



FLORIDA ATLANTIC OWLS

2023 Record: 4-8

American Athletic Conference

Boca Raton, FL

FBS Ranking

99



FEDERICO MARANGES – C

Photo via @FedeMaranges on X

Ever since Florida Atlantic's 2019 Conference USA Championship season under Lane Kiffin, the Owls haven't been able to get over the five-win mark in a season. It looked as though Tom Herman would break that streak in his first year in Boca Raton but after a 4-4 start, the Owls lost the final four games of the season to end at 4-8. Unfortunately, poor finishes to the season have become a theme in recent seasons. It's now four years in a row that Florida Atlantic has dropped the final two games of the season. If there's blame to place, the defense allowed far too many points in the 2020, 2021, and 2022 seasons, but it was actually the offense that fell a bit short last season.

Now that the Owls have experienced a season in the American, can they find six wins on the schedule and reach the postseason?

OFFENSE

Tom Herman is an offensive-minded head coach, but he faces a challenge this season with only four starters back on a team that scored just 23.8 points per game. In fairness, part of the adjustment last season was not only better competition in the AAC but also getting used to Herman and offensive coordinator Charlie Frye's scheme.

Quarterback Casey Thompson was injured early in the season which prompted Daniel Richardson to take over. Both are gone, leaving **Tyriq Starks** as the only returner who attempted a pass, but the starting role will likely be handed to Marshall transfer **Cam Fancher**. He's easily the most experienced option and he's a capable runner.

Running the ball was a challenge in 2023 and of the six players who had positive yardage in rushing, only **Zuberi Mobley** returns. The Owls as a team averaged just 3.7 yards per carry and Mobley was a notch below that at 2.8, although he didn't have much chance to improve those numbers after an early season-ending injury. **CJ Campbell** saw a handful of carries at Florida State and will compete for carries. Whether the run game takes a step forward from last year likely comes down to how well a relatively young offensive line comes together. Center **Federico Maranges** started all 12 games but the starts are few and far between otherwise.

The top five pass catchers have left including 1,000-yard receiver LaJohntay Westler. The leading returner is **BJ Alexander** with his 10 catches for 104 yards and tight end **Zeke Moore** caught 12 passes and two touchdowns as a freshman. Here too Herman has turned towards the portal for immediate options at wideout, among them are **Marilyn Johnson** (Buffalo) and **Milan Tucker** (Appalachian State). This unit will benefit from more consistent quarterback play and if the Owls can establish the run game in 2024, even better.

DEFENSE

While there are uncertainties on offense, the defense could be the foundation of a bowl bid. As talented as the offense was in that 2019 C-USA Championship season, the defense held opponents to 22.7 points per game and the Owls managed a ridiculous +21 turnover margin. Obviously, that kind of turnover statistic is the exception and not the rule, but the scoring defense in 2019 is a reasonable goal for the 2024 defense to achieve.

The defense starts with linebacker **Jackson Ambush** who transitioned seamlessly from FCS Albany last season. **Eddie Williams** is back after an early season-ending injury and will look to regain the form that produced 65 tackles, 2.5 sacks, and a forced fumble in 2022. He's seen the good, bad, and the ugly (and everything in between) as he enters his sixth season with the program.

The secondary loses their star in Jarron Morris who contributed 86 tackles, 7.5 tackles for loss, and 3 interceptions. Even with Morris, that unit allowed nearly 250 passing yards a game. **Kahzir Brown** started a lot of games at Maine and will get his first experience in the FBS at cornerback. He joins **Daemon "Daedae" Hill** who claimed a pair of interceptions and broke up four other tackles.

Up front, **Marlon Bradley** was the most productive and returns the most sacks from last season (3) including two in a close loss to Illinois. **Chris Jones** chipped in 1.5 sacks and 22 tackles. With those two ends returning, the defensive line should cause some headaches for opposing offenses.

Can Herman and the Owls end losing season streak?

HC: Tom Herman
(2nd Year, 4-8)

OC: Charlie Frye
(2nd Year)

DC: Roc Bellantoni
(2nd Year)

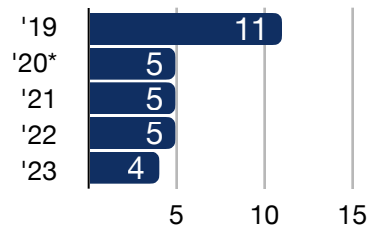
2024 Class Rankings

Recruiting
79

Transfer Portal
81

Via 24/7 Sports

FLORIDA ATLANTIC WIN TREND



2023 Results (4-8)

- Monmouth (W 42-20)
- Ohio (L 10-17)
- @ Clemson (L 14-48)
- @ Illinois (L 17-23)
- Tulsa (W 20-17)
- @ South Florida (W 56-14)
- UTSA (L 10-36)
- @ Charlotte (W 38-16)
- @ UAB (L 42-45)
- East Carolina (L 7-22)
- Tulane (L 8-24)
- @ Rice (L 21-24)



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2024 FAU Schedule

Wk	Date	Location
1	Fri, Aug 30	@ Michigan State
2	Sat, Sept 7	vs. Army
3	Sat, Sept 14	vs. Florida Intl
4	Sat, Sept 21	@ UConn
5	Sat, Sept 28	vs. Wagner
7	Sat, Oct 12	vs. North Texas
8	Sat, Oct 19	@ UTSA
10	Fri, Nov 1	vs. South Florida
11	Thu, Nov 7	@ East Carolina
12	Sat, Nov 16	@ Temple
13	Sat, Nov 23	vs. Charlotte
14	Sat, Nov 30	@ Tulsa

■ Home ■ Away

Key Games

@ Michigan State: The Spartans are firmly in rebuild territory under first year head coach Jonathan Smith, could they be susceptible to an upset in his first game in East Lansing?

vs. North Texas: These two former Conference USA members will do battle for the first time in the American. If the Owls emerge with a 3-2 or even 4-1 record in September, this home game will have added significance

@ Tulsa: The Owls have lost the last game of the season in each of the last four years. A game against Tulsa gives them a great chance to end the streak, even on the road, and if a bowl game is on the line this contest means even more.

Player Spotlight

Photo via The Palm Beach Post



JACKSON AMBUSH – LB

Ambush made an immediate impact for the Owls after transferring in from Albany. He topped the team's tackle chart with 87 and he recorded 13 of those in a career-best performance against Rice in the season finale. Against Ohio, he snagged an interception on the very first play of the game. If not for a midseason injury that slowed him down a bit he would have likely posted 100 tackles and if healthy this year, he'll reach that mark.

2023 Stats: 87 TKL, 6.5 TFL, 1 SACK, 1 INT

Photo via FAU Owl's Nest

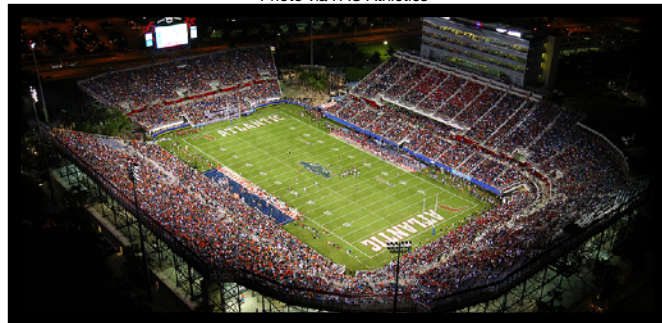


CAM FANCHER – QB

Fancher is capable of producing a lot of offense, but he'll need to reduce his turnovers for the Owls to find success in 2024. He completed an impressive 65.6% of his passes but yet he threw an equal number of interceptions to touchdowns. Some of those mistakes can be taught. What can't be taught is the quick legs he possesses out of the backfield that allowed him to score four rushing touchdowns and gain 273 yards.

2023 Stats: 65.6% COMP, 2162 YDS, 11 TD, 11 INT

Photo via FAU Athletics



FAU Stadium (29,571)



Eddie WILLIAMS

SPECIAL TEAMS

Florida Atlantic only attempted eight field goals last season (likely due to a lack of confidence in the unit) but their kicker from 2022 is back, **Morgan Suarez**. He connected on 9 of 13 field goals with a long of 43 yards and made every PAT. **Logan Lupo** handles the punting. Not only was LaJohntay Wester a 1,000+ yard receiver but he was also a dynamic kick returner and the Owls will have to find a replacement.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Tom Herman was superb in his previous stop in the American with Houston. He went 22-4 in two seasons and brought home an American Championship in 2015. This season could represent his toughest challenge in this conference. The Owls are eager to snap their losing season streak and many feel that they should routinely compete at the top of the conference, especially with a location like Boca Raton that can be used in wooing transfers to the program.

Florida Atlantic avoids both Memphis and Tulane and the non-conference is manageable, too. That's good news for a team looking to establish their offense. Four home games in the first six contests also helps in that regard. There are lot of questions on that side of the ball. That doesn't mean that the team can't answer those questions, but it is something to watch and will determine just how successful this season can be.

Appointment Television



vs.



Sat, Sept 14 - 6:00 PM ET ESPN+

Now that Florida Atlantic has moved to the American, these neighboring programs won't *always* play one another on an annual basis (although the series is currently scheduled through 2027). This season, the Owls will be eying the Don Shula Award for the seventh consecutive time. Florida Atlantic has thoroughly dominated those matchups (a 30+ point win in almost every game in the six game streak).

2023 Statistics

Offense			Defense		
Statistic	Per Game	FBS Rank	Statistic	Per Game	FBS Rank
Points	23.8	87	Points	25.5	57
Rushing	115.3	108	Rushing	149.3	64
Passing	215.5	76	Passing	248.1	103
Total	330.8	100	Total	397.3	90
Sacks	30	T-93	Sacks	28	46

2024 Projection
6-6
9th in AAC



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Trophy Case