

2026 Cal Lutheran Kingsmen Football

Preview and Outlook

The 2026 Cal Lutheran Kingsmen enter the season with tremendous excitement, momentum, and a clear understanding of the standard we are working to uphold. Coming off a Sun Division Championship and an appearance in the SCIAC Championship Game, our program has taken another important step forward.

We are proud of what last year's team accomplished, but our focus is now firmly on the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. Our success will be determined by our preparation, consistency, toughness, and commitment to one another every day.

Experienced Leadership Returns on Offense

One of the greatest strengths of our 2026 team is the experience returning throughout the roster. We bring back several players who earned All-SCIAC recognition last season, along with a strong group of veterans who have played meaningful football and understand what it takes to compete for a championship.

Leading the offense is junior quarterback Joe Farley, a returning First Team All-SCIAC selection. Joe established himself as one of the top quarterbacks in the SCIAC last season, leading the conference with 1,759 passing yards while accounting for 13 total touchdowns. His continued growth, leadership, and command of our offense will be critical to our success in 2026.

At wide receiver, we return Tyler Woodworth, a First Team All-SCIAC performer who emerged as one of the most productive receivers in the conference. Tyler's ability to make plays and provide a dependable target gives our offense an experienced weapon on the perimeter.

We are also excited to have TeNorris Merkel back as one of the most dynamic players in the SCIAC. TeNorris earned First Team All-SCIAC recognition as a return specialist and Second Team honors as a receiver. His versatility, explosiveness, and ability to impact the game in multiple phases make him a major part of our football team.

The offensive line returns three starters from one of the best units in the SCIAC in 2025. The group is led by senior Gabe Anguiano, sophomore Kaleb Martinez, and senior Ryan Curtis. Esteban Gonzalez and freshman Tyler Seefeldt have had an outstanding fall camp and are expected to contribute significantly to the high-powered offense.

At running back, we expect production to come by committee. Transfers Jordan Barbadillo, John Gilbert, and Jayden Tinker bring additional depth and talent to a strong running back room that also includes Dylan Robinson and Zack Rogozik. This group gives us versatility, competition, and multiple players capable of making an impact throughout the season.

Defensive Playmakers Set the Tone

Defensively, we return one of the most productive and experienced groups in the SCIAC.

Drew Nees returns after an outstanding sophomore campaign that earned him First Team All-SCIAC recognition. Drew led the team in tackles, tackles for loss, sacks, interceptions, pass breakups, quarterback hurries, and forced fumbles. His ability to impact the game from multiple positions makes him one of the premier defensive players in the conference.

Alongside Nees is Logan Bowers, another returning First Team All-SCIAC linebacker. Logan brings physicality, toughness, and a relentless approach to the field. After recording 65 tackles, seven tackles for loss, and four sacks last season, he returns as one of the leaders of our defense.

Blake Hurley is the rock of our defense. A starter since his freshman year and an All-SCIAC performer, Blake's experience, leadership, and playmaking ability make him a cornerstone of our defensive unit. His presence provides stability and toughness for a defense that expects to play fast, physical, and disciplined football.

Up front, the Kingsmen will be led by returning starters and All SCIAC defensive lineMax Juarez and JD Vargas, who are both critical to the success of our defensive front. Their physicality, toughness, and experience will be essential as we look to establish a dominant presence against the run. Both Max and JD set the tone for the entire defense.Makaio Sanders, Jayden Wood, and Dejuan Colvin have each put together an outstanding training camp. Their development and continued growth have added important depth and competition to the defensive line

In the secondary, Charles Cravings returns after earning Second Team All-SCIAC honors as a freshman. His continued development and experience will be important as we continue building a fast, aggressive, and disciplined defense.

The Kingsmen also return experienced starters Gannon Greenan and JR Ramirez, giving the secondary valuable leadership and continuity. Their experience and understanding of our defensive system will be critical as we face another challenging SCIAC schedule.Dominic Johnson and CJ Alarcon have both had outstanding training camp and have quickly established themselves as players who can make an immediate impact. Their athleticism, instincts, and playmaking ability add even more depth and versatility to an already talented secondary.

Special Teams Remain a Major Strength

Special teams will once again be a major point of emphasis for our football program.

Matthew Montegna returns after earning First Team All-SCIAC honors as a freshman. He led the SCIAC with 10 made field goals last season and established himself as one of the top young specialists in Division III football. His consistency and confidence provide a tremendous advantage for our team.

TeNorris Merkel also returns as one of the conference's most dangerous return specialists, giving us the ability to create momentum and change field position at any moment.

Returning All-SCIAC Players

The returning All-SCIAC players who provide the foundation for the 2026 Kingsmen include:

First Team All-SCIAC

- **Joe Farley**, Quarterback
- **Tyler Woodworth**, Wide Receiver
- **Drew Nees**, Linebacker
- **Logan Bowers**, Linebacker
- **Matthew Montegna**, Kicker
- **TeNorris Merkel**, Return Specialist

Second Team All-SCIAC

- **TeNorris Merkel**, Wide Receiver
- **Charles Cravings**, Safety
- **Max Juarez**, Defensive Line

These players represent an experienced and talented core, but our success will never depend on just a handful of individuals. It will take the entire team. It will take young players stepping into bigger roles, newcomers embracing our culture, and every member of our program committing to the standard of excellence we expect as Kingsmen.

The Outlook

The 2026 season presents an exciting opportunity for Kingsmen Football.

We have returning experience at multiple position groups on all three phases of the ball. We have players who have experienced the preparation and intensity of competing for a SCIAC Championship and understand what it takes to compete at the highest level.

The challenge now is to take the next step.

The SCIAC will be as competitive as ever. Every week will present a new challenge, and our football team must be prepared to be the most physical team every time we take the field.

For our football team, the formula remains simple.

We must be disciplined.

We must be physical.

We must play together.

We must continue to develop depth.

And most importantly, we must remain committed to The Brotherhood.

Our goal is not to simply talk about competing for championships. Our goal is to earn that opportunity every day through our preparation, our habits, and the way we represent Cal Lutheran University.

I am incredibly proud of the work our players and coaching staff have put in to prepare for this season. We have a hungry football team, a strong group of returning leaders, and a brotherhood that continues to grow.

Kingsmen Football is built on tradition and values. We are grateful for the support of our alumni and fans, and we are committed to representing Cal Lutheran University with pride, passion, and purpose.