They led Albany 31-7 at HT and 45-7 into the 4Q before allowing 19 meaningless pts. They were ranked for the first time since 2005 (started 3-0). While they never led FBS foe Connecticut, they tied the game at 42 & 49 before allowing a GW td with :57 left. They only trailed once (3-2) vs Harvard & led 23-6 in 3Q before allowing final 10 pts. They shut out Brown 48-0 (27-0 HT). at 4-1, they were not just thinking winning season but possibly a playoff berth. They were ranked #16, when they hosted #20 Maine. They led most of the game but the lead changed 3 times in the final 2:28 including when Maine hit a final play GW 54 yd FG, as URI lost 38-36. They were still #22 when they trailed #18 Stony Brook 24-0 2Q & lost 52-14. After trailing William & Mary 7-0, the Rams took a 14-7 HT lead and won 21-10. Against #8 Elon they got withing 24-21 with 1:12 left but could not recover the onside kick. They trailed #9 James Madison 27-14 at HT but got withing 10, three times in 2H but lost by 17. At 5-5 they hosted New Hampshire (a team they had not beat since 2010), with a winning season on the line. They led 17-0 3Q but just 17-14 early 4Q but held on for a 24-21 win. While they playoff dream ended, their first winning season in 17 years, was a huge achievement.

HC Jim Fleming, OC Will Fleming & DC Pete Rekstis all return for their 6th season at Rhode Island. They have 13 returning starters to work with, trying for a 2nd straight winning season.

The offense returns 6 starters to the CAA's #3 Scoring (30.3 ppg) and #7 Total offense (352 ypg). They lose 2nd tm CAA QB JaJuan Lawson (7 st), who threw for 1,711 (66.7%, 17-5) & was the #3 rusher (172, 2.3, 5 td), despite missing 4 games. They return QB Vito Priore (781, 54.6%, 7-4), who started the 4 gms Lawson missed. The Rams return 8 of their top 9 rushers including their top 2 in RB Zoe Bryant (6 st, 456, 4.0, 101 rec) and RB Naim Jones (4 st, 435, 4.4). They lose 3 of their top 6 receivers who combined for 660 yds including WR Marven Beauvais (2 st, 336, 10.8, 7 td) & 2nd tm CAA TE Tyler Burke (11 st, 238, 15.9, 3 td). Their top 2 receivers return in 1st tm CAA WR Aaron Parker (955, 15.7, 10 td) & WR Isaiah Coulter (604, 14.4, 3 td). The OLine loses 3 OL, who started 8+ including Ball St transfer RT Kadin Booker (10 st) & C Dwayne Scott, a 3 yr starter, who went through spring before deciding to grad transfer to Boston College, to pursue his NFL dream. They return 4 OL who combined for 26 sts led by two 11 gm starters in 1st tm CAA LT Kyle Murphy & RG Kevin Lawrence. The unexpected loss of Scott over the summer, make Fall camp a little more hectic, but their is enough experience overall to keep the offense on track.

The defenses returns 7 starters from the CAA's #9 scoring (28.2 ppg) & #6 Total defense (345 ypg). The DLine loses 2 of their top 7 DL who combined for 5 sts, 31 tkl, 1 sk & 4.5 tfl. They return their top 5, who combined for 39 sts, 189 tkl, 19 sk & 12 tfl giving then a solid front. They are led by DE's LB Mack (10 st, ,52 tkl, 6 sk, 5 tfl) & Andre Bibeault (6 st, 40 tkl, 4.5 sk, 2 tfl). They lose two of three 11 gm LB starters in Justin Hogan (52 tkl, 2.5 tfl) & Nas Jones (3 sk, 4.5), who led with 78 tkl. While they return Brayan Javier-Castillo (78 tkl, 6.5 tfl, 2 int) their next 2 returning LB's combined for just 19 tkl. The secondary 3 of their top 8, who combined for 21 sts, 105 tkl, 3 int & 10 pbu including S DJ Stewart (8 st, 54 tkl, 3 int) & CB Zay Hill (5 st, 34 tkl, 6 pbu). They return 5 DB who combined for 22 sts, 131 tkl, 4 int & 7 pbu led by S Momodou Mbye (9 st, 41 tkl, 1 int). While they lose 4 of their top 10 tkl'rs including 3 of their top 4, the defense returns 11 of their top 15 giving them a solid amount of experience across the entire defense.

The ST Unit only needs to replace P Anthony Garro who avg'd just 31.8 ypg. They return K CJ Carrick (6-8 FG, L/40) and 2nd tm CAA RS Ahmere Dorsey (11.1 PR, 1 td, 28.4 KR, 2 td), who led the conference with 1,085 total return yds.

In non-conf Rhode island faces Ohio & Virginia Tech, while they face all the top teams in the CAA, including ending the season at Maine & hosting James Madison. While the Rams should again be very competitive their schedule may keep them from a 2nd straight winning season