



UAB BLAZERS

2023 Record: 4-8

American Athletic Conference

Birmingham, AL

FBS Ranking

91

Can UAB prove last year's losing season was just an anomaly?

HC: Trent Dilfer
(2nd Year, 4-8)

OC: Alex Mortensen
(2nd Year)

DC: Stone Ta'ufu'ou
(2nd Year)

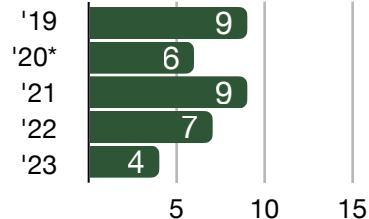
2024 Class Rankings

Recruiting
98

Transfer Portal
96

Via 24/7 Sports

UAB WIN TREND



2023 Results (4-8)

NC A&T (W 35-6)
 @ Georgia So. (L 35-49)
 Louisiana (L 21-41)
 @ Georgia (L 21-49)
 @ Tulane (L 23-35)
South Florida (W 56-35)
 @ UTSA (L 20-41)
 Memphis (L 21-45)
Florida Atlantic (W 45-42)
 @ Navy (L 6-31)
Temple (W 34-24)
 @ North Texas (L 42-45)



Given the lack of experience heading into Trent Dilfer's first season, the 2023 campaign was expected to be a bit of a down season (we projected a 4-8 finish and that's exactly what UAB did). The transition really effected the defense, which was one of the worst in college football. The Blazers allowed 40 points or more in over half of their games. Comparatively, the offense did well and scored 20 or more points in all but one of the eight losses, scoring 29.9 points per game across the entire season.

Year two appears to be much more promising for Dilfer and his staff. For one, UAB got their feet wet last year in American conference play, a step up from the competition they faced in Conference USA. They took their lumps at times and finished with a losing record in conference play for the first time in over a decade. That adversity has shaped the 2024 roster and there is an obvious hunger to succeed this season.

OFFENSE

UAB stumbled upon a budding star in quarterback **Jacob Zeno**. After a sneak peak of the Baylor transfer in 2022, he put together a fantastic season that included a remarkable completion percentage of 73.6%, the eighth-most accurate season in FBS history among qualifiers (Oregon's Bo Nix tied the all-time record with his 77.4% completion percentage last year). Zeno returns for his sixth collegiate season and his third at UAB. If he can replicate his production from 2023, he'll crack the top three in school history for passing yards. His go-to deep threat Tejhaun Palmer is gone following a 858 season but his most targeted receiver **Amare Thomas** is back after 53 catches and 437 yards as a freshman.

The Blazers have had a remarkable run at running back for nearly an entire decade. Spencer Brown tore through opposing defenses for 4,011 career yards, smashing the school record for career rush yards. Just as Spencer Brown was winding down his career, Dewayne McBride and Jermaine Brown emerged and both had produced a ton of offense. McBride finished his career in 2022 with 3,523 yards (second all-time) and last year Jermaine Brown ended his time in Birmingham with 3,078 yards (third all-time). Brown also contributed 41 catches and 416 receiving yards and he's the most significant departure on the team. Could **Lee Beebe** be the next impact running back for UAB? He has some huge shoes to fill, but he did rush for 367 yards on only 52 carries for a 6.9 average as a redshirt freshman.

The offensive line brings back a lot of starting experience including **Brady Wilson** and **Quez Yates**. This group has been supplemented with the transfer portal and as a whole the line should be deeper and more talented than last season. Zeno faced a lot of pressure last season, but his jersey should hopefully look a lot cleaner in 2024.

DEFENSE

Opposing offenses teed off against every aspect of the UAB defense last season. The group had a very difficult time getting off the field which snowballed into lots of points and lots of yards allowed. The UAB offense had three fewer minutes of possession per game in 2023 than they did in 2022 when the defense allowed only 23.2 points per game. Expecting numbers like that in 2024 is probably unrealistic but perhaps the Blazers can split the difference between that number and the 36.9 points allowed last season.

Improvement on the part of the defensive line will help the defensive as a who tremendously. UAB did claim 27 sacks but they were in the bottom ten of all FBS schools in runs allowed and they allowed more first downs than any team in the conference. **Kevin Penn** provided 43 tackles and four sacks from the tackle position and **Desmond Little** led the team with 5.5 sacks.

Michael Moore is the team's returning tackler at linebacker. He'll be joined at the position by **Everett Rousseau** (50 tackles) and Purdue transfer **OC Brothers**. **Adrian Maddox** had a productive season at FCS Alabama State. The front seven in Stone Ta'ufu'ou's will have a great opportunity to gel in the first two weeks of the season which features to very winnable games against Alcorn State and ULM.

Last year, Dilfer had to rebuild the secondary almost from scratch. This year is similar, but there are a few Power 4 transfers ready to step in. UAB turned to the ACC and brought in safeties **Sirad Bryant** (Georgia Tech) and **Ray Thornton** (Clemson). Corner **Colby Dempsey** had 37 tackles and a pick in 2023 with the Blazers.



LEE BEEBE – RB

Photo via AL.com

2024 UAB Schedule

Wk	Date	Opponent
1	Thu, Aug 29	vs. Alcorn State
2	Sat, Sept 7	@ ULM
3	Sat, Sept 14	@ Arkansas
5	Sat, Sept 28	vs. Navy
6	Sat, Oct 5	vs. Tulane
7	Sat, Oct 12	@ Army
8	Sat, Oct 19	@ South Florida
10	Sat, Nov 2	vs. Tulsa
11	Sat, Nov 9	vs. UConn
12	Sat, Nov 16	@ Memphis
13	Sat, Nov 23	vs. Rice
14	Sat, Nov 30	@ Charlotte

■ Home ■ Away

Key Games

@ Army: The Blazers hadn't faced a service academy team since 2004 (Army) prior last season. Against Navy, they were blown out 31-6 and would like to avoid a similar fate at West Point.

@ South Florida: UAB has won just one game on the road over the past two seasons. The Bulls figure to be a contender in the AAC which would make a road win in Tampa that much sweeter.

@ Memphis: Want to win a 100-pound statue depicting a rack of ribs? Win the "Battle of the Bones" rivalry. The Tigers did exactly that last year in a 45-21 rout. This rivalry was played from 1999 to 2012 with UAB winning ten times.

Player Spotlight

Photo via Blazer Victory

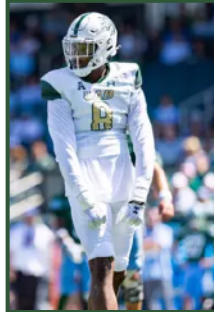


AMARE THOMAS – WR

In Trent Dilfer and OC Alex Mortensen’s system, the short pass is utilized a lot which requires a lot out of the wide receiver corps. The Birmingham native was tall to the task as a true freshman, recording 53 catches for 437 yards and 3 touchdowns. He had two of his best games when UAB was facing their toughest competition and snagged a season-high nine catches against Georgia and eight the next week against Tulane.

2023 Stats: 53 REC, 437 YDS, 3 TD

Photo via UAB Athletics



DESMOND LITTLE – DE

Not a lot went right for the UAB defense last season, but the lone bright spot was arguably the team’s 27 sacks. Little contributed the most of any player to that total in his first season with UAB after transferring in from LSU. He had a sack in four of his last five games and the week before that streak, he forced a fumble against Tulane. The Blazers badly need more reliable pressure against quarterbacks and Little’s play will help.

2023 Stats: 29 TKL, 7.5 TFL YDS, 5.5 SACK, 1 FF

Photo via Stadium DB



Protective Stadium (47,100)



Jacob ZENO

SPECIAL TEAMS

After an adventure in the kicking game last year (11 of 18 field goals), **Jonah Delange** will likely step in as the new starter. **Patrick Foley** returns to punt. Jermaine Brown handled kickoff returns so that role will fall to someone else.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Trent Dilfer is eager to prove that his team can win football games, but the process of getting back to a bowl game starts by just being competitive in every game. On five separate occasions, the Blazers lost a game last year by at least 20 points. The defense certainly deserves a lot of the blame and UAB is going to have a difficult time winning on the road if that side of the ball doesn’t improve (the Blazers are just 1-11 the last two seasons away from Protective Stadium).

The non-conference schedule is very manageable even with a road trip to Arkansas. The Blazers will have every opportunity to start the season 3-1 (including a win in the conference opener against Navy), anything less will probably feel like a disappointment. UAB faces most of the contenders in the conference, but November home games against Tulsa, UConn, and Rice offer the needed opportunities for reaching at least six wins on the campaign. In the worst-case scenario, the defense isn’t improved, the offense takes a step back, and the Blazers miss a bowl game again. However, in the best-case scenario, UAB is a darkhorse contender in the American.

Appointment Television



vs.



Saturday, October 19

If you’re looking for a good quarterback battle, Jacob Zeno vs. Bryum Brown is about as good as it gets. Don’t believe me? In last year’s matchup, Zeno won the battle in the air with a stellar performance of 19/25, 353 yards, and 4 touchdowns, but Bynum ran for a career high 136 yards and 2 touchdowns and threw for 260 yards and two more touchdowns and the Bulls took home a 56-35 victory.

2023 Statistics

Statistic	Offense		Defense		
	Per Game	FBS Rank	Per Game	FBS Rank	
Points	29.9	49	Points	36.9	127
Rushing	161.1	60	Rushing	197.1	123
Passing	288.9	18	Passing	238.0	88
Total	450.0	18	Total	435.1	118
Sacks	32	T-103	Sacks	27	T-53

2024 Projection

7-5

7th in AAC

Trophy Case



XO



XO



XO