YALE 2019 PREVIEW

Yale went from a disappointing 3-7 season (3-4 in Ivy) in '16 to 9-1 (6-1 in Ivy) in '17. The Bulldogs won their first Ivy League Title since 2006 and their first outright title since 1980 while they finished the season ranked #24. Last year Yale entered the season as the Media favorite despite just 7 returning starters. They held a +151 yd edge in their opener but lost to Holy Cross. They were 5-3 before suffering B2B losses to Princeton and Harvard to finish just 5-5 (3-4). Tony Reno is in his 8th season and has a career record of 38-32.

Yale had a pedestrian offense in '15 and '16, averaging 23.5 (390 ypg) and 20.3 ppg (303 ypg) respectively. The Bulldogs came out of nowhere in '17, putting up 34.5 ppg and 451 ypg. Only 5 starters returned last year but among the returnees were QB Kurt Rawlings who threw for 2,320 (67%, 19-6, 226 rush) in '17. They slipped to 29.5 ppg but ypg actually jumped to 480. Rawlings started the first 6, but was injured and barely played in the last 4. Jimmy Check got his first start vs Columbia and threw for 238 but it was Griffin O'Connor who started the last 3, and his 436 pass yds in his debut was just 2 yards shy of the school record. Rawlings led with 1,562 (67.4%, 9-3). O'Connor averaged 410 pass ypg in his 3 starts and threw for 1,229 on the season (58.4%, 8-6). Check threw for 346 (52.9%, 0-3). All 3 return, making this the most intriguing QB battle in the Ivy League and the top unit in the conference. In 2017 Zane Dudek became the first 1st frosh to ever lead the Ivy League in rushing while also setting Yale's frosh rushing record with 1,133 (7.1). Last year 3rd Tm AA Dudek returned, along with '16's leading rusher Alan Lamar (557, 4.3) who missed '17 with an injury. Dudek only played in 6 games due to injuries and slipped to just 380 (5.4). Lamar led with 685 (5.5). This year Dudek and 2nd Tm All-Ivy Lamar return again while they lose #3 rusher Spencer Alston (367 (4.8). If they stay healthy this is the top RB unit in the Ivy League. Yale had to replace 3 of their top 4 receivers last year. '16's top receiver, Reed Klubnick became the goto guy and led with 1,143 (15.7). JP Shohfi was #2 with 836 (15.2). TE JJ Howland was #3 with 326 (18.1). Not only do all 3 return, of Yale's 223 receptions last year, only 5 are gone! This is easily the Ivy League's top WR unit. Yale had 2 starters back from an Oline that paved the way for 217 (5.6) rush ypg in '17. They slipped to 163.9 (4.4, 21 sk) last year. All 5 Oline starters return incl 3 All-Ivy performers. LG Dieter Eiselen (1st Tm All-Ivy) leads the way and this will be yet another unit that is among the best in the Ivy.

In 2017 Yale allowed 372 ypg in their first 4, then held their last 6 foes to 257 ypg. They allowed 303 ypg on the season. Last year only 3 starters returned. They held their first 8 opponents to 23 ppg and 321 ypg but the wheels fell off in their last 2 games, allowing 104 points and 1,212 yds vs Princeton and Harvard. Overall they slipped from just 16 ppg to 28.5 ppg and 379 ypg. In '17 Yale allowed just 73 (2.4) rush ypg. LY they lost all 4 starters. Their rush defense allowed 812 ypg in their F/8 (101.5 ypg) but were gashed for 755 yds in their L/2 (378 ypg). Three starters are back this year and 8 have starting experience. Their only loss is DT Nicholas Crowle (10 st, 15 tkl, 4 tfl). Yale had to replace their top 2 LB's last year incl the Ivy's Def POY. Their top returning LB had just 16 tkls in '17. The Bulldogs return their whole LB unit this year incl their #1, #2, #4, #5, #12, #13 and #14 tkl'rs. Seven LB's have starting experience. Last year only returned 1 starter in their secondary. They allowed 222 ypg and were 7th in the Ivy League in pass eff D (53.5%, 17-3). This year all 4 starters return. The only loss is CB Marquise Peggs (5 st, 13 tkl). Five return that have starting experience. This should be Yale's most improved unit.

Last year Yale returned their 3rd Tm All-Ivy P Alex Galland and only had to replace their top PR. Galland avg 36.8 ypp (net 34.4). Galland also hit 7 of 10 fg's (L/42). Melvin Rouse avg 43.3 KR (3 att, 1 td). This year they must replace Galland. They get their top PR and KR back but need to find a new P/K.

Last year Yale finished 5-5 but was +101 ypg with an inexperienced team (7 ret starters). This year they get an amazing 21 starters back (11 on OFF, 10 on DEF). This is not only the most experienced team in the Ivy, but all of the FCS with 3 QB's with starting experience, their top 2 RB's, top 9 receivers, all 5 starting Oline, and their top 14 tacklers all back. They do travel to Princeton and Dartmouth while they host Harvard and Penn. They've already proven they can win the Ivy under Tony Reno. The Bulldogs are our favorite to win the Ivy League and could finish the year ranked in the top 25.