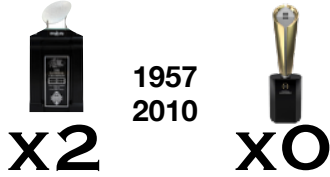




### AUBURN BIO

#### National Championships - 2



SEC Championships: 8  
(Last: 2013)

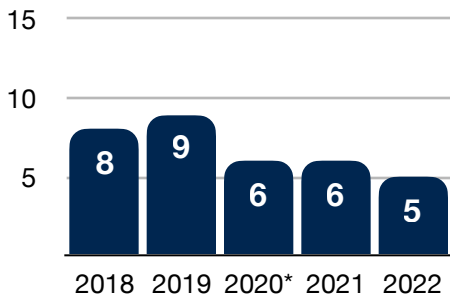
Location: **Auburn, AL**

All-Time Record: **770-452-42**

2022 Results: **5-7**

Head Coach: **Hugh Freeze**  
1st Year (0-0)

#### 5-YEAR WIN TREND



Jordan-Hare Stadium (87,451)

## The Freeze Era Begins

The Bryan Hardin experiment quickly turned into a unmitigated disaster both on and off the field. Entering his second year, Auburn fans were practically begging him to give a reason to be fired and their hopes came true when the Tigers hit a five game losing streak to fall to just 3-6. Carnell "Cadillac" Williams (the program's second all-team leading rusher with 3,831 career yards) took over as the interim head coach and provided an immediate spark to Auburn and the Tigers won their next two games against Texas A&M and Western Kentucky before falling to Alabama in the Iron Bowl. To fill the full-time head coaching role, Auburn turned to a familiar face in the SEC and brought in Hugh Freeze (and Williams remains on staff as the running backs coach and associate head coach).

Freeze coached Mississippi from 2012 to 2016 and worked wonders in Oxford and had the Rebels ranked as high as #4 in the inaugural College Football Playoff season of 2014. It wasn't all roses for Hugh Freeze and Ole Miss, however. Freeze was fired before the 2017 season due to a combination of off-the-field misconduct and recruiting violations. The Rebels vacated 33 victories over both Houston Nutt and Freeze's tenures and were hit with a postseason ban and scholarship reductions. One could say that Freeze was simply ahead of his time (NIL) and his recruiting efforts have already paid dividends. Say what you want about Freeze off the field (the criticism he has received is fair). However, at every stop along his career he has won football games. He has a double-digit win season at Arkansas State, Mississippi, and Liberty, and he won't be daunted by the SEC West.

The Auburn offense has struggled to find their footing since the 2019 season that include a big upset over Alabama in the Iron Bowl. The Tigers hit a new low with just 24.8 points per game last season and the passing game was the worst in the SEC. The Tigers partially made up for that weakness with a strong running game but Tank Bigsby is now gone to the NFL and Freeze is accustomed to strong quarterback play. That particular aspect of the offense could be a work in progress. TJ Finley started last season for the Tigers but was knocked out with an injury and he had just one touchdown to four interceptions when he left. **Robby Ashford** stepped in as a true freshman and worked through growing pains as a passer (49.2% completion, 7 interceptions) but showcased his skills as a runner and had two 100-yard games including a career-high 121 yards and 2 touchdowns against Alabama. He finished the season with 710 yards (second on the team) and had more carries than completions. The Tigers also brought in Michigan State transfer **Payton Thorne** who had flashes of brilliance in 2021 but a much quieter season in 2022. If Ashford can develop his passing, he offers the highest upside of the two quarterbacks.

Even with Bigsby's departure, the run game will be the strength of the offense. **Marquez Hunter** ran for 675 yards with a team-best 6.5 yards per carry and the Tigers may have found a real difference maker in **Brian Battie**. He's a transfer from South Florida who ran for 1,186 yards despite being stuck on a 1-11 Bulls team last year. He also added 659 yards on kick returns which gives Freeze two stellar options with Hunter taking 14 returns last year for 302 yards. **Jeremiah Cobb** is a freshman to watch out for at running back. The top three pass catchers return (which includes Hunter). **Ja'Varrius Johnson** caught 26 passes for 493 yards and **Roy Moore** caught 20 passes for 314 yards.

The Auburn defense took it on the chin last season especially in their efforts to stop the run. Nine starters are back for new defensive coordinator Ron Roberts including the cornerback duo of **Nehemiah Pritchett** and **DJ James**. A couple of transfers should hopefully revitalize the front seven including **Austin Keys** (Mississippi) and **Justin Rogers** (Kentucky).

**The Bottom Line:** Although there will be a period of "feeling out" as Freeze makes his adjustments to the program, he's familiar with both the conference and the division so the transition could be somewhat seamless and 17 returning starters only helps. The Tigers benefit from a three-game runway before a brutal stretch of games hits (Texas A&M, Georgia, LSU, Mississippi). I project the Tigers to have a 6-5 record going into the Iron Bowl and for Freeze to reach a bowl game in his first season here. Assuming no unforeseen disasters arise this season, Auburn is a program on the rise.













## Projection: 6-6 (6th in SEC West)

### 2022 Statistics

Points Scored	Rush Yards	Pass Yards	Turnover Margin
<b>24.8</b>	<b>205.8</b>	<b>172.7</b>	<b>-10</b>
88th in FBS	18th in FBS	119th in FBS	122nd in FBS
Points Allowed	Rush YDS Allowed	Pass YDS Allowed	
<b>29.5</b>	<b>172.7</b>	<b>222.7</b>	
98th in FBS	97th in FBS	61st in FBS	



## 2023 Auburn Schedule

Week	Date	Team
1	Sat, Sept 2	 vs. UMass
2	Sat, Sept 9	 @ California
3	Sat, Sept 16	 vs. Samford
4	Sat, Sept 23	 @ Texas A&M
5	Sat, Sept 30	 vs. Georgia
6	Bye Week	
7	Sat, Oct 14	 @ LSU
8	Sat, Oct 21	 vs. Mississippi
9	Sat, Oct 28	 vs. Mississippi St
10	Sat, Nov 4	 @ Vanderbilt
11	Sat, Nov 11	 @ Arkansas
12	Sat, Nov 18	 vs. N. Mexico St.
13	Sat, Nov 25	 vs. Alabama

Conference Games in Bold

### KEY GAMES

**Sat, Sept 23: @ Texas A&M** - Last year's win over the Aggies provided a badly needed salve to a five-game winning streak. Like Auburn, the Aggies are trying to erase the memories of a 5-7 season. They're loaded with talent and a win on the road at Kyle Field is always a difficult accomplishment.

**Sat, Nov 11: @ Arkansas** - Freeze actually faced Arkansas last season. By point margin alone (a questionable comparison tool, to be fair), Liberty fared better against the Razorbacks.

**Sat, Nov 25: vs. Alabama** - Freeze has yet to get a taste of the Iron Bowl but he is one of only two head coaches who can say they have defeated Nick Sagan twice (2014, 2015).

## KEY PLAYERS

### Brian Battie - RB

Battie was dominant for the South Florida Bulls last season and ran for 1,186 yards at a 6.7 yards per carry clip. He found the end zone eight times and was a big contributor on special teams and in the passing game too. Defenses in the American tried to key in on Battie but couldn't find a way to stop him. He joins a deep running back room and I believe he will quickly turn into one of the transfer portal's hidden gems.



### Nehemiah Pritchett - CB

Pritchett is one of the most experienced veterans on the Auburn defense and has started the better part of three seasons. Last year was his best with a career high 37 tackles and 8 pass breakups. Auburn will, from time to time, blitz him off the edge and he recorded a sack against Texas A&M last season. He's a physical corner who hits hard and makes plays all over the field including a 99-yard kick six against Alabama State in 2021.



## 2022 RESULTS (5-7)

**Mercer (W 42-16)**

**San Jose State (W 24-16)**

Penn State (L 12-41)

**Missouri (W 17-14)**

LSU (L 17-21)

@ Georgia (L 10-42)

@ Mississippi (L 34-48)

Arkansas (L 27-41)

@ Mississippi State (L 33-39)

**Texas A&M (W 13-10)**

**Western Kentucky (W 41-17)**

@ Alabama (L 27-49)

# AUBURN

## RECRUITING

2023 Class Ranking

# 18th

(Via 24/7 Sports)