

UC DAVIS 2019 PREVIEW

After back to back 2-9 seasons, the Aggies "improved" to 3-8 in '16. The Aggies came up just short of a winning season in '17, losing the finale 52-47 to finish 5-6 under 1st year HC Dan Hawkins.

Last year started with a bang, as the Aggies led San Jose St 37-21 early 3Q and held on for a 44-38 win over an FBS foe. They led San Diego 20-0 at HT but trailed 21-20 in the 3Q before scoring the final 34. They led Stanford 3-0 after 1Q but trailed 17-3 at HT & 30-3 4Q before a final play TD. The #21 Aggies gave the Vandals a rough welcome back to the Big Sky, leading 27-7 at HT & 44-7 into the 4Q. At #16, they never trailed Northern Colorado leading 49-10 early 4Q before allowing 26 unanswered. They were #14 when they trailed Idaho St 23-7 late 2Q & 37-22 4Q before sending the game to OT with a td & 2 pt conv w/1:09 left & won 44-37. At #10 they trailed 2-4 Cal Poly 10-0 into the 2Q, but led 31-10 at HT & won 52-10. The #6 Aggies trailed Montana 21-3 at HT but thanks in part to 3 straight MU TO's, scored 46 unanswered, for their first win ever over the Grizzlies. They finally started strong leading NAU 21-0 into the 2Q & cruised to a 42-20 win. They were ranked #4 & led #5 Eastern Washington 10-0 1Q but trailed 21-17 at HT & lost 59-20. Down to #9 they led Sacramento St 35-10 at HT & won the Causeway Classic 56-13. That victory gave them a share of their first ever Big Sky Title. After a first round bye, the #6 Aggies hosted UNI in their first ever FCS playoff game. After trailing 6-3 1Q, they led 16-6 at HT & held on for a 23-16 win. In a rematch with #3 EWU, the Aggies led 21-14 into the 4Q. After falling behind they scored a td & 2 pt conv w/1:13 left to take a 29-28 lead. They allowed a 35 yd td run w/:26 left & fumbled on a sack 2 plays later with :11. They set program records with 10 overall & 7 conference wins

The Aggies return 16 starters this year. The 2018 BSC COY Dan Hawkins, along with OC Tim Plough & DC Robert Tucker return for their 3rd seasons along with 6th yr STC Paul Creighton.

UC Davis returns 9 starters from the Big Sky's #2 Scoring (39.7 ppg) & #3 Total Offense (489 ypg). They return BSC OPOY QB Jake Maier (13 st), who led the BSC with 3,931 pass yds (65.4%) with an outstanding 34-10 ratio, along with both backup QB's (12-18-166-3-2). They lose their #3 & #4 RB's who combined for 322 (6.0, 3 td). They return their top 2 rushers in 3rd tm BSC RB Ulonzo Gilliam (976, 5.2, 13 td, 385 rec) & RB Tehran Thomas (686, 6.7, 6 td). The offenses biggest loss is 2x AA WR Keelan Doss, who led the FCS with 118 rec (13 st, 1334 yds, 11.3, 9 td, 82 rush). They return 9 of their top 10 receivers led by 3rd tm BSC WR Jared Harrell (13 st, 896, 14.5, 5 td) & 2nd tm BSC TE Wes Preece (337, 11.6, 9 td). The OLine loses LG Ramset Hufford (13 st). They return 6 OL who combined for the other 52 sts led by RT Kooper Richardson (13 st). While the loss of WR Doss will have effect, this is a solid, experienced offense and should once again be one of the best in the Big Sky Conference.

The Aggies return 7 starters to the Big Sky's #3 Scoring (27.4 ppg) & #7 Total Defense (432 ypg). The DLine must replace NT Terrell Cloud, who despite just 4 sts was the #2 DL with 40 tkl (6.5 tfl). They return 6 of their top 7, who combined for 35 sts led by NT Jordan Franklin (13 st, 41 tkl, 4.5 tfl), DE Roland Ocansey (12 st, 29 tkl, 4.5 tfl) & DE Brandon Jamison (7 st, 24 tkl, 7.0 tfl). The LB Unit loses 3 of their top 6 who combined for 26 sts, 182 tkl, 15.5 sk & 14.5 tfl including 2nd tm BSC LB Mason Moe, who led the Aggies with 83 tkl, 10.5 sk & 10 tfl, and LB Anthony Baumgart (56 tkl, 4 sk, 1 tfl). They return 4 LB who combined for just 26 sts & 178 tkl but just 6.5 sk & 8 tfl, led by Montell Bland (5 st, 78 tkl, 7.5 tfl) & Conner Aireyi (51 tkl, 4 sk, 2 tfl). The secondary loses two 13 gm starters in 2nd tm BSC S Vincent White (42 tkl, 2 int, 19 pbu) & 3rd tm CB Isiah Olave (66 tkl, 2 int, 7 pbu). They return 2 of their top 3 DB's in S Erron Duncan (13 st, 56 tkl, 6 pd) & CB Devon King (11 st, 49 tkl, 2 int, 9 pbu). While the defense has depth retuning 18 of their top 24 tkl's, they lose 6 of their top 11 including 3 of their top 4 and all 3 all-BSC players. The defense will need to do some rebuilding & could slip some this year.

The Special Teams Unit loses their top KR in Namane Modise (23.1 avg). They return P Daniel Whelan (41.1 avg), K Max O'Rourke (13-17 fg, L/45), KO Matt Blair (33 TB/88 KO) & top PR (5.0 avg).

While many teams suffer a letdown after a record setting season, especially as many times they lose their HC. The Aggies not only return BSC COY Hawkins, but enter the 3rd season in his systems, which is usually when a team makes a noticeable improvement. With 16 returning starters they seemed primed to keep the momentum going. Their non-conf schedule is not a pushover as they face both California & FCS Champion North Dakota St. Their Big Sky schedule is promising as they host 3 of their toughest foes in Montana, Weber St & Montana St and avoid an improving Idaho St & an Eastern Washington team that accounted for 2 of their 3 losses last year. They should make their 2nd straight playoffs, but how well they rebuild their defense will likely determine how far they can go.