



MISSISSIPPI STATE BULLDOGS

SEC - West Division

MISSISSIPPI STATE BIO

National Championships - 0



SEC Championships: 1
(Last: 1941)

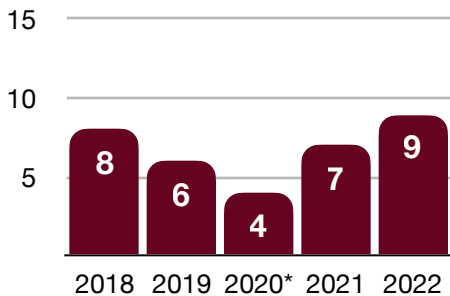
Location: **Starkville, MS**

All-Time Record: **581-590-36**

2022 Results: **9-4**
Won ReliaQuest Bowl

Head Coach: **Zach Arnett**
1st Year (1-0)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



Davis Wade Stadium (61,337)

Remembering a Legend

The college football world was rocked when the news of Mike Leach's tragic and sudden passing was announced. Leach was one of the most beloved coaches in the country and in many ways he revolutionized the modern offense of the sport. He was known for his dry sense of humor, his invigorating and entertaining interviews, and his creativity. His coaching tree is decorated with many branches as pupil after pupil continue to move through the college football coaching ranks. He will be deeply missed as a head coach but, more importantly, as a person. Mississippi State opted to play in the ReliaQuest Bowl last year in Leach's honor and the Bulldogs won an emotional game 19-10 over Illinois. Practically speaking, Leach had completely rejuvenated this program and the Bulldogs had increased their win total from 4 to 7 to 8 last year prior to his passing.

Zach Arnett coached the bowl game and steps into the full-time head coaching role. He obviously has enormous shoes to fill and this season will still be very emotional. He'll bring a bit more balance to the offense as opposed to Leach's famous air raid style of offense. Quarterback **Will Rogers** slung the ball a whopping 610 times last year and finished with 3,974 yards and 35 touchdowns. He smashed Dan Prescott's record for most career passing yards (10,689) and will only add to that number this season. Rogers probably won't come near those numbers this year in the new offense but, assuming he stays healthy, he'll reach 100 career passing yards and will end his career as one of the most successful Bulldog quarterbacks ever. Rogers rifled the ball all over the field to a wide variety of receivers so while the top yardage receiver is gone in Rara Thomas, four receivers return who had 30 or more catches including **Rufus Harvey**, **Lideatrick Griffin**, **Jaden Walley**, and **Justin Robinson**. **Jo'Quavious Marks** caught 48 passes for 288 yards from the running back position in addition to his 582 yards on the ground.

Marks' versatility makes him an immediate candidate for attention from NFL scouts. Offensive coordinator Kevin Barbay will open up the run game which will give Marks a huge opportunity to shine as a running back. **Keyvone Lee** joins the running back room from Penn State and **Simeon Price** served as Marks' backup last season. The offensive line returns nearly every starter from last season which should help smooth out any bumps that show up throughout the transition to the new offensive scheme.

The new Mississippi State defensive coordinator is Matt Brock (former linebackers coach) now that Zach Arnett is head coach. Brock has just four returning starters but does luck out with the top three tacklers returning including two All-SEC linebackers **Nathaniel Watson** (113 tackles, 6 sacks) and **Jett Johnson** (115 tackles, 2 sacks). **Decameron Richardson** made 85 tackles at cornerback and his return gives a big lift to the secondary. More pressure up front wouldn't hurt and although the Bulldogs had 31 sacks on the season, seven came against Illinois in the bowl game and only 18 of those sacks were against SEC opponents. Tackle **Jaden Crumedy** is the lone returning starter on the line. Outside of Richardson, the secondary is inexperienced and could be a weakness. The Bulldogs allowed 23.1 points per game, a four-year best, but I expect to see a bit of an increase in that statistic this season.












The Bottom Line: Mississippi State's nine win season (their first since 2015) was overlooked in the West due to LSU's upstart season but the Bulldogs were much closer to the top of the pack in the SEC than the average college football fan may realize. Consider that three of the Bulldogs' four losses were against Alabama, Georgia, and LSU. This season a trip to South Carolina replaces their game against Georgia last year but the Bulldogs draw Kentucky again. A 2-3 September is very realistic but October offers a couple of winnable games even though Mississippi State travels to both Arkansas and Auburn. Despite last year's successful season, there will be growing pains as Mississippi State makes the transition to a different offensive scheme. The SEC West is the best division in college football and the margin between competing (like the Bulldogs did last season, finishing tied for third) and struggling is razor thin. I see this year as a rebuilding season for Mississippi State but there's enough talent on the roster to prove me wrong.

Projection: 4-8 (7th in SEC West)

2022 Statistics

Points Scored	Rush Yards	Pass Yards	Turnover Margin
31.6	81.7	311.2	+4
43rd in FBS	130th in FBS	10th in FBS	T-42nd in FBS
Points Allowed	Rush YDS Allowed	Pass YDS Allowed	
23.1	134.2	210.3	
40th in FBS	41st in FBS	42nd in FBS	

2023 Mississippi State Schedule

Week	Date	Team
1	Sat, Sept 2	 vs. SE Louisiana
2	Sat, Sept 9	 vs. Arizona
3	Sat, Sept 16	 vs. LSU
4	Sat, Sept 23	 @ South Carolina
5	Sat, Sept 30	 vs. Alabama
6	Sat, Oct 7	 vs. W. Michigan
7	Bye Week	
8	Sat, Oct 21	 @ Arkansas
9	Sat, Oct 28	 @ Auburn
10	Sat, Nov 4	 vs. Kentucky
11	Sat, Nov 11	 @ Texas A&M
12	Sat, Nov 18	 vs. Southern Miss
13	Thu, Nov 23	 vs. Mississippi

Conference Games in Bold

KEY GAMES

Sat, Oct 28: @ Auburn - Both teams have new head coaches so this matchup could be a good test of which program is ahead of the other in their respective new eras. The Bulldogs have won the last two meetings but needed overtime to get the victory last season.

Sat, Nov 11: @ Texas A&M - Mississippi State's win over then #17 Texas A&M really got the momentum rolling in 2022 and resulted in a top 25 ranking the following week.

Sat, Nov 23: vs. Mississippi - Leach claimed an Egg Bowl victory in what sadly became his final game. The all-time series is in the Rebels' favor 64-47-6 but the Bulldogs have now won three of five.

KEY PLAYERS

Will Rogers - QB

Rogers' role may look slightly different in a new offense but his talent and his ability to make every throw on the football field won't change. He threw for nearly 5,000 yards in 2021 and added nearly 4,000 more in 2022 to become the program's all-time leading passer. In what could be his last season (he does have a year of eligibility remaining after this season), expect to see Rogers leave everything out on the field as the ultimate competitor builds on his illustrious career.



Nathaniel Watson - LB

Watson is entering his sixth season in a Bulldogs uniform and he has improved rapidly in the past two seasons. After 83 tackles and five sacks in 2021, Watson confirmed that he is one of the SEC's best defenders with an impressive 113 tackle campaign in 2022 that feature six sacks, a forced fumble, and an interception that he returned 51 yards. The NFL will be calling soon.



2022 RESULTS (9-4)

Memphis (W 49-23)

@ Arizona (W 39-17)

@ LSU (L 16-31)

Bowling Green (W 45-14)

Texas A&M (W 42-24)

Arkansas (W 40-17)

@ Kentucky (L 17-27)

@ Alabama (L 6-30)

Auburn (W 39-33)

Georgia (L 19-45)

E. Tennessee State (W 56-7)

@ Mississippi (W 24-22)

Illinois (W 19-10)



RECRUITING

2023 Class Ranking

26th

(Via 24/7 Sports)