



The University of Pittsburgh (Panthers)

Last year's overview: Last year was a challenging season for Pitt, as the team managed to secure just three victories: one against an FCS opponent and two in ACC play. One of their ACC wins included a game against a then-ranked Louisville team, which also marked the season debut of former Panthers quarterback Christian Veilleux. The other ACC victory came against Boston College in the final home game of the season, where Nate Yarnell made his debut. The defense struggled last year, largely due to the loss of many seniors and the reliance on a young core of players. This inexperience was a significant factor in the unit's overall difficult season.

Offense overview: Pitt's offense cycled through three different quarterbacks last season. They started with Phil Jurkovec, a former Pine-Richland standout, who played the first five games before being benched. He finished the season completing 57 of 112 passes for 893 yards, six touchdowns, and three interceptions. Christian Veilleux took over next and initially performed well, leading the team to a win over a nationally ranked-Louisville. However, things quickly went downhill as the team lost four straight games, prompting head coach Pat Narduzzi to make another change at quarterback. Veilleux ended the year with 94 completions on 184 attempts for 1,179 yards, seven touchdowns, and eight interceptions. Nate Yarnell then stepped in earning a win in his first start against Boston College, then lost the season finally at Duke. Yarnell finished the season with 41 completions on 62 attempts for 595 yards, four touchdowns, and one interception.

Moving on to the running game, Pitt's rushing attack last year was mediocre, totaling 1,223 yards on the ground and averaging 3.4 yards per carry, which ranked as the 11th worst in the nation among FBS teams. The struggles in the run game were largely due to weak offensive line support and an ineffective passing game, which placed additional pressure on the running backs.

Looking to move on from last year's offensive struggles, Pitt made significant coaching changes, parting ways with offensive coordinator Frank Cignetti Jr. and several other offensive coaches. They brought in a young offensive coordinator, Kade Bell, who was previously the OC at Western Carolina. While he was there, he led the FCS in total offense, averaging 504.1 yards per game, and ranked third in passing offense with 321.1 yards per game, as well as fourth in scoring with 37.5 points per game. This marks a shift for Pitt, which has traditionally been known for a pro-style offense with a slower, under-center approach. Coach Bell's spread offense, which features a fast-paced, no-huddle style and a focus on airing the ball out, will bring a new dynamic to Pitt's playbook.