



NORTH ATLANTIC

*NCFA Conference
Preview*



Clarkson University had a solid showing for their inaugural NCFA season in 2017, respectably finishing behind NCFA powers ECSU and Sacred Heart. They will lean on returning RB Taylor Richardson offensively and hope their defense can come together and compete in the hard nosed NAC. If they can secure some more explosive plays they should be able to make the NAC more than a 2 pony race



Clarkson University
Potsdam, NY

Head Coach – Rick Delaney
Assistants – Ray Holz, Todd Sharlow
2017 record – 2-3

Conference Finish – 3rd
Final National Ranking – 11th

Returning Players – 25
Returning Starters – 15

Players to Watch – Taylor Richardson, Demetri Cummings, Ethan Gray, Will Miles, Alex Grimes, Chris Blount, Carson Gotham

Eastern Connecticut once again enters the NCFA season as heavy playoff contenders. After a NCFA playoff appearance in 2016, they lost close contests to Sacred Heart which kept them out of the 2017 playoffs. The Warriors return workhorse RB Ivan Mangual, a 2 time NCFA All-American. They will base their offense around his tough running style, looking to grind out victories with their ball control offense. Connor Hill anchors the offensive line that returns all five starters that will help that offensive style. The Warriors notoriously stingy defense will need to replace numerous starters, but they believe those few defensive returners can hold things down until the newcomers get caught up to speed. ECSU will once again have the Sacred Heart game circled as the winner of that regular season game will be in the drivers seat for the NAC title and an NCFA playoff berth.



**Eastern Connecticut State University
Willimantic, CT**

**Head Coach – Coach Doughty
2017 record – 4-2**

Final Conference Ranking – 2nd

Final National Ranking – 9th

Returning Players – 24

Returning Starters - 14

Players to Watch – Ivan Mangual, Connor Hill, Nicholas Ferraci, Bryson Fountain, Chris Casseus, Jon Doty, Chris Mink

Johnson & Wales enters their first NCFA season this fall. As with most new programs they are unknowns, but as history as show, it's not out of the realm for a first year team to come out strong out of the gate, as Fort Lauderdale showed yet again last fall. The Wildcats are hoping to compete with the NAC top tier by minimizing mistakes and playing sound football. Using this 2018 season as a growth step for future success

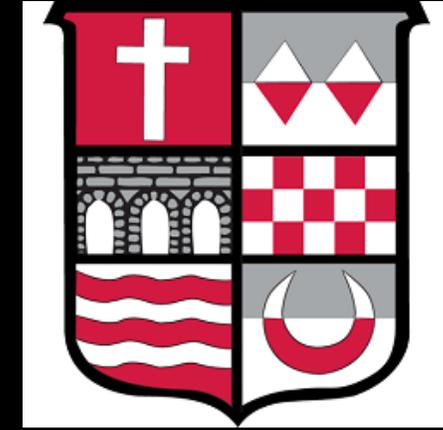


**Johnson & Wales University
Providence, RI**

**Head Coach – Ian O'Malley
Assistants – Richard Stanley, Derek Mott, Edwyn
Johnson**

**Players to Watch – Nick Buggy, Brendan Kelliher, Mikai
Carlton**

As in past season as the defending NCFA National Champions, the Sacred Heart Pioneers open the season with a bullseye on their back. Although they did lose some major contributors on both sides of the ball, the Pioneers return some of the best players in the country, including 7 returning All-Americans. Those players combined with a very strong class of transfers and incoming freshman have the Pioneers hopeful to be the first repeat champs since Coppin State. The team will be led by three-way threat Mark Barranger, Barranger is arguably the best player in the NCFA, he is a threat to go the distance on offense every play from his WR position, he wreaks havoc from his safety spot both as a backfield player and a run stopper and he is a home run threat as a kick and punt returner, teams need to be aware of him on every play. 2017 NCFA title game MVP, Jordan James returns to lead the Pioneer ground game, he will look to continue his success behind returning offensive lineman Andrew Crookes and JT Manolopoulos. The Sacred Heart defense has made a name for itself around the NCFA in the past two years and that reputation should continue in 2018. Ben Burke returns again to anchor the D up front and will look to spend a lot of time in the opponents backfield again this season. Reigning NCFA Coach of the Year Greg Jones, expects the team to come together early as they have been stressing that what happened last year is now a distant memory. Look for the Pioneers to once again be among the NCFA elite and make that strong push to be repeat champions



**Sacred Heart University
Fairfield, CT**

Head Coach – Greg Jones

**Assistants – Mike Statuti, Rory McKane, Matt Ilallo,
Curtis Sutherland**

2017 record – 9-0

Conference Finish – 1st

Final National Ranking – 1st

Returning Players – 25

Returning Starters – 14

**Players to Watch – Mark Barranger, Jordan James,
Andrew Crookes, JT Manolopoulos, Will Visgilio, Ben
Burke, Dalvyn Charles, Quaheem Dufane**

Vermont was in a unfamiliar role last year, under longtime head coach Jeff Porter, near the bottom of the NAC. They were a very young team last fall and although had a lot of talent, that lack of experience caused a lot of growing pains, struggling on offense especially. With a new OC and a new offensive system the Catamounts will lean on QB Kyle Morand once again, building a system around him and his 6'2 220 lb frame. Ben Combs should be the lead back to help get the offense on track.

Defensively if they can minimize the mistakes from last year they could field on of the better D's in the league. Somer Mackillop and Nick Daigle lead a strong defensive backfield and Pat Messenger will anchor the LB crew. If Vermont can use the experience gained last year and come together they could be a surprise in the NAC and challenge for the top spot.



**University of Vermont
Burlington, VT**

Head Coach – Jeff Porter

Assistants – Jason Paul, Zen Bliss, Hunter Knight

2017 record – 2-5

Conference Finish – 4th

Final National Ranking – 17th

Returning Players – 20

Returning Starters – 13

Players to Watch – Somer Mackillop, Ben Combs, Pat Messenger, Kyle Morand, Nick Daigle