



JOHNS HOPKINS LOOKING TO HONOR LATE COACH IN 2019

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D3football.com

PRESEASON TOP 25

- 1 **Mary Hardin-Baylor** (15-0 in 2018)
- 2 **Mount Union** (14-1)
- 3 **Saint John's** (12-1)
- 4 **Wisconsin-Whitewater** (13-1)
- 5 **Johns Hopkins** (12-2)
- 6 **St. Thomas** (8-2)
- 7 **Hardin-Simmons** (9-2)
- 8 **North Central (Ill.)** (10-2)
- 9 **Wheaton** (8-2)
- 10 **Bethel** (11-2)
- 11 **Wesley** (7-4)
- 12 **Linfield** (7-2)
- 13 **Whitworth** (10-1)
- 14 **Muhlenberg** (11-2)
- 15 **Ithaca** (8-3)
- 16 **Illinois Wesleyan** (8-2)
- 17 **Alfred** (7-4)
- 18 **Wittenberg** (9-1)
- 19 **RPI** (10-2)
- 20 **Delaware Valley** (9-2)
- 21 **Centre** (10-2)
- 22 **Washington & Jefferson** (9-2)
- 23 **Trinity College** (8-1)
- 24 **Marietta** (7-3)
- 25 **Wisconsin-Oshkosh** (6-4)

ALL-AMERICA TEAM

OFFENSE

- QB** Jackson Erdmann 6-4, 215/Sr., Saint John's
- RB** Alex Peete 5-8, 195/Jr., Wisconsin-Whitewater
- RB** Josh Parks 5-10, 195/Sr., St. Thomas
- OL** Jonathan Castaneda 6-4, 280/Sr., H.-Simmons
- OL** Dan Greenheck 6-1, 255/Sr., Saint John's
- OL** Nick Bainter 5-9, 240/Sr., Springfield
- OL** Sharmore Clarke 6-0, 264/Jr., North Central
- OL** Brendan Klaus 6-3, 275/Sr., Mount Union
- TE** Ryan Curtiss 6-1, 236/Sr., Muhlenberg
- WR** Justin Hill 6-2, 195/Sr., Mount Union
- WR** Andrew Wolf 6-1, 185/Jr., Washington & Jeff.

DEFENSE

- DL** Frankie Feaster 6-2, 240/Sr., Muhlenberg
- DL** Joey Longoria 6-1, 275/Sr., Mary Hardin-Baylor
- DL** Conner Bogard 6-1, 255/Sr., John Carroll
- DL** Andrew Roesch 6-2, 220/Sr., Mount Union
- LB** Sam Romanski 6-2, 230/Sr., Wisc.-Eau Claire
- LB** Trey Williams 6-1, 255/Sr., Mount Union
- LB** Re'Shaun Myers 6-0, 231/Sr., Bridgewater
- DB** Daniel Shelton 5-11, 190/Sr., Susquehanna
- DB** Dedrick Strambler 6-3, 203/Sr., H.-Simmons
- DB** Jefferson Fritz 5-11, 185/Jr., Mary Hardin-Baylor
- DB** Cal Lewellyn 6-0, 173/Sr., Centre

SPECIALISTS

- K** Derik Judka 6-0, 184/So., North Central
- P** Michael Raczak 6-5, 210/Sr., Widener

Greg Chimera knew he wanted to lead a program someday. Perhaps, he joked, at Johns Hopkins "in 2029," when Jim Margraff, who became the Blue Jays' coach in 1990, decided to hang 'em up.

Then Margraff, less than a month after Johns Hopkins came up a touchdown shy at Mount Union in a national semifinal, passed away in his sleep at age 58.

"This is obviously not how I wanted to become a head coach," the 31-year-old former offensive coordinator says.

Chimera takes the reins in one of Division 3's most compelling situations, with a Gagliardi Trophy-caliber quarterback in David Tammaro and a roster that includes a handful of sophomores who contributed meaningfully in the 28-20 loss to Mount Union. Defensive back Nick Seidel, linebacker Robert Fletcher, defensive end Jake Vall-Llobera, tight end Emmett Turner and wide receiver Harrison Wellmann were all freshmen when the Blue Jays faced "The Machine" they call Mount Union in Alliance, Ohio. Plenty a player has wilted under the Purple Raiders' pressure, but JHU's youth delivered, and Chimera's Blue Jays have lots returning to work with this season.

Although they now know they belong on the field with the nation's best, there are no guarantees the Blue Jays will return to such heights. With 32 playoff spots and 27 automatic bids for conference winners at the D3 level in 2019, there's scant room for a midseason slip-up or close loss to a league rival.

"You're a couple plays away from playing in the national championship, which is true," Chimera says. "But you're also a couple of plays away from not making the playoffs. So to say we should automatically get back to the final four is ridiculous."

Coming off their best season and hoping to honor their coach of 29 years with a special finish, the Blue Jays have a most daunting challenge ahead.

TOP 25

Mary Hardin-Baylor has played in the past three Amos Alonzo Stagg Bowls, winning two, which leaves the Cru reigning atop D3's traditional powers. The national title game is again slated for Shenandoah, Texas, and UMHB's chance to win it all again without a postseason game outside the state starts under center. Quarterback Jase Hammack led the Cru to the 2018 title but is recovering from a shoulder injury, and former Mount Union QB Luke Poorman, who transferred to UMHB last spring, missed the postseason with a foot injury. Hammack should start the season with the job if he's healthy. Marquis Duncan, Olan Vining and Montana Miller will vie for carries in the Cru's attempt to replace standout Markeith Miller at running back.

Winning it all is the standard at **Mount Union**, so the Purple Raiders won't look back fondly at their one-score loss in the Stagg Bowl. Cornerback Gabe Brown, linebacker Trey Williams and defensive end Andrew Roesch are among a cast of familiar stars hoping to lead the 13-time champions back to the D3 apex. Quarterback D'Angelo Fulford has lit up the regular season and early playoff rounds but struggled in big games since leading a 25-point comeback in the national semifinals against Wisconsin-Oshkosh in 2017. He has a chance to graduate as a two-time champion, however, and will have wide receiver Justin Hill and running back Josh Petrucci back to help him on offense.

No team came closer to beating the national champions last season than **Saint John's (Minn.)**, which was a late end-zone interception away from beating Mary Hardin-Baylor in the quarterfinals. Gagliardi Trophy-winning QB Jackson Erdmann is back to lead the Johnnies through one of the most top-heavy leagues in the country, the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

Wisconsin-Whitewater was again a championship contender last season, bouncing back from a 7-3 finish in 2017. In 2019, the Warhawks return four of five starting offensive linemen, running

backs Alex Peete, Jarrod Ware and Ronny Ponick, plus wide receivers JT Parish and Ryan Wisniewski. If dual-threat QB Zach Oles adequately replaces strong-armed Cole Wilber, the offense should hum.

Johns Hopkins aims to win its 11th straight Centennial Conference title, but has Muhlenberg, Susquehanna and Franklin & Marshall standing in the way.

Saint John's and Bethel have the star quarterbacks returning, but **St. Thomas** could be a Stagg Bowl contender from the MIAC if a leader emerges from a four-way QB competition. Nine offensive starters are back to ease the transition, including tailback Josh Parks (8.4 yards per carry).

It's hard to tell what to make of **Hardin-Simmons**, which scored 522 points in nine wins last season and only six in eight quarters against Mary Hardin-Baylor. The Cowboys lost their quarterback and top playmaker but are capable of lighting up Texas scoreboards again, with Bryson Hammonds and Rae Millsap attacking defenses and Jonathan Castaneda around to anchor the O-line.

North Central (Ill.) often disappoints in its biggest games, but with quarterback Broc Rutter back for a fourth season as a starter, the Cardinals' sights should be set as high as ever. Wide receiver Andrew Kamienski provides a downfield target, guards Ricky Strba and Sharmore Clarke should hold down the offensive line and tackle Tommy Hyland and corner Jake Beesley should help carry the defense.

Wheaton scored points like crazy in 2018, including 52 in the "Little Brass Bell" rivalry-game win against North Central, but its offense vanished in road losses to Illinois Wesleyan and Washington (Mo.) University. All of those are Thunder home games in 2019, but the frontloaded schedule features four tests in the first month. Wheaton is stout on the D-line with Dallas McRae and Patrick O'Connell.

Bethel (Minn.) surged to 11 wins in 2018 after three straight 5-5 campaigns. The Royals had 12-win seasons in 2013, 2010 and 2007, but the best argument against the pattern of backsliding after a big year is QB Jaran Roste. The former Minnesota Golden Gopher ran for 1,023 yards and 20 touchdowns and passed for 1,800 and 11 more scores as a freshman.

With Frostburg State moving up to Division 2, the New Jersey Athletic Conference could be **Wesley's** to lose. The Wolverines might lean on running back E.J. Lee while they figure out the successor to quarterback Khaaliq Burroughs. But if it can fix the kicking game, along with keeping penalties down, some of 2018's close results could flip.

A 64th consecutive winning season should be no problem for **Linfield**, but the more pressing question is how to vault back atop the Northwest Conference. Coach Joe Smith turns over the offensive-coordinator reins to former Linfield quarterbacks Brett Elliott and Aaron Boehme, a significant development because his son, Wyatt Smith, is back for his third year as the starting QB. The Wildcats were stout defensively in '18 and return end Travis Swanson, linebacker Brian Pullman and safety Tyler Bergeron.

Was **Whitworth** a one-year wonder? Quarterback Leif Ericksen is back to prove the Pirates weren't, but with his go-to wide receiver and top running back gone, 6-3 senior wideouts Nick McGill and Taylor Hall will take on bigger roles. The defense should be rugged, led by linebackers Kale Wong, Jaylen Gonzales and Iain Black.

Muhlenberg is capable of dethroning Johns Hopkins in the Centennial Conference and making another deep NCAA playoff run. Defensive lineman Frankie Feaster feasted last season, with 29.0 tackles for loss and 17.5 sacks, including four in a second-round playoff win. Linebackers Mickey Kober, Spencer Kirin and Kwasi Ampomah will have his back. The offense is loaded as well, led by quarterback Michael Hnatkowsky.

Quarterback Wahid Nabi returns to lead **Ithaca**, which fell a two-point-conversion attempt short of a playoff spot against Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in 2018. The Bombers' defense held the first nine opponents to 14 points or fewer last season. With all but three of the top 13 tacklers from that unit graduated, third-year coach Dan Swanstrom's offense will have to pull its weight.

There likely won't be room in the national playoffs for three teams from the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin, and **Illinois Wesleyan** has road tests right out of the gate—at Wisconsin-La Crosse and Wheaton—so we'll find out quickly where the Titans stand. Quarterback Brandon Bauer gives IWU a shot in any game and his favorite target returns in 6-5 wideout Jack Healy.

With no Joe Germinerio at quarterback and a gutted defense at Brockport, the door is open for **Alfred** running back Nas Smith and defensive back Raeqwon Greer to lead the Saxons back to the top of the Empire 8 Conference.

Wittenberg's playoff hopes usually ride on the Wabash game, but in 2018 an overtime loss to the Little Giants allowed Denison to win a three-way tie for the North Coast Athletic Conference's

automatic bid. To retake the crown in 2019, the Tigers have to replace the latest in a line of star quarterbacks, Jake Kennedy, perhaps with Bobby Froehlich.

RPI is coming off a 10-win season and has quarterback George Marinopoulos again in the fold, but his top five receivers and the leading ballcarrier graduated. Linebackers John Sadak and Jack Fallon are back to lead the defense, though.

Michael Nobile will try to top his 15.5-sack freshman season for **Delaware Valley**, while brother Anthony (5.5 sacks) will join him along the defensive line. The Aggies have linebacker Anthony Tedesco and a handful of skill-position players returning from a team that won nine games in a supposed rebuilding year.

Cornerback Cal Lewellyn and linebacker Jaylen Jones return to lead **Centre's** defense. Quarterback John Walton was in seven games last year and should replace graduated Tanner Young.

Coach Mike Sirianni's **Washington & Jefferson** teams have always been known for prolific passing. Quarterback Jacob Adams and wide receiver Andrew Wolf connected for 21 TDs last season, so that reputation should remain intact. Jeffrey Oxner and Mike Williams combined for 31.5 tackles for loss in 2018 and are back to anchor the defensive line.

Because the New England Small College Athletic Conference doesn't accept a playoff bid, its champion is often forgotten in the larger D3 picture. But **Trinity (Conn.)**, which returns a bit more than NESCAC rivals Amherst and Tufts, will make a run at 9-0 behind QB Jordan Vazzano and top receivers Jonathan Girard and Koby Schofer. Linebacker Dan Negron is back to lead the defense.

With standout quarterback Anthony Moeglin electing not to return to John Carroll and Baldwin Wallace graduating its signal-caller, Jake Hudson, **Marietta** might ascend to the No. 2 spot in the Ohio Athletic Conference behind Mount Union. The Pioneers played in five games decided by four points or fewer in 2018, but 1,446-yard tailback Tanner Clark returns to help tilt those contests in Marietta's direction.

A perennial Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference power such as **Wisconsin-Oshkosh** wasn't the second-best team in the state last season—it was St. Norbert. The Titans, although three seasons removed from their Stagg Bowl appearance, should bounce back since they've settled on quarterback Kyle Radavich, who has strong weapons in tailback Mitch Gerhartz and receivers Riley Kallas and Mitchell Gerend.