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# SACRAMENTO STATE FOOTBALL

Big Sky Champions: 2019, 2021, 2022 • NCAA FCS Playoff Appearances 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023  
38 FCS All-Americans • 19 NFL Players • Sixth Most Wins in FCS Since 2019



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### SEASON OUTLOOK

Get an inside look at the 2021 Sacramento State Hornets with rosters, position breakdowns and more.



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### THE COACHES

Bios for each of Sacramento State's coaching staff members.



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### THE PLAYERS

Get to know each member of the 2024 Hornet football team. Bios include stats, hometown and high school info.



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### RECORD BOOK

The complete source for Sacramento State football history. Find records, results, awards and other accolades.



## QUICK FACTS

## 2024 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Date	Day	Opponent	Time
Aug. 29	Thu.	at San Jose State	7 p.m.
Sept. 7	Sat.	at Fresno State	TBA
<b>Sept. 14</b>	<b>Sat.</b>	<b>NICHOLLS</b>	<b>6 p.m.</b>
Sept. 21	Sat.	at Texas A&M-Commerce	4 p.m.
Sept. 28	Sat.	at Northern Arizona*	1 p.m.
<b>Oct. 12</b>	<b>Sat.</b>	<b>EASTERN WASHINGTON*</b>	<b>6 p.m.</b>
<b>Oct. 19</b>	<b>Sat.</b>	<b>WEBER STATE*</b>	<b>6 p.m.</b>
Oct. 26	Sat.	at Idaho State*	3 p.m.
<b>Nov. 2</b>	<b>Sat.</b>	<b>PORTLAND STATE*</b>	<b>6 p.m.</b>
Nov. 9	Sat.	at Montana State*	12 p.m.
Nov. 16	Sat.	at Cal Poly*	2 p.m.
<b>Nov. 23</b>	<b>Sat.</b>	<b>UC DAVIS*</b>	<b>2 p.m.</b>

## 2023 FOOTBALL RESULTS

Date	Rank	Opponent	Result
Aug. 31	(10/8)	at Nicholls	W, 38-24
<b>Sept. 9</b>	<b>(9/8)</b>	<b>TEXAS A&amp;M-COMMERCE</b>	<b>W, 34-6</b>
Sept. 16	(8/6)	at Stanford	W, 30-23
Sept. 23	(4/4)	at Idaho* (7/10)	L, 36-27
<b>Sept. 30</b>	<b>(8/9)</b>	<b>NORTHERN ARIZONA*</b>	<b>W, 31-30</b>
Oct. 14	(4/5)	at Northern Colorado*	W, 21-13
<b>Oct. 21</b>	<b>(3/4)</b>	<b>MONTANA STATE* (2/2)</b>	<b>L, 42-30</b>
<b>Oct. 28</b>	<b>(6/7)</b>	<b>IDAHO STATE**</b>	<b>W, 51-16</b>
Nov. 4	(7/7)	at Montana* (4/4)	L, 34-7
<b>Nov. 11</b>	<b>(9/11)</b>	<b>CAL POLY*</b>	<b>W, 41-30</b>
Nov. 18	(8/10)	at UC Davis* (RV/RV)	L, 31-21
Nov. 25	(15/16)	at North Dakota^ (12/14)	W, 42-35
Dec. 2	(15/16)	at South Dakota^ (3/3)	L, 34-24

All Times Pacific | ALL CAPS and BOLD indicate home games

\* Big Sky Conference games | # Homecoming | ^ NCAA FCS Playoffs

## UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

Location	Sacramento, Calif.
Founded	1947
Enrollment	30,883
Nickname	Hornets
Colors	Green & Gold (PMS 343, 4525)
President	Dr. J. Luke Wood
Director of Athletics	Mark Orr
Faculty Athletic Representative	Dr. Maureen Smith

## FOOTBALL INFORMATION

Classification	NCAA Football Championship Subdivision
Conference	Big Sky Conference
Stadium (Capacity)	Hornet Stadium (21,195)
Surface	Sprinturf
2024 Overall Record	8-5
2024 Big Sky Record/Finish	4-4/T6th
Letterwinners Returning/Lost	49/32
Starters Returning (O/D/ST)/Lost	13 ret. (9/1/3)/14 lost (4/10/0)

**KMAX31 ESPN+**

Follow the Hornets by listening to all games on EPSN 1320 AM, watching home games and selected road games on KMAX 31 or stream all Big Sky contests on ESPN+.

## COACHING STAFF

Head Coach	Andy Thompson
Alma Mater	Montana, '04
Sacramento State Record	First year
Career Record	Same

## Assistant Coaches

Kris Richardson	Associate Head Coach/Off. Line
Bobby Fresques	Associate Head Coach/Quarterbacks
Jeremy LaPan	Special Teams Coordinator/Tight Ends
Keyshawn Colmon	Wide Receivers
Kraig Paulson	Def. Line
Donnel Pumphrey	Running Backs
Jason Slowey	Edge Rushers
Brandyn Thompson	Cornerbacks
Misi Tupe	Linebackers
Cherokee Valeria	Def. Passing Game Coordinator/Cornerbacks
Chris Parry	Director of Recruiting and Player Personnel
Jeffrey Goldsmith	Director of Football Operations
Justin Lantz	Video Coordinator/Def. Analyst
Nick Sciacqua	Special Teams Assistant
Justin Houlihan	Offensive Graduate Assistant
Taylor Powell	Defensive Graduate Assistant
Jeremy Harris	Defensive Student Assistant
Greg Fong	Student Manager - Recruiting/Offense
Wesley Williams	Offensive Intern
Kenny Macklin	Football Operations Assistant
Leif Schanche	Recruiting Assistant
Hanaa Alanassiry	Operations Student Assistant
Jordan Vigel	Operations Student Assistant
Brleigh Nixon	Recruiting Student Assistant
Nathan Morris	Director of Strength & Conditioning

## ATHLETIC COMMUNICATIONS

Director (Football Contact)	Brian Berger
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Office Phone	916.278.7426
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Assistant Director	Jason Spencer
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Department Fax	916.278.5429
Web Site	hornetsports.com
Shipping Address	6000 J Street
	Athletics Center Room 1210
	Sacramento, CA 95819-6099



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## STADIUM/GAMEDAY



## HORNET STADIUM

- Originally built in 1969, Hornet Stadium is the home for Sacramento State football. The facility has a capacity of 21,195 — the second largest in the Big Sky Conference.
- A new playing surface was installed prior to the 2021 season. The Sprinturf surface features the yardage numbers in Sacramento State's font, the Big Sky Conference logos stitched into the field and new gold end zones. The surface also has a shock pad beneath it and an infill which is designed to reduce heat.
- Hornet Stadium has served as the home of several professional football teams including the Sacramento Surge of the World League, the Sacramento Gold Miners of the Canadian Football League and Sacramento Mountain Lions of the United Football League.
- The stadium has also hosted the 2000 and 2004 U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials and four NCAA Div. I Outdoor Track and Field Championships (2003, 2005, 2006, 2007).
- The stadium is surrounded by The Well to the north and the Broad Athletic Fieldhouse to the south. The Well is Sacramento State's student recreation and health center. It opened in 2010 (expanded in 2021) and features a large weight room, indoor spaces for basketball, volleyball, racquetball and soccer, a rock climbing wall and an elevated running track.
- The Broad Athletic Fieldhouse is the home to Hornet football and track and field. Built in 2008, it includes coaches offices, meeting spaces, locker rooms, training rooms and weight rooms for the teams.

## GAMEDAY

- The celebration of Hornet football begins well before kickoff with a lively tailgate party outside of Hornet Stadium. Fans then greet the team for Hornet Walk which includes the Sacramento State marching band, cheer and dance teams.
- Once inside, Sacramento State students sit directly behind the Hornet bench at midfield. A new VIP fan section was added in the north end zone during the 2019 season.





## ROSTER

## ALPHABETICAL ROSTER

31	Josh Aguilar.....	LB
94	Ben Ahio.....	DL
29	Koa Akui.....	S
8	Daizon Allen.....	NB
16	Jason Auzenne.....	WR
7	Luke Baker.....	QB
5	Jordan Barton.....	QB
1	Kaiden Bennett.....	QB
35	Hunter Boeddeker.....	LB
14	Curron Borders.....	RB
95	Mason Brosseau.....	DL
3	Ajon Bryant.....	RB
13	Zeke Burnett.....	RB
28	Dejuan Butler.....	NB
83	Mekhei Byrd.....	WR
47	AJ Campos.....	LS
19	Josh Cashiola.....	DL
46	Caleb Chennault.....	LB
37	Xander Chisolm.....	S
15	Tim Christian.....	CB
17	Carson Conklin.....	QB
10	Joey Cook.....	QB
11	Makai Cope.....	WR
40	Dawit Crain.....	P
70	Justin Davis.....	OL
27	Gavin Davis-Smith.....	S
2	Patrick Dean.....	CB
13	Yebrell Emerson.....	S
32	Matthew Eskridge II.....	LB
61	Isaac Espinoza.....	K
50	Oge Feo.....	LB
81	Jayden Flaig.....	TE
57	Declan Follette.....	OL
85	Darren Gandy.....	WR
2	Devin Gandy.....	WR
8	Jared Gipson.....	WR
65	Cade Gretlein.....	OL
26	Anderson Grover.....	WR
9	Kai Hamilton.....	WR
96	Elijah Hansen.....	DL
90	Pate Haunga.....	DL
72	Sawyer Hays.....	OL
75	Tyler Henry.....	DL
54	Riley Hernandez.....	DL
16	Kaleb Higgins.....	S
39	Derek Houston.....	LB
38	DJ Houston.....	CB
34	Amarian Hunter.....	LB
41	Chase Jackson.....	LB
4	Nakian Jackson.....	LB
89	Austin Jarrard.....	TE
49	Elliott Johnson.....	DL
23	Michael Johnson.....	RB
23	Lamont Johnson-Burrell.....	CB
60	Adam Johnston.....	LS
11	Steven Keene II.....	CB
1	Murvin Kenion III.....	S
92	Evan Kiely.....	K
56	Brandon Knott.....	DL
93	Asher Kolodziej.....	DL
18	Kyle Koontz.....	TE
66	Giovanni Kovacs.....	OL
6	Carter Kraft.....	NB
82	Coleman Kuntz.....	TE
21	Will Leota.....	LB

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Exp.	Hometown/Previous School
0	Eian Moore	S	6-0	190	Sr.	1V	Sacramento, Calif. / Sierra JC
0	Joshua Nicholson	WR	6-0	179	Jr.	TR	Grand Prairie, Texas / San Diego State
1	Kaiden Bennett	QB	6-0	188	Sr.	3V	Sparks, Nev. / Nevada
1	Murvin Kenion III	S	6-0	204	Sr.	TR	Vallejo, Calif. / Idaho
2	Patrick Dean	CB	5-11	183	Sr.	3V	Ontario, Calif. / Colony HS
2	Devin Gandy	WR	6-1	191	Jr.	2V	Victorville, Calif. / Silverado HS
3	Ajon Bryant	RB	5-6	152	Fr.	HS	Santa Ana, Calif. / Mater Dei HS
3	Malini Ti'a	NB	6-0	205	Jr.	JC	Livermore, Calif. / San Mateo JC
4	Nakian Jackson	LB	6-1	227	So.	1V	Stockton, Calif. / Edison HS
4	Elijah Tau-Tolliver	RB	6-1	204	Jr.	2V	Sparks, Nev. / Reed HS
5	Jordan Barton	QB	6-0	184	Jr.	JC	La Verne, Calif. / Riverside JC
5	Amari Roberson	S	6-0	187	Jr.	JC	East Oakland, Calif. / San Mateo JC
6	Carter Kraft	NB	6-0	175	Fr.	HS	Clancy, Mont. / Helena HS
6	Ezra Moleni	RB	6-0	206	Sr.	1V	Midvale, Utah / San Mateo JC
7	Luke Baker	QB	5-11	185	Fr.	HS	Alamo, Calif. / San Ramon Valley HS
7	Jalen Williams	S	5-11	187	Jr.	TR	Lancaster, Calif. / Fresno State
8	Daizon Allen	NB	6-1	186	So.	1V	Fresno, Calif. / Bullard HS
8	Jared Gipson	WR	6-1	205	Sr.	3V	Stockton, Calif. / St. Mary's HS
9	Kai Hamilton	WR	6-3	178	Fr.	HS	San Jose, Calif. / Valley Christian HS
9	Zelmar Vedder	CB	6-3	193	Jr.	1V	Manteca, Calif. / Modesto JC
10	Joey Cook	QB	6-1	202	R-Fr.	RS	Novato, Calif. / Marin Catholic HS
10	Danny Scudero	WR	5-9	178	R-Fr.	RS	San Jose, Calif. / Archbishop Mitty HS
11	Makai Cope	WR	6-4	206	Jr.	TR	Culver City, Calif. / Utah
11	Steven Keene II	CB	6-3	180	So.	TR	Sacramento, Calif. / Lewis & Clark
12	Jason Oliver	CB	6-0	169	So.	1V	Bakersfield, Calif. / Colorado
12	Onterio Smith, Jr.	WR	6-2	195	R-Fr.	RS	Sacramento, Calif. / Folsom HS
13	Zeke Burnett	RB	5-10	202	So.	1V	Sacramento, Calif. / Elk Grove HS
13	Yebrell Emerson	S	6-2	203	Jr.	JC	Fresno, Calif. / Fresno City JC
14	Curron Borders	RB	5-7	184	R-Fr.	RS	Sacramento, Calif. / Antelope HS
14	Phoenix Rose	CB	5-10	169	Fr.	HS	Marysville, Calif. / Whitney HS
15	Tim Christian	CB	5-10	180	Jr.	JC	Akron, Ohio / Foothill JC
15	Sawyer Merrill	WR	6-0	196	Sr.	2V	El Dorado Hills, Calif. / American River JC
16	Jason Auzenne	WR	6-1	185	Fr.	HS	East Palo Alto, Calif. / Palo Alto HS
16	Kaleb Higgins	S	6-2	198	Jr.	1V	Austin, Texas / Cal
17	Carson Conklin	QB	6-1	180	R-Fr.	RS	Yorba Linda, Calif. / Centennial HS
17	Anta'Veon McKenzie	S	6-1	196	So.	1V	Stockton, Calif. / Edison HS
18	Kyle Koontz	TE	6-4	225	Fr.	HS	Minden, Nev. / Douglas HS
18	Fata Puloka	DL	6-3	221	R-Fr.	RS	Sacramento, Calif. / Monterey Trail HS
19	Josh Cashiola	DL	6-3	229	Sr.	1V	Houston, Texas / Fresno City JC
19	Jayden Weber	WR	5-9	154	R-Fr.	RS	San Mateo, Calif. / Serra HS
20	Adam Taylor	CB	5-10	150	Fr.	HS	Stockton, Calif. / St. Mary's HS
21	Will Leota	LB	6-2	223	Sr.	TR	Salt Lake City, Utah / Utah Tech
22	Elias Mullican	CB	6-1	172	So.	1V	Rocklin, Calif. / Rocklin HS
23	Michael Johnson	RB	5-7	189	Jr.	2V	Oxnard, Calif. / Pacifica HS
23	Lamont Johnson-Burrell	CB	6-3	182	So.	1V	Sacramento, Calif. / Sacramento HS
24	Davion Ross	DB	5-11	196	Sr.	2V	Sacramento, Calif. / Inderkum HS
25	Ardwon Morris	RB	5-9	202	Fr.	HS	Los Angeles, Calif. / Orange HS
26	Anderson Grover	WR	6-3	200	Sr.	1V	Modesto, Calif. / Washington State
27	Gavin Davis-Smith	S	5-11	198	Sr.	3V	Folsom, Calif. / Folsom HS
28	Dejuan Butler	NB	5-11	206	Gr.	TR	Antioch, Calif. / Cal
29	Koa Akui	S	5-10	187	So.	2V	Hilo, Hawaii / Hilo HS
30	Mitchell Wolfe	LB	6-3	235	Jr.	2V	Sumner, Wash. / Sumner HS
31	Josh Aguilar	LB	6-3	205	Fr.	HS	San Jose, Calif. / Bellarmine HS
32	Matthew Eskridge II	LB	6-1	225	Jr.	JC	Las Vegas, Nev. / Riverside JC
33	Alex Rocha	LB	6-2	213	So.	SQ	Bakersfield, Calif. / Bakersfield HS
34	Amarian Hunter	LB	6-3	228	Jr.	JC	Fresno, Calif. / Reedley JC
35	Hunter Boeddeker	LB	6-0	222	So.	1V	Santa Barbara, Calif. / Bishop Diego HS
36	James Tivao	LB	6-0	205	Fr.	HS	San Diego, Calif. / Madison HS
37	Xander Chisolm	S	6-2	196	R-Fr.	RS	Bakersfield, Calif. / Liberty HS
38	DJ Houston	CB	5-10	183	Sr.	3V	Compton, Calif. / Hawthorne HS
39	Derek Houston	LB	6-1	224	R-Fr.	RS	Rocklin, Calif. / Rocklin HS
40	Dawit Crain	P	6-6	215	Fr.	HS	Yucaipa, Calif. / Yucaipa HS
41	Chase Jackson	LB	6-0	215	Fr.	HS	Fontana, Calif. / Damien HS
42	Jerome Roberts	LB	5-10	208	Fr.	HS	San Diego, Calif. / Lincoln HS
43	In Memory of John Bloomfield			-		Rs.	



No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Exp.	Hometown/Previous School
44	Will Schalde	DL	6-5	258	Jr.	2V	Lemoore, Calif. / Lemoore HS
45	Xavier Williams	DL	6-4	266	Jr.	2V	Gustine, Calif. / Atwater HS
46	Caleb Chennault	LB	6-0	220	Jr.	JC	Hanford, Calif. / Sequoias JC
47	AJ Campos	LS	6-2	228	Jr.	2V	Upland, Calif. / Upland HS
48	Jordan Snowden	DL	6-4	237	Fr.	HS	Benicia, Calif. / Benicia HS
49	Elliott Johnson	DL	6-1	271	Sr.	TR	Modesto, Calif. / Lincoln (CA)
50	Oge Feo	LB	6-1	247	Jr.	2V	Waianae, Hawaii / Bethel HS
51	Joseph Speno	OL	6-3	267	Jr.	JC	San Jose, Calif. / Foothill JC
52	TangiTangi Pongia	OL	6-3	312	Jr.	TR	San Diego, Calif. / UTEP
53	Elijah Ortiz	OL	6-1	300	Jr.	JC	Union City, Calif. / Laney JC
54	Riley Hernandez	DL	6-2	223	So.	SQ	Bakersfield, Calif. / Liberty HS
55	Kyle Stahlecker	DL	6-6	289	R-Fr.	RS	Citrus Heights, Calif. / Oakmont HS
56	Brandon Knott	DL	6-3	278	Sr.	3V	Sacramento, Calif. / Inderkum HS
57	Declan Follette	OL	6-2	275	Fr.	HS	Elk Grove, Calif. / Laguna Creek HS
58	Jayland McGlothen	DL	6-2	270	Fr.	HS	Las Vegas, Nev. / Silverado HS
59	Nathan Mejia	OL	6-3	304	Jr.	2V	Arcadia, Calif. / Cathedral HS
60	Adam Johnston	LS	6-0	225	So.	JC	Ripon, Calif. / Modesto JC
61	Isaac Espinoza	K	5-11	209	Fr.	HS	Richmond, Calif. / McClymonds HS
62	Kenndel Riley	OL	6-3	353	Jr.	2V	Lincoln, Calif. / Capital Christian HS
63	Mike Melanson	P	5-11	185	Jr.	JC	Las Vegas, Nev. / Sequoias JC
64	Brandon Sousa	OL	6-4	306	So.	1V	Pleasanton, Calif. / Foothill HS
65	Cade Gretlein	OL	6-4	289	R-Fr.	RS	Bakersfield, Calif. / Liberty HS
66	Giovanni Kovacs	OL	6-4	300	Fr.	HS	Pleasanton, Calif. / Amador Valley HS
67	Luke Slater	OL	6-2	270	Fr.	HS	Bellevue, Wash. / Newport HS
68	Davis May	OL	6-4	314	R-Fr.	RS	Bakersfield, Calif. / Garces Memorial HS
70	Justin Davis	OL	6-6	345	So.	SQ	Camarillo, Calif. / Oaks Christian HS
71	Bryson Summers	OL	6-5	308	Jr.	TR	El Dorado Hills, Calif. / Coastal Carolina
72	Sawyer Hays	OL	6-6	288	Jr.	2V	Sacramento, Calif. / Christian Brothers HS
73	Jose Soto	OL	6-3	304	R-Fr.	RS	Tulare, Calif. / Tulare Western HS
74	Aidan Meek	OL	6-5	300	Jr.	2V	Bakersfield, Calif. / Garces Memorial HS
75	Tyler Henry	DL	6-3	280	So.	1V	Houston, Texas / De La Salle HS
76	Jackson Slater	OL	6-4	316	Sr.	3V	Bellevue, Wash. / Newport HS
77	Joey Wright	OL	6-5	312	Jr.	TR	Reno, Nev. / San Diego State
78	Richard McKay	OL	6-6	292	R-Fr.	RS	Vallejo, Calif. / Clayton Valley Charter HS
79	Kaden Richardson	OL	6-3	283	Sr.	3V	Folsom, Calif. / UC Davis
80	Tommy Poe	TE	6-4	209	Fr.	HS	Penryn, Calif. / Del Oro HS
81	Jayden Flaig	TE	6-4	216	R-Fr.	RS	Placentia, Calif. / Yorba Linda HS
82	Coleman Kuntz	TE	6-3	239	Jr.	2V	Beaumont, Calif. / Etiwanda HS
83	Mekhei Byrd	WR	5-11	171	R-Fr.	RS	Vallejo, Calif. / Natomas HS
84	Jaythn Long	WR	5-11	160	Fr.	HS	Stockton, Calif. / Lincoln HS
85	Darren Gandy	WR	5-10	148	R-Fr.	RS	Victorville, Calif. / Silverado HS
86	Ty Smith	WR	6-1	181	Jr.	2V	Apple Valley, Calif. / Apple Valley HS
87	Gavin Nelson	TE	6-4	245	Jr.	JC	Clovis, Calif. / Fresno City JC
88	Jay Rudolph	TE	6-4	238	Jr.	TR	Phoenix, Ariz. / San Diego State
89	Austin Jarrard	TE	6-3	233	Sr.	2V	El Dorado Hills, Calif. / Oklahoma State
90	Pate Haunga	DL	6-2	280	Sr.	SQ	Sacramento, Calif. / Chabot JC
91	Cal McGough	P	6-2	190	Jr.	2V	Geelong, Australia / St. Joseph's College
92	Evan Kiely	K	6-4	216	So.	1V	Tu'rlock, Calif. / Pitman HS
93	Asher Kolodziej	DL	6-1	230	Fr.	HS	Palo Alto, Calif. / St. Francis HS
94	Ben Ahio	DL	6-4	269	Sr.	1V	Fresno, Calif. / Fresno City JC
95	Mason Brosseau	DL	6-3	276	Jr.	2V	Hanford, Calif. / Hanford HS
96	Elijah Hansen	DL	6-2	250	Jr.	JC	El Dorado Hills, Calif. / Sierra JC
97	Zach Schreiner	K	6-0	181	Sr.	1V	Rocklin, Calif. / American River JC
98	Spencer Patton	DL	6-1	271	Fr.	HS	Rocklin, Calif. / Rocklin HS
99	Colby Warkentin	DL	6-6	267	Sr.	TR	Bakersfield, Calif. / Abilene Christian

## ALPHABETICAL ROSTER

84	Jaythn Long	WR
68	Davis May	OL
58	Jayland McGlothen	DL
91	Cal McGough	P
78	Richard McKay	OL
17	Anta'Veon McKenzie	S
74	Aidan Meek	OL
59	Nathan Mejia	OL
63	Mike Melanson	P
15	Sawyer Merrill	WR
6	Ezra Moleni	RB
0	Eian Moore	S
25	Ardwon Morris	RB
22	Elias Mullican	CB
87	Gavin Nelson	TE
0	Joshua Nicholson	WR
12	Jason Oliver	CB
53	Elijah Ortiz	OL
98	Spencer Patton	DL
80	Tommy Poe	TE
52	TangiTangi Pongia	OL
18	Fata Puloka	DL
79	Kaden Richardson	OL
62	Kenndel Riley	OL
5	Amari Roberson	S
42	Jerome Roberts	LB
33	Alex Rocha	LB
14	Phoenix Rose	CB
24	Davion Ross	DB
88	Jay Rudolph	TE
44	Will Schalde	DL
97	Zach Schreiner	K
10	Danny Scudero	WR
76	Jackson Slater	OL
67	Luke Slater	OL
12	Onterio Smith, Jr.	WR
86	Ty Smith	WR
48	Jordan Snowden	DL
73	Jose Soto	OL
64	Brandon Sousa	OL
51	Joseph Speno	OL
55	Kyle Stahlecker	DL
71	Bryson Summers	OL
4	Elijah Tau-Tolliver	RB
20	Adam Taylor	CB
3	Malini Ti'a	NB
36	James Tivao	LB
9	Zelmar Vedder	CB
99	Colby Warkentin	DL
19	Jayden Weber	WR
7	Jalen Williams	S
45	Xavier Williams	DL
30	Mitchell Wolfe	LB
77	Joey Wright	OL

## PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Ben Ahio	AH-he-o	Dawit Crain	duh-VEET	Evan Kiely	KY-lee	Eian Moore	E-in
Koa Akui	CO-uh uh-KOO-ee	Yebrell Emerson	yeh-BRELL	Coleman Kuntz	KOONTS	TangiTangi Pognia	po-NEE-uh
Daizon Allen	DAY-zon	Oge Feo	O-G FAY-oh	Cal McGough	Mc-GUFF	Fata Puloka	FAH-tuh POO-lo-kuh
Hunter Boeddeker	BO-deck-er	Jayden Flaig	FLAG	Anta'Veon McKenzie	an-TAY-vee-on	Kenndel Riley	KEN-dell
Mason Brosseau	BRO-so	Kai Hamilton	KY	Nathan Mejia	muh-HEE-uh	Alex Rocha	ROW-chuh
Curron Borders	cur-RON	Pate Haunga	pah-TAY ha-UN-guh	Sawyer Merrill	MAIR-ill	Will Schalde	SKALL-dee
Mekhei Byrd	meh-KY	Nakian Jackson	nuh-KY-in	Ezra Moleni	mo-lee-nee	Malini Ti-a	muh-LIN-ee TEE-uh



## ROSTER BREAKDOWN

## SQUAD BREAKDOWN

True Freshmen.....	21
Redshirt Freshmen.....	17
Sophomores.....	17
Juniors.....	37
Seniors/Graduate.....	22

## LETTERMEN RETURNING (49)

Offense (22)	
Kaiden Bennett.....	QB
Zeke Burnett.....	RB
Justin Davis.....	OL
Devin Gandy.....	WR
Jared Gipson.....	WR
Pate Haunga.....	DL
Sawyer Hays.....	OL
Kaleb Higgins.....	S
Austin Jarrard.....	TE
Michael Johnson.....	RB
Coleman Kuntz.....	TE
Aiden Meek.....	OL
Nathan Mejia.....	OL
Sawyer Merrill.....	WR
Ezra Moleni.....	RB
Tyler Perez.....	OL
Kaden Richardson.....	OL
Kenndel Riley.....	OL
Jackson Slater.....	OL
Ty Smith.....	WR
Brandon Sousa.....	OL
Elijah Tao-Tolliver.....	RB

Defense (23)	
Ben Ahio.....	DL
Koa Akui.....	S
Daizon Allen.....	DB
Hunter Boeddeker.....	LB
Mason Brosseau.....	DL
Josh Cashiola.....	DL
Gavin Davis-Smith.....	S
Patrick Dean.....	CB
Oge Feo.....	LB
Riley Hernandez.....	LB
Tyler Henry.....	OL
DJ Houston.....	CB
Nakian Jackson.....	LB
Lamont Johnson-Burrell.....	CB
Brandon Knott.....	DL
Eian Moore.....	S
Elias Mullican.....	CB
Alex Rocha.....	LB
Davion Ross.....	S
Will Schalde.....	TE
Zelmar Vedder.....	CB
Xavier Williams.....	DL
Mitchell Wolfe.....	LB

Specialists (4)	
AJ Campos.....	LS
Evan Kiely.....	K
Cal McGough.....	P
Zach Schreiner.....	K

## STARTERS RETURNING (13)

*Minimum of six starts in 2023 or 12 career starts*

Offense (9)		2023/Career
Kaiden Bennett, QB.....	10/10	
Devin Gandy, WR.....	9/15	
Jared Gipson, WR.....	12/27	
Coleman Kuntz, TE.....	6/7	
Aidan Meek, OL.....	9/9	
Nathan Mejia, OL.....	13/27	
Kaden Richardson, OL.....	6/6	
Kenndel Riley, OL.....	6/6	
Jackson Slater, OL.....	13/34	

Defense (1)	
Gavin Davis-Smith, S.....	8/19

Specialists (3)	
Cal McGough, P.....	12/24
Zach Schreiner, K.....	13/13
AJ Campos, LS.....	13/26

## STARTERS LOST (14)

Offense (4)		2022/Career
Marcus Fulcher, RB.....	10/14	
Ivan Garza, OL.....	13/36	
Marshall Martin, TE.....	11/45	
Troy Stiefel, OL.....	3/29	

Defense (10)	
Armon Bailey, LB.....	11/25
Cameron Broussard, S.....	11/19
Leke Fashola, DE.....	11/11
Tyler Hardeman, DT.....	13/38
Dillon Juniel, CB.....	13/19
DeShawn Lynch, DE.....	13/13
Brock Mather, LB.....	12/25
Caleb Nelson, CB.....	11/23
Kylen Ross, S.....	10/10
Jett Stanley, DT.....	13/38

Specialists (0)	
None	

## 2023 REDSHIRTS (20)

Offense (14)	
Curron Borders.....	RB
Mekhei Byrd.....	WR
Carson Conklin.....	QB
Joey Cook.....	QB
Franklin Daniels.....	OL
Darren Gandy.....	WR
Cade Gretlein.....	OL
Anderson Grover.....	WR
Davis May.....	OL
Richard McKay.....	OL
Danny Scudero.....	WR
Onterio Smith, Jr.....	WR
Jose Soto.....	OL
Jayden Weber.....	WR

Defense (6)	
Xander Chisolm.....	S
Derek Houston.....	LB
Anta'Veon McKenzie.....	S
Jason Oliver.....	CB
Fata Puloka.....	NB
Kyle Stahlecker.....	DL

Specialists (0)	
None	

## NEWCOMERS (47)

Offense (20)	
Jason Auzenne.....	WR
Luke Baker.....	QB
Jordan Barton.....	QB
Ajon Bryant.....	RB
Makai Cope.....	WR
Declan Follette.....	OL
Kai Hamilton.....	WR
Kyle Kuntz.....	TE
Jaythn Long.....	WR
Ardwon Morris.....	RB
Gavin Nelson.....	TE
Joshua Nicholson.....	WR
Elijah Ortiz.....	OL
Tommy Poe.....	TE
TangiTangi Pongia.....	OL
Jay Rudolph.....	TE
Luke Slater.....	OL
Joseph Speno.....	OL
Bryson Summers.....	OL
Joey Wright.....	OL

Defense (23)	
DeJuan Butler.....	NB
Caleb Chennault.....	LB
Tim Christian.....	CB
Yebrell Emerson.....	S
Matthew Eskridge II.....	LB
Elijah Hansen.....	DL
Amarian Hunter.....	LB
Chase Jackson.....	LB
Steven Keene.....	CB
Murvin Kenion III.....	S
Carter Kraft.....	NB
Will Leota.....	LB
Jayland McGlothen.....	DL
Spencer Patton.....	DL
Amari Roberson.....	DB
Jerome Roberts.....	LB
Phoenix Rose.....	CB
Jordan Snowden.....	DL
Adam Taylor.....	CB
Malini Ti'a.....	NB
James Tivao.....	LB
Colby Warkentin.....	DL
Jalen Williams.....	S

Specialists (4)	
Dawit Crain.....	P
Isaac Espinoza.....	K
Adam Johnston.....	LS
Mike Melanson.....	P



# POSITIONAL BREAKDOWN

## OFFENSE

### Offensive Line

51	Joseph Speno (6-3, 267, Jr.)
52	TangiTangi Pongia (6-3, 312, Jr.)
53	Elijah Ortiz (6-1, 300, Jr.)
57	Declan Follette (6-2, 275, Fr.)
59	Nathan Mejia (6-3, 304, Jr.)
62	Kenndel Riley (6-3, 353, Jr.)
64	Brandon Sousa (6-4, 306, So.)
65	Cade Gretlein (6-4, 289, RFr.)
66	Giovanni Kovacs (6-4, 300, Fr.)
67	Luke Slater (6-2, 270, Fr.)
68	Davis May (6-4, 314, RFr.)
70	Justin Davis (6-6, 345, So.)
71	Bryson Summers (6-5, 308, Jr.)
72	Sawyer Hays (6-6, 288, Jr.)
73	Jose Soto (6-3, 304, RFr.)
74	Aidan Meek (6-5, 300, Jr.)
76	Jackson Slater (6-4, 316, Sr.)
77	Joey Wright (6-5, 312, Jr.)
78	Richard McKay (6-6, 292, RFr.)
79	Kaden Richardson (6-3, 283, Sr.)

### Tight End

18	Kyle Koontz (6-4, 225, Fr.)
80	Tommy Poe (6-4, 209 Fr.)
81	Jayden Flaig (6-4, 216, RFr.)
82	Coleman Kuntz (6-3, 239, Jr.)
87	Gavin Nelson (6-4, 245, Jr.)
88	Jay Rudolph (6-4, 238, Jr.)
89	Austin Jarrard (6-3, 233, Sr.)

### Wide Receiver

0	Joshua Nicholson (6-0, 179, Jr.)
2	Devin Gandy (6-1, 191, Jr.)
8	Jared Gipson (6-1, 205, Sr.)
9	Kai Hamilton (6-3, 178, Fr.)
10	Danny Scudero (5-9, 178, RFr.)
11	Makai Cope (6-4, 206, Jr.)
12	Onterio Smith, Jr. (6-2, 195, RFr.)
15	Sawyer Merrill (6-0, 196, Sr.)
16	Jason Auzenne (6-1, 185, Fr.)
19	Jayden Weber (5-9, 154, RFr.)
26	Anderson Grover (6-3, 200, Sr.)
83	Mekhei Byrd (5-11, 171, RFr.)
84	Jaythn Long (5-11, 160, Fr.)
85	Darren Gandy (5-10, 148, RFr.)
86	Ty Smith (6-1, 181, Jr.)

### Running Back

3	Ajon Bryant (5-6, 152, Fr.)
4	Elijah Tau-Tolliver (6-1, 204, Jr.)
6	Ezra Moleni (6-0, 206, Sr.)
13	Zeke Burnett (5-10, 202, So.)
14	Currion Borders (5-7, 184, RFr.)
23	Michael Johnson (5-7, 189, Jr.)
25	Ardwon Morris (5-9, 202, Fr.)

### Quarterback

1	Kaiden Bennett (6-0, 188, Sr.)
5	Jordan Barton (6-0, 184, Jr.)
7	Luke Baker (5-11, 185, Fr.)
10	Joey Cook (6-1, 202, RFr.)
17	Carson Conklin (6-1, 180, RFr.)

## SPECIALISTS

### Kicker

61	Isaac Espinoza (5-11, 209, Fr.)
92	Evan Kiely (6-4, 216, So.)
97	Zach Schreiner (6-0, 181, Sr.)

### Long Snapper

47	AJ Campos (6-2, 228, Jr.)
60	Adam Johnston (6-0, 225, So.)

### Punter

49	Dawit Crain (6-6, 215, Fr.)
63	Mike Melanson (5-11, 185, Jr.)
91	Cal McGough (6-2, 190, Jr.)

## DEFENSE

### Defensive Line

18	Fata Puloka (6-3, 221, RFr.)
19	Josh Cashiola (6-3, 229, Sr.)
31	Josh Aguilar (6-3, 205, Fr.)
34	Amarian Hunter (6-3, 228, Jr.)
44	Will Schalde (6-5, 258, Jr.)
45	Xavier Williams (6-4, 266, Jr.)
46	Caleb Chennault (6-0, 220, Jr.)
48	Jordan Snowden (6-4, 237, Fr.)
54	Riley Hernandez (6-2, 223, So.)
55	Kyle Stahlecker (6-6, 289, RFr.)
56	Brandon Knott (6-3, 278, Sr.)
58	Jayland McGlothen (6-2, 270, Fr.)
75	Tyler Henry (6-3, 280, So.)
90	Pate Haunga (6-2, 280, Sr.)
94	Ben Ahio (6-4, 269, Sr.)
95	Mason Brosseau (6-3, 276, Jr.)
96	Elijah Hansen (6-2, 250, Jr.)
98	Spencer Patton (6-1, 271, Fr.)
99	Colby Warkentin (6-6, 267, Sr.)

### Linebacker

4	Nakian Jackson (6-1, 227, So.)
21	Will Leota (6-2, 223, Sr.)
30	Mitchell Wolfe (6-3, 235, Jr.)
32	Matthew Eskridge II (6-1, 225, Jr.)
33	Alex Rocha (6-2, 213, So.)
35	Hunter Boeddeker (6-0, 222, So.)
36	James Tivao (6-0, 205, Fr.)
39	Derek Houston (6-1, 224, RFr.)
41	Chase Jackson (6-0, 215, Fr.)
42	Jerome Roberts (5-10, 208, Fr.)
50	Oge Feo (6-1, 247, Jr.)

### Cornerbacks

2	Patrick Dean (5-11, 183, Sr.)
9	Zelmar Vedder (6-3, 193, Jr.)
11	Steven Keene (6-3, 180, So.)
12	Jason Oliver (6-0, 169, So.)
14	Phoenix Rose (5-10, 169, Fr.)
15	Tim Christian (5-10, 180, Jr.)
20	Adam Taylor (5-10, 150, Fr.)
22	Elias Mullican (6-1, 172, So.)
23	Lamont Johnson-Burrell (6-3, 182, So.)
38	DJ Houston (5-10, 189, Sr.)

### Safeties

0	Eian Moore (6-0, 190, Sr.)
1	Murvin Kenion III (6-0, 204, Sr.)
5	Amari Roberson (6-0, 187, Jr.)
7	Jalen Williams (5-11, 187, Jr.)
13	Yebrell Emerson (6-2, 203, Jr.)
16	Kaleb Higgins (6-2, 198, Jr.)
17	Anta'Veon McKenzie (6-1, 196, So.)
27	Gavin Davis-Smith (5-11, 198, Sr.)
29	Koa Akui (5-10, 187, So.)
37	Xander Chisolm (6-2, 196, RFr.)

### Nickelbacks

3	Malini Ti'a (6-0, 205, Jr.)
6	Carter Kraft (6-0, 175, Fr.)
8	Daizon Allen (6-1, 186, So.)
24	Davion Ross (5-11, 196, Sr.)
28	Dejuan Butler (5-11, 206, Gr.)

## START CHART

Offense	'23	Consecutive Starts	Career
Kaiden Bennett	10	2	10
Carson Conklin	2	---	2
Devin Gandy	9	---	15
Jared Gipson	12	3	27
Anderson Grover	4	3	4
Coleman Kuntz	6	1	7
Aidan Meek	9	8	9
Nathan Mejia	13	26	27
Ezra Moleni	3	---	3
Kaden Richardson	6	---	6
Kenndel Riley	6	2	8
Jackson Slater	13	34	34
Elijah Tau-Tolliver	3	---	3

Defense	'23	Consecutive Starts	Career
Ben Ahio	2	---	2
Gavin Davis-Smith	8	5	19
Patrick Dean	---	---	2
Oge Feo	1	---	1
Caleb Higgins	1	---	1
Brandon Knott	1	---	1
Anta'Veon McKenzie	3	2	2
Eian Moore	---	---	6
Davion Ross	---	---	5
Zelmar Vedder	2	2	2

Specialists	'23	Consecutive Starts	Career
AJ Campos	13	26	26
Cal McGough	12	---	24
Zach Schreiner	13	13	13

### Players Who Started Every Game in '22 and '23

Offense (2): Nathan Mejia, Jackson Slater

Defense (0): None

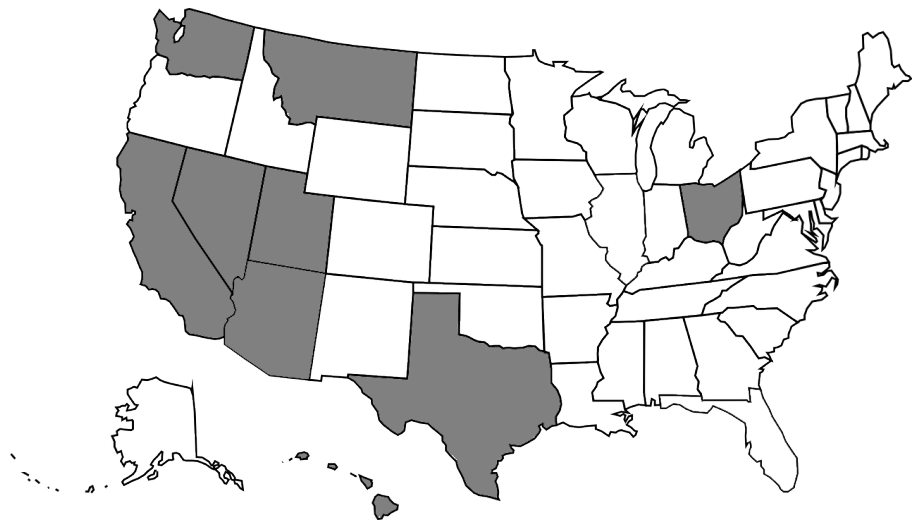
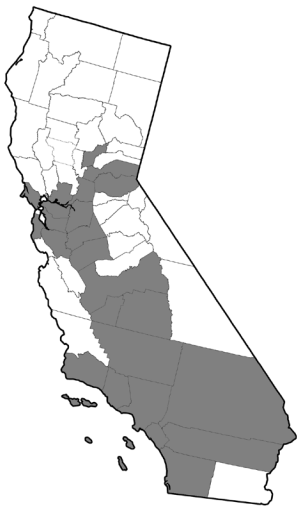
Specialists (0): None

### Longest Active Starting Streaks

Jackson Slater	34
Nathan Mejia	26
AJ Campos	26



## GEOGRAPHICAL ROSTER



## CALIFORNIA

**Alameda County (5)****Livermore:** Malini Ti'a**East Oakland:** Amari Roberson**Pleasanton:** Giovanni Kovacs, Brandon Sousa**Union City:** Elijah Ortiz**Contra Costa County (3)****Alamo:** Luke Baker**Antioch:** Dejuan Butler**Richmond:** Isaac Espinoza**El Dorado County (4)****El Dorado Hills:** Elijah Hansen, Austin Jarrard,  
Sawyer Merrill, Bryson Summers**Fresno County (5)****Clovis:** Gavin Nelson**Fresno:** Ben Ahio, Daizon Allen, Yebrell Emerson,  
Amarian Hunter**Kern County (8)****Bakersfield:** Xander Chisolm, Cade Gretlein,  
Riley Hernandez, Davis May, Aidan Meek,  
Jason Oliver, Alex Rocha, Colby Warkentin**Kings County (3)****Hanford:** Mason Brosseau, Caleb Chennault  
**Lemoore:** Will Schalde**Los Angeles County (6)****Arcadia:** Nathan Mejia**Compton:** DJ Houston**Culver City:** Makai Cope**Lancaster:** Jalen Williams**La Verne:** Jordan Barton**Los Angeles:** Ardwon Morris**Marin County (1)****Novato:** Joey Cook**Merced County (1)****Gustine:** Xavier Williams**Orange County (3)****Placentia:** Jayden Flaig**Santa Ana:** Ajon Bryant**Yorba Linda:** Carson Conklin**Placer County (6)****Lincoln:** Kennedel Riley**Penryn:** Tommy Poe**Rocklin:** Derek Houston, Elias Mullican,  
Spencer Patton, Zach Schreiner**Riverside County (1)****Beaumont:** Coleman Kuntz**Sacramento County (15)****Citrus Heights:** Kyle Stahlecker**Elk Grove:** Declan Follette**Folsom:** Gavin Davis-Smith, Kaden Richardson**Sacramento:** Curron Borders, Zeke Burnett,  
Pate Haunga, Sawyer Hays, Lamont Johnson-Burrell,  
Steven Keene, Brandon Knott, Eian Moore, Fata Puloka,  
Davion Ross, Onterio Smith Jr.**San Bernardino County (7)****Apple Valley:** Ty Smith**Fontana:** Chase Jackson**Ontario:** Patrick Dean**Upland:** AJ Campos**Victorville:** Darren Gandy, Devin Gandy**Yucaipa:** Dawit Crain**San Diego County (3)****San Diego:** TangiTangi Pongia, Jerome Roberts,  
James Tivao**San Joaquin County (6)****Manteca:** Zelmar Vedder**Stockton:** Jared Gipson, Jaythn Long,  
Anta'Veon McKenzie, Nakian Jackson, Adam Taylor**San Mateo County (1)****San Mateo:** Jayden Weber**Santa Barbara County (1)****Santa Barbara:** Hunter Boeddeker**Santa Clara County (6)****East Palo Alto:** Jason Auzenne**Palo Alto:** Asher Kolodziej**San Jose:** Josh Aguilar, Kai Hamilton, Danny Scudero,  
Joseph Speno**Solano County (5)****Benicia:** Jordan Snowden**Vallejo:** Mekhei Byrd, Murvin Kenion III, Richard  
McKay**Stanislaus County (4)****Modesto:** Anderson Grover, Elliott Johnson**Ripon:** Adam Johnston**Turlock:** Evan Kiely**Tulare County (1)****Tulare:** Jose Soto**Ventura County (2)****Camarillo:** Justin Davis**Oxnard:** Michael Johnson**Yuba County (1)****Marysville:** Phoenix Rose

## OUT OF STATE

**Arizona (1)****Phoenix:** Jay Rudolph**Hawaii (2)****Hilo:** Koa Akui**Waianae:** Oge Feo**Montana (1)****Clancy:** Carter Kraft**Nevada (7)****Las Vegas:** Matthew Eskridge II, Jayland McGlothen,  
Mike Melanson**Minden:** Kyle Koontz**Reno:** Joey Wright**Sparks:** Kaiden Bennett, Elijah Tao-Tolliver**Ohio (1)****Akron:** Tim Christian**Texas (4)****Austin:** Kaleb Higgins**Grand Prairie:** Joshua Nicholson**Houston:** Josh Cashiola, Tyler Henry**Utah (2)****Midvale:** Ezra Moleni**Salt Lake City:** Will Leota**Washington (3)****Bellevue:** Jackson Slater, Luke Slater**Sumner:** Mitchell Wolfe**Australia (1)****Geelong:** Cal McGough

## SEASON OUTLOOK



## QUARTERBACKS

- Unlike last season where Sacramento State entered the year without a quarterback on the roster who had started a game for the Hornets, the team boasts two QBs in 2024 who saw significant time on the field in Kaiden Bennett and Carson Conklin.
- Bennett appeared in all 13 games, starting 10 last season. The senior compiled 2,767 yards of total offense and accounted for 24 touchdowns while showcasing his dual-threat ability. Bennett had monster performances in two of the team's biggest victories of the season beginning with 279 passing yards and 100 rushing yards in the win at Stanford. In the NCAA FCS first round playoff game, he added 207 passing yards and 126 rushing yards with a pair of touchdowns.
- He finished the season with 2,190 passing yards while completing 64.3 percent of his passes and tossing 16 touchdowns. Bennett's completion percentage ranks second in school single-season history and was the best by a Hornet with at least 200 pass attempts during a year. He also ranked second on the team with 577 rushing yards and was third among Sacramento State players with six rushing touchdowns.
- Conklin played in the final four regular season games allowing him to preserve his redshirt status during the year. He had a memorable debut against Idaho State, completing 14-of-21 passes for 235 yards and three touchdowns. Conklin also shined against Cal Poly where he had 313 passing yards — the most by a Hornet during the year — and three touchdowns while completing 17-of-26 pass attempts.
- Behind the pair are a trio of quarterbacks who have yet to appear in a game for the Hornets. Jordan Barton was named the California State Offensive Player of the Year last season while guiding Riverside JC to a state title. Barton led the state with 35 touchdown passes and threw for 3,990 yards while completing 72.6 percent of his passes.
- Joey Cook redshirted in 2023. Cook graduated from Marin Catholic HS and helped his team to an appearance in the NorCal Div. 2-A title game as a senior.
- The newest member to the unit is Luke Baker who graduated from San Ramon Valley HS this past spring. Baker amassed 7,259 passing yards and 83 touchdowns during his career. As a senior, he threw for 3,347 yards and 37 touchdowns and was named the East Bay Athletic League MVP.



## RUNNING BACKS

- A trio of running backs who combined for over 150 carries and nearly 900 yards return to their Hornet backfield in 2024. Junior Elijah Tau-Tolliver is the leading returning rusher on the team having compiled 387 yards a year ago. A good chunk of that total came in a nationally-televised game against Montana State on ESPN2 where he rushed for 100 yards and scored a 53-yard touchdown. Tau-Tolliver has appeared in every Sacramento State game over the last two seasons where he has become an all-purpose standout with 1,719 combined yards rushing, receiving and on kick returns.
- Ezra Molteni appeared in nine games during his first season with the team. Molteni rushed for 278 yards on six carries and also caught five passes for 32 yards. His biggest output came in the team's win at Northern Colorado where he had 87 rushing yards and also caught an 8-yard touchdown pass. In the three games where Molteni filled in for the injured Marcus Fulcher, he averaged 58.3 yards per game.
- Zeke Burnett was the most explosive of the backs last season, averaging 8.0 yards per carry on his 27 attempts. Burnett did not receive a carry until week five where he picked up 40 yards on six attempts and scored his first career touchdown. His breakout game came against Idaho State, rushing for 143 yards on just nine attempts.
- Junior Michael Johnson and redshirt freshman Curron Borders also return to the team. Johnson was efficient in limited action last year, picking up 32 yards on four carries. He scored his first career touchdown on an 8-yard rush against Idaho State. Borders did not appear in a game in 2023 but was a three-star recruit out of Antelope HS where he ran for 3,574 yards and 50 touchdowns in three varsity seasons.
- The two newcomers in the backfield are freshmen Ajon Bryant and Ard-won Morris. Bryant was a three-star product of Mater Dei HS. He averaged nearly seven yards per carry as a senior and helped the Monarchs to a 37-2 overall record in his final three seasons. Morris comes to the Hornets from Orange HS. As a senior, he rushed for 2,486 yards which ranked second in the Southern Section and eighth in the state. He averaged 226.0 yards per game and rushed for at least 113 yards in all 11 contests.
- Though not a running back, Sacramento State did turn to tight end Coleman Kuntz near the goal line last season. Kuntz had six carries during the year for a total of 10 yards and scored four touchdowns.



# SEASON OUTLOOK



## WIDE RECEIVERS

- Sacramento State's 2024 wide receiving corps boasts three players which caught at least 30 passes last season. The trio are part of 15 total wide receivers on the roster comprised of five returners, four redshirt freshmen, two FBS transfers and three true freshmen.
- Jared Gipson was named second team all-Big Sky a year ago after ranking second on the team with 38 receptions for 657 yards and four touchdowns. Gipson was the team's primary deep ball threat, averaging 17.3 yards per reception which led the Big Sky. He caught at least one pass in 11 games and three or more receptions in eight contests. Gipson also had a pair of 100-yard games with 154 receiving yards against Cal Poly and 108 against Northern Arizona.
- Anderson Grover finished 2023 — his first with the Hornets — with 34 receptions for 431 yards and three touchdowns. Grover made an immediate impact, catching a touchdown in the season opener at Nicholls. He finished the year strong with over half of his season total (262 yards) coming in the final three games of the season.
- Devin Gandy was a primary target through the first 10 games of the season until a knee injury ended his year. Gandy hauled in 33 passes for 412 yards and four touchdowns. He is expected to return to action near the start of the 2024 season.
- Sawyer Merrill and Ty Smith complete the returners while Onterio Smith, Jr., Jayden Weber, Mekhei Byrd, Danny Scudero and Darren Gandy (Devin's younger brother) all redshirted last season. Along with playing receiver, Merrill has established himself as one of the top special teams players in the Big Sky. Scudero, arguably the fastest player on the team, appeared in four games in 2023 while maintaining his redshirt. He scored a touchdown on his first offensive touch of his career with a 16-yard rush against Montana State on ESPN2.
- Makai Cope and Joshua Nicholson both come to the Hornets from FBS teams where they were active contributors. Cope appeared in 26 games for Utah including the 2021 and 2022 Rose Bowls. Nicholson played in 18 games over the last two seasons at San Diego State. He had 17 receptions for 157 yards and a touchdown in those contests and will have two years of eligibility remaining with the Hornets.
- Kai Hamilton, Jason Auzenne and Jaythn Long are all 2024 high school graduates. Hamilton and Long were both three-star recruits by 247Sports while Auzenne was a two-star product.



## OFF. LINE/TIGHT ENDS

- Two-time first team all-Big Sky selection Jackson Slater leads an experienced offensive line. Slater has started 36 consecutive games for the Hornets with the majority coming at left guard. He became just the second offensive lineman in school history to earn back-to-back first team all-Big Sky accolades a year ago. The 6-4, 316-pounder has power cleaned 415 pounds, back squatted 635 pounds and has been clocked at 19.96 miles per hour.
- Nathan Mejia was named second team all-Big Sky in 2022 and followed with honorable mention last year. Mejia has started all 26 games at center the last two years.
- Kennedel Riley (eight career starts) and Kaden Richardson (six) both bring experience on the interior of the line. Riley has mostly played right guard while Richardson has seen action at guard and center.
- Aidan Meek started nine games in 2023 at right tackle and the junior is expected to return to the starting lineup this year.
- Other returners include junior Sawyer Hays, sophomores Brandon Sousa and Justin Davis and redshirt freshmen Cade Gretlein, Davis May, Jose Soto and Richard McKay.
- Transfers Bryson Summers (Coastal Carolina), Joey Wright (San Diego State) and TangiTangi Pongia (UTEP) as well as a pair of junior college transfers and true freshmen complete the unit.
- Junior Coleman Kuntz is the most experienced of the returning tight ends as he started seven games in 2023 and finished the year with 20 receptions for 236 yards. Kuntz had played behind All-American Marshal Martin for the majority of his first two seasons but stepped into a starting role last season when the three-time first team all-Big Sky selection was injured.
- Austin Jarrard is the only other tight end to catch a pass as a Hornet. Jarrard's first career reception at Sacramento State was a touchdown last season at Idaho.
- Jay Rudolph played in 30 games at San Diego State, including 12 starts. He was primarily used as a blocking tight end but did have nearly 20 career receptions, including a touchdown against Utah.
- Redshirt freshman Jayden Flaig will be joined by junior college transfer Gavin Nelson and true freshmen Kyle Koontz and Tommy Poe.

## SEASON OUTLOOK



## DEFENSIVE LINE

- A common theme on the Hornet defense this year will be the need to replace last season's starters. This proves true on the defensive line where all four primary starters from 2023 are no longer with the program. However, there are plenty options for the team as five players return after seeing significant time in the rotation a year ago.
- The interior of the line will include senior Brandon Knott and juniors Xavier Williams and Mason Brosseau. Knott has been a key cog for the team up front over the three previous seasons where he has been credited with 71 total tackles, including 3.5 for loss and three sacks.
- Williams finished 2023 with 14 total tackles in 12 games. Nine of those stops came in the final four games of the year, including a career best four tackles against UC Davis in the Causeway Classic.
- Brosseau has the ability to also play on the edge and has shown a knack to get to the quarterback. Last year, he had 12 tackles with three sacks and added three quarterback hurries.
- Josh Cashiola and Ben Ahio were both part of the rotation at defensive end during the 2023 season. Cashiola led all returning defensive linemen with 27 total tackles last year. His total included 4.5 for loss and two sacks. Cashiola began his collegiate career at San Diego as a safety and then moved to linebacker at Fresno City JC before finding a spot up front.
- Ahio played in all 13 games, starting two at defensive end. He was credited with 16 total tackles including 1.5 sacks. Ahio also intercepted a pass in the NCAA FCS Playoffs against North Dakota.
- Senior Pate Haunga and sophomore Tyler Henry will compete for a spot in the rotation at defensive tackle. Each saw limited action a year ago in their first active season with the team.
- On the edge, the returners include Fata Puloka who played nickelback and linebacker during his redshirt season in 2023 and Will Schalde who's a converted tight end. Riley Hernandez also returns after missing all of 2023 with an injury. Redshirt freshmen Kyle Stahlecker completes the list of defensive linemen who were with the team a year ago.
- The newcomers include Abilene Christian transfer Colby Warkentin, junior college transfer Elijah Hansen and true freshmen Jordan Snowden, Jayland McGlothen and Spencer Patton.



## LINEBACKERS

- The team's leading tackler from 2023, two of the top three and three of the top eight were all linebackers and each graduated from the program following the season.
- The blow will be softened by the addition of Will Leota who transferred from Utah Tech and will be reunited with linebackers coach Misi Tupe. Leota earned first team all-WAC honors in 2022 and was a second team all-league choice in 2021 and 2023. During his time with the Trailblazers, he tallied 213 career tackles which ranked sixth in school history. Last season, he recorded 75 total stops, including four for loss and also had an interception.
- The only player on the roster who has started a game at linebacker for the Hornets is junior Oge Feo (one start). Feo has been a stalwart on special teams the last two years, appearing in every game and recording 20 tackles in his career.
- Junior Mitchell Wolfe and sophomores Nakian Jackson and Hunter Boedeker have each seen action on the field. Wolfe has 13 tackles in his two seasons. His 2023 campaign was highlighted by an interception against Idaho State as well as a career-high four tackles at South Dakota in the second round of the FCS Playoffs.
- Jackson played in the first nine games of the year before a thumb injury ended his season. He was credited with 15 total tackles during the year and had at least one stop in eight of his nine games.
- Junior college transfers Matthew Eskridge II, Amarian Hunter and Caleb Chennault will add a veteran presence to the unit. Eskridge won a state title at Riverside JC and was named third team All-America by JC Gridwire. Hunter and Chennault are both Central Valley products having played at Reedley JC and College of Sequoias, respectively.
- Alex Rocha, who missed the majority of last season with an injury and redshirt freshman Derek Houston round out the returners at linebacker.
- Other newcomers include James Tivao, Jerome Roberts and Chase Jackson. Tivao was a three-star recruit from Madison HS in San Diego where he tallied 271 career tackles. Roberts graduated high school early and took part in spring practice with the Hornets. While at Lincoln HS in San Diego he made 171 tackles as a senior and was named the Western League Defensive Player of the Year. Jackson was a three-star recruit from Damien HS and was twice named all-league.



# SEASON OUTLOOK



## DEFENSIVE BACKS

- With 23 defensive backs on the roster, there are plenty of options for Sacramento State to fill the five starting positions in 2024. Senior Gavin Davis-Smith is the only returner who started multiple games a year ago for the team. Davis-Smith earned the starting nod at nickelback in seven games and ended the season at free safety. He finished the season with 65 total tackles which placed him fourth on the team and is the most among returners this year.
- Zelmar Vedder and Patrick Dean have both started games at cornerback for the team. Vedder played in all 13 games last season, starting the two FCS playoff games. During the year, he recorded 14 total tackles. Dean has 28 appearances during his three previous seasons.
- The cornerback position also features several players who were with the team last season. DJ Houston has played in every game over the last two years. Jason Oliver redshirted during the season after transferring from Colorado. Sacramento native Lamont Johnson-Burrell played in 10 games in 2023 and was poised to start late in the season until he was injured in practice. Sophomores Daizon Allen and Elias Mullican have also been with the program for two years.
- Newcomers to the unit are true freshmen Phoenix Rose and Adam Taylor and Lewis & Clark transfer Steven Keene who returns to his hometown.
- Veterans Eian Moore and Davion Ross return to the team at safety to provide some leadership to the secondary. Moore arrived on campus in 2020 only to have the Hornets opt not to play, he then redshirted in 2021 due to an injury which limited him to the final three games. He played in 12 games, starting four, in 2022 where he had 39 total tackles but missed all of last season with injury. Ross redshirted in 2018, played in eight games in 2019 and seven in 2021. He missed all of 2022 with a knee injury and 2023 due to a ruptured Achilles tendon.
- Transfer Murvin Kennion III is familiar with the Big Sky having played the last two seasons at Idaho where he had 53 tackles and four interceptions.
- Other returners include Kaleb Higgins and Anta'Veon McKenzie who each started at least one game last season, Koa Akui and Xander Chisolm.
- At nickelback, Davis-Smith will be joined by junior college transfers Malini Ti'a and Amari Roberson, Fresno State transfer Jalen Williams and Cal transfer Dejuan Butler.



## SPECIALISTS

- The Hornets specialists are fully stocked from a year ago with the return of long snapper AJ Campos, kicker Zach Schreiner and punter Cal McGough. The unit also returns its top kick and punt returners as well as its leading special teams tackler.
- Schreiner had a fantastic debut season for the team as he made 14 field goals and was a perfect 49-of-49 on extra points. His field goal total was the third highest in school history and he became just the second Hornet kicker to not have a missed PAT with at least 40 attempts. Schreiner was named the Big Sky Special Teams Player of the Week after making field goals of 24, 22 and 44 yards in the win at Stanford.
- McGough followed being named to the all-Big Sky third team in 2022 with honorable mention in 2023. Last season, he averaged 42.86 yards per punt which was the fifth-highest mark in school single-season history. He had seven punts of at least 50 yards and landed 50 percent of his kicks inside the opponent 20-yard line.
- Campos has started every game at long snapper over the past two seasons. He has remained perfect on punt and kick attempts during his career.
- Evan Kiely returns for his second season with the team and will be joined by true freshman Isaac Espinoza at kicker. Fellow freshman Dawit Crain will battle for the punting job and could also serve as a kickoff specialist. Junior college transfer Adam Johnston (Modesto JC) will compete for an opportunity at long snapper.
- Through two seasons, Elijah Tau-Tolliver has cemented himself as one of the best kick returners in school history. Tau-Tolliver enters the season ranked third in the Hornet record book in kick return average (25.07 ypr), is sixth in total kick return yards (1,053) and seventh in kick return attempts (42). Last season, he averaged 23.0 yards per return with a long of 44 yards. Redshirt freshman Danny Scudero could join Tau-Tolliver for kick returners in 2024. Scudero had three attempts last season with a long of 29 yards.
- Anderson Grover was the team's primary punt returner during his first season. Grover had 17 returns with an average of 7.1 yards per attempt and a long of 36 yards.