



WEST VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEERS

Big 12 Conference

A Hot Seat in Morgantown

WEST VIRGINIA BIO

National Championships - 0



Big 12 Championships: 0

Location: **Morgantown, WV**

All-Time Record: **684-463-41**

2022 Results: **5-7**

Head Coach: **Neal Brown**
5th Year (22-25)

The hottest seat in college football is arguably located in Morgantown and has Neal Brown's name on it. He reached a bowl game in both 2020 and 2021 but has a sub-.500 record in four years with the Mountaineers after replacing Dana Holgorsen who ironically appears on the conference schedule this season in the form of the Houston Cougars. There was some excitement centered around former 5-star transfer quarterback JT Daniels which brought forth expectations that 2022 would be the season that the Mountaineers would turn the corner, but those hopes never materialized. West Virginia stumbled out of the gate with two straight close losses including a particularly painful loss to Pittsburgh in the renewal of the "Backyard Brawl." The Mountaineers righted the ship and picked up a dominating win on the road in a tough environment against Virginia Tech but finished the season just 3-5. Despite a season that was disappointing as a whole, there were a few bright spots that emerged, particularly on the offensive side of the football.

When Daniels was eventually benched, **Garrett Greene** stepped up and showed off his athleticism and dual-threat ability in a big home victory over Oklahoma. Greene threw for 138 yards and a touchdown but his legs made the biggest impact and he ran for a career-best 119 yards on just 14 carries and reached the end zone twice. He again showed off the wheels against Oklahoma State with a 36 yard sprint to the house and he appears to be the clear-cut starter in 2023 now that Daniels transferred to Rice. **Nicco Marchiol** helped the Mountaineers clinch a victory in the season finale at Oklahoma State and returns as a solid backup option at quarterback. Greene will learn a new offense with new offensive coordinator Chad Scott who becomes the third OC in as many seasons for WVU.

Under Neal Brown, the running game struggled mightily in his first three seasons (though partially due to a pass-first offense employed by past offensive coordinators) but last year was a positive exception. **CJ Donaldson** made a name for himself on the very first Thursday night of the season by running for 125 yards against bitter rival Pittsburgh and blocking a punt. He's a mammoth of a running back who played only seven games last season due to both a concussion and season-ending leg injury but could easily top 1,000 yards if he can stay healthy. **Justin Johnson** added 430 yards to Donaldson's 526 and Greene had 276 yards and 5 touchdowns. Those players will run behind an offensive line that should be the best Brown has had in his West Virginia tenure led. By center **Zach Frazier**. Now with 34 career starts, Frazier is one of the best centers in the college game and could have a long career playing on Sundays in the future. Virtually the entire offensive line returns around Frazier.

While I expect the ground game to be quite consistent, the passing game is essentially starting from scratch in terms of returning weapons. The top four pass catchers are all gone leaving **Cortez Braham** as the leading returner with just 14 receptions for 147 yards. **Jeremiah Aaron** posted similar numbers and those two figure to be the two starters along with North Carolina State transfer **Devin Carter** but this unit is probably the biggest question mark on the team.

The defense largely held back West Virginia from reaching a third straight bowl game and allowed 40 or more points four separate times. The good news is that seven starters return including linebacker **Lee Kpogba** who was third team All-Big-12 with 92 tackles. **Sean Martin** added 4 sacks last season and is a potential NFL talent but the players around him are relatively inexperienced outside of **Jared Barlett** and the loss of Dante Stills won't be easy to overcome. A pair of transfers will likely start at corner in **Montre Miller** (Kent State) and **Beanie Bishop** (Minnesota). The West Virginia pass defense was picked apart last season and there could be an adjustment period early in the season as new players fill new roles.

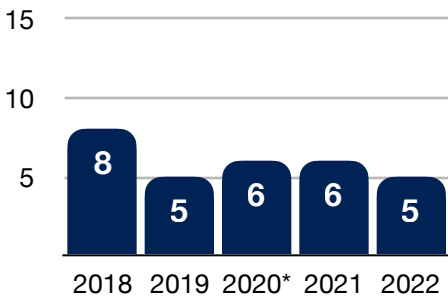
The Bottom Line: West Virginia's schedule isn't exactly friendly, especially early on. The Mountaineers face both Penn State and Pittsburgh in the non-conference and the first two conference opponents are Texas Tech and TCU. Those games all happen in September and a 1-4 start is unfortunately fairly realistic. There's still a chance for the Mountaineers to recover and win enough games to reach a bowl game as the season rolls along, but will it be enough to save Brown's job?

Projection: 5-7 (12th in Big 12)

2022 Statistics













Points Scored	Rush Yards	Pass Yards	Turnover Margin
30.6	171.5	227.5	-8
52nd in FBS	52nd in FBS	71st in FBS	T-119th in FBS
Points Allowed	Rush YDS Allowed	Pass YDS Allowed	
32.9	149.6	262.7	
116th in FBS	66th in FBS	111th in FBS	

5-YEAR WIN TREND



Milan Puskar Stadium (60,000)

2023 West Virginia Schedule

Week	Date	Team
1	Sat, Sept 2	 @ Penn State
2	Sat, Sept 9	 vs. Duquesne
3	Sat, Sept 16	 vs. Pittsburgh
4	Sat, Sept 23	 vs. Texas Tech
5	Sat, Sept 30	 @ TCU
6	Bye Week	
7	Thu, Oct 12	 @ Houston
8	Sat, Oct 21	 vs. Oklahoma St.
9	Sat, Oct 28	 @ UCF
10	Sat, Nov 4	 vs. BYU
11	Sat, Nov 11	 @ Oklahoma
12	Sat, Nov 18	 vs. Cincinnati
13	Sat, Nov 25	 @ Baylor

Conference Games in Bold

KEY GAMES

Sat, Sept 2: @ Penn State - Penn State has thoroughly dominated this matchup 48-9-2 all-time but this rivalry hasn't been played since 1992. The Nittany Lions are legitimate Playoff contenders so the Mountaineers face an incredibly difficult test in week one.

Sat, Sept 15: vs. Pittsburgh - The renewal of the "Backyard Brawl" quite literally slipped through West Virginia's fingers last season. This win would go a long way in producing momentum for the Big 12 portion of the schedule.

Sat, Oct 21: vs. Oklahoma State - The Mountaineers pulled out a 24-19 victory in Stillwater last season and badly need to win to preserve bowl hopes in 2023.

KEY PLAYERS

CJ Donaldson - RB



If CJ Donaldson passed you in the grocery store you might think he played tight end or linebacker. He doesn't. The 6'2" 240 pound running back powered his way through defenses until injuries prematurely ended his season. In a small sample size, the freshman ran for 100 yards in four of the seven games he played and needed just seven carries to do it against Backyard Brawl rival Pittsburgh. If healthy this season, he could be absolutely dominant.

Sean Martin - DE

With several notable departures on the defensive front from last season, West Virginia will be relying heavily on Martin to initiate the pass rush. He forced a fumble against Baylor and made two of his four sacks against Oklahoma. The Mountaineers won both of those games. With another quality season the hometown kid will get an opportunity to play on Sundays.



2022 RESULTS (5-7)

@ Pittsburgh (L 31-38)

Kansas (L 42-55)

Towson (W 65-7)

@ **Virginia Tech (W 33-10)**

@ Texas (L 20-38)

Baylor (W 43-40)

@ Texas Tech (L 10-48)

TCU (L 31-41)

@ Iowa State (L 14-31)

Oklahoma (W 23-20)

Kansas State (L 31-48)

@ **Oklahoma State (W 24-19)**

WEST VIRGINIA

RECRUITING

2023 Class Ranking

50th

(Via 24/7 Sports)