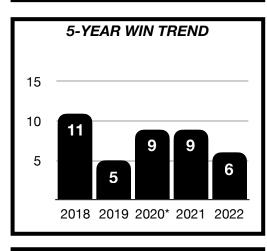


# **ARMY BLACK KNIGHTS**

Independent







Michie Stadium (38,000)

## New Look Army, Same Expectations

Don't adjust your television set when you see Army's offense this season. Yes, that Army quarterback you see before you really is taking the snap from the shotgun and yes, Army really is throwing the ball more than they have since the early 2000s. The new offense is partly in response to new NCAA rules that prohibit cut blocks on the offensive line and partly due to new offensive coordinator Drew Thatcher. The run game will still be the primary focus, of course, but the Black Knight offense will be a bit more balanced especially if they can identify a consistent option at quarterback. Army rotated through four different quarterbacks but none threw for more than 50 passes. Cade Ballard, Tyhier Tyler, and Jeremy Jones are all gone leaving **Bryson Daily** as the lone returner at the position. He attempted just a single pass last season which gives this year's quarterback room... one pass total. Behind Daily are quarterbacks **Alex Meredith**, **Zach Mundell**, **Dewayne Coleman**, and **Jacob Azizi**. It might seem crazy to list this many quarterbacks as potential options but Army has historically rotated players at this position. Plus, none of the four quarterbacks mentioned here have taken a college snap so it's very difficult to assess a frontrunner and Coach Monken has been relatively quiet on the subject. Two freshman, **Larry Robinson** and **Champ Harris**, could also factor into the complicated equation (via Black Knight Nation).

The biggest advantage of the new offense might be getting the ball in **Isaiah Alston**'s hands more often. He's an electric athlete who led the team in receiving with 16 catches and 269 yards after compiling 449 yards the season prior and his ceiling is extraordinarily high. **Ay'Juan Marshall** added 6 catches for 208 yards and **Tyrell Robinson** made 7 catches for 135 yards. Robinson happens to be one of the top returning running backs too on a unit that is incredibly deep. It's probably no surprise that a team that primarily ran the ball would use so many options at running back, slotback, or fullback, but the Black Knights did have seven players who had 30 or more carries. The team's leader Tyler had 663 yards and 12 touchdowns at quarterback but **Tyson Riley** is back after 441 yards. Marshall had a whopping 10.7 yards per carry in a relatively small sample size (24 carries) but those numbers give you an indication of his athleticism and speed. Given the new offensive scheme it's almost a guarantee that the line allows more sacks than there 12 allowed last season but this unit looks to be strong. There's a lot of returning experience and **Connor Finucane** is the strongest link in the chain.

The defense is experienced and brings back eight returning starters including their leading tackler **Leo Lowin** at linebacker. **Jimmy Ciarlo** and **Camden O'Gara** should also provide meaningful contributions at the same position. Statistically, the Black Knights were one of the worst teams against the run in terms of total yards allowed but also consider that opponents ran the ball against Army 473 times. They did average 5.0 yards per carry which is still far too high and players like **Austin Hill** will need to step up on the line. **Cameron Jones** leads the secondary that defended against only 275 passes all season but should be tested more in 2023.

**The Bottom Line:** How bad does Army want to beat Navy and Air Force? According to reports by Sports Illustrated, Army wants those victories so bad that Monkey has put their logos on urinal cakes in the bathrooms at the football facility. The Army-Navy game means absolutely everything and the Army-Air Force game is a close second. If Army wins both of these games the season will be a smashing success but there are other goals within reach, too. The Black Knights just missed out on a bowl game even though they had six wins on account of two of those victories occurring against FCS opponents. Army faces two FCS opponents again this season so they will need to reach seven wins to the postseason. Monken has missed out on a bowl only twice in his nine seasons with the program. Road trips to UTSA, Syracuse, and LSU will be challenges and Army also draws two of the Sun Belt's best in Troy and Coastal Carolina but they host both games. Two games against ULM and Delaware State to open the season should give Army enough runway to workout the kinks in the new offensive scheme and I expect the Black Knights to just do enough to reach a bowl.

#### **Projection: 7-5**



2023 Army Schedule			
Week	Date		Team
1	Sat, Sept 2	A CAN	@ ULM
2	Sat, Sept 9		vs. Delaware St.
3	Fri, Sept 15		@ UTSA
4	Sat, Sept 23	<b>\$</b>	@ Syracuse
5	Bye Week		
6	Sat, Oct 7		vs. Boston Col
7	Sat, Oct 14		vs. Troy
8	Sat, Oct 21		@ LSU
9	Sat, Oct 28		vs. UMass
10	Sat, Nov 4		vs. Air Force*
11	Sat, Nov 11	<b>A</b>	vs. Holy Cross
12	Sat, Nov 18		vs. Coastal Car
13	Bye Week		
14	Bye Week		
15	Sat, Dec 9		vs. Navy*
Conference Games in Bold			

#### **KEY GAMES**

**Sat, Sept 15: @ UTSA** - Army narrowly lost to the Roadrunners in overtime last season and must now travel to the Alamodome to face a team looking to win their third straight conference championship.

**Sat, Nov 4: vs. Air Force\*** - In what is essentially a road game for the Black Knights (Denver), Army and Air Force will face off in an intense rivalry that has been decided by no more than a touchdown in each of the last five seasons.

**Sat, Dec 9: vs. Navy**\* - Welcome to the 124th edition of the best rivalry in sports. Army took advantage of a timely fumble to claim the first ever overtime game in the series' storied history and have now won five of the last seven games.

#### **KEY PLAYERS**

#### Isaiah Alston - WR

If you haven't seen some of the highlight plays Alston has been making in fall camp, do your self a favor and look it up, you'll be amazed. Army wide receivers have been historically utilized primarily as blockers but Alston and company will have more of an opportunity to shine as pass catchers and the 6'3" speedster could make a monumental impact on the Army offense.

#### Leo Lowin - LB

Lowin made a major impact in Army's big doubleovertime victory over Navy making 16 tackles to reach an even 100 on the season. Over the course of the year he also added three sacks, a forced fumble, and an interception in back-toback weeks against Colgate and ULM. He's the "quarterback" of the defense and leads a quality linebacker corps that should pace the Army defense.

### 2022 RESULTS (6-6)

@ Coastal Carolina (L 28-38) UTSA (L 38-41)
Villanova (W 49-10)
Georgia State (L 14-31)
@ Wake Forest (L 10-45)
Colgate (W 42-17)
ULM (W 48-24)
Air Force (L 7-13)
@ Troy (L 9-10)
UConn (W 34-17)
@ UMass (W 44-7)
Navy (W 20-17)

ARMY

