



### UCF BIO

National Championships - 0



Big 12 Championships: 0

Location: **Orlando, FL**

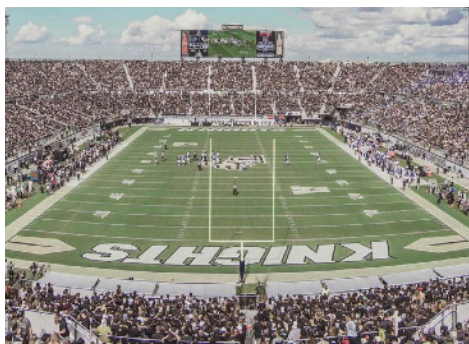
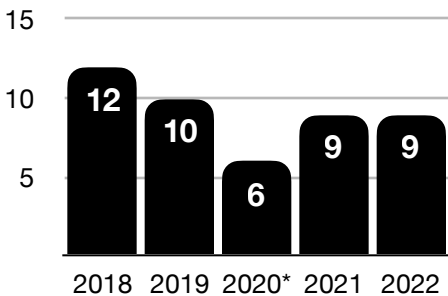
All-Time Record: **192-140**

2022 Results: **9-4**

**Lost in Military Bowl**

Head Coach: **Gus Malzahn**  
2nd Year (18-9)

### 5-YEAR WIN TREND



FBC Mortgage Stadium (45,301)

## Can UCF Make Big 12 Transition Look Easy?

Of the four newcomers to the Big 12 (Cincinnati, BYU, and Houston being the other three), UCF appears to be poised as the team best prepared to immediately compete in the conference this season. Time will tell which of the four teams enjoys the best long-term success but head coach Gus Malzahn knows a thing or two about competing at the highest level of college football. He made an appearance in the final BCS national championship game and actually has the best head-to-head record against Nick Saban of any active head coach. Malzahn adds former UCF quarterback Darin Hinshaw to his staff as offensive coordinator, replacing Chip Lindsey who now fills the same role at North Carolina. Hinshaw's arrival marks the fifth offensive coordinator in as many seasons but he could prove to be one of the best. He was previously at UAB and had the Blazers' offense on a tear and Malzahn trusts him enough to call plays for the Knights this season.

Regardless of the new wrinkles on offense, one thing will remain true: **John Rhys Plumlee** will be making plays for UCF. The dual football and baseball athlete returns for his second season as the Knights' starter and he exemplifies the dual-threat quarterback. He tossed 14 touchdowns and threw for 2,586 yards while running for 11 more touchdowns and compiling 862 rushing yards. He did carry the ball 159 times and took 28 sacks last season, so health is a long-term concern but there's no denying his playmaking ability. He may need to improve his pocket passing this season as he'll be facing faster defenses but he's a former Mississippi Rebel and understands the kind of competition he will face.

Thanks to Plumlee and running backs Isaiah Bower and **RJ Harvey**, the UCF running game was one of the best in the entire country. Bruising back Bower graduates but Harvey is back following 796 yards and a notable 6.7 yards per carry. Bower was an especially useful weapon in the red zone and Harvey or other backs will need to fill that gap. **Jordan McDonald** is a slighter bigger back and could be called upon in short yardage situations. The transfer portal adds significant depth to an offensive line that was strong in the run game but allowed 36 sacks in 2022. **Drake Metcalf** joins from Stanford and **Amari Knight** transfers in from Alabama. **Marcellus Marshall** was dominant at right tackle last year at Kent State and **Bula Schmidt** has started most of the past four seasons for Fresno State. **Lokahi Paule** is a familiar name and has been one of the best offensive linemen in the American the past two seasons.

The Knights lose Ryan O'Keefe out of the receiving corps but the rest of the top pass catchers from last season are back. That includes **Javon Baker** who caught 56 passes for 796 yards and 5 touchdowns. **Alec Holler** is a senior tight end who is a capable pass catcher and Harvey was also a weapon out of the backfield. **Kobe Hudson** made an impact with 641 yards and was the team's leader in yards per catch (16.4). A couple of transfers will provide depth and this receiver unit should compete well even against stiffer competition.

Malzahn's defenses have been mostly solid in each of his two 9-win seasons but this unit will need to take another step forward given the number of high powered offenses within the Big 12. Linebacker **Jason Johnson** racked up 126 tackles which was more than double the amount of the second-leading tackler Koby Perry. **Tre'mon Morris-Brash** had 6 of UCF's 22 sacks and both **Ricky Barber** and **Josh Celiscar** had three. This returning production is good news for the front seven and Georgia transfer **Rian Davis** could be another potential impact player. Speaking of transfers, **DeCorian Patterson** (Middle Tennessee) and **Jireh Wilson** (East Carolina) will help out the UCF secondary.






**The Bottom Line:** Similar to the other new members, UCF plays nine Power 5 opponents in the regular season as opposed to the two they played last season (loss against Louisville, win against Georgia Tech). I don't expect Malzahn and company to reach the nine-win threshold for the third straight year but a bowl game would be a successful first season in the Big 12 this season and if the Knights spring an upset along the way, even better. I would argue that the upside is fairly high for this team if everything goes right in both the health and skill development categories.

### Projection: 6-6 (10th in Big 12)

#### 2022 Statistics

Points Scored	Rush Yards	Pass Yards	Turnover Margin
<b>32.9</b>	<b>228.4</b>	<b>241.2</b>	<b>-5</b>
<b>31st in FBS</b>	<b>9th in FBS</b>	<b>57th in FBS</b>	<b>T-100th in FBS</b>
Points Allowed	Rush YDS Allowed	Pass YDS Allowed	
<b>23.6</b>	<b>157.7</b>	<b>222.3</b>	
<b>46th in FBS</b>	<b>78th in FBS</b>	<b>59th in FBS</b>	

## 2023 UCF Schedule

Week	Date	Team
1	Thu, Aug 31	 vs. Kent State
2	Sat, Sept 9	 @ Boise State
3	Sat, Sept 16	 vs. Villanova
4	Sat, Sept 23	 @ <b>Kansas State</b>
5	Sat, Sept 30	 vs. <b>Baylor</b>
6	Sat, Oct 7	 @ <b>Kansas</b>
7	Bye Week	
8	Sat, Oct 21	 @ <b>Oklahoma</b>
9	Sat, Oct 28	 vs. West Virginia
10	Sat, Nov 4	 @ <b>Cincinnati</b>
11	Sat, Nov 11	 vs. Oklahoma St.
12	Sat, Nov 18	 @ <b>Texas Tech</b>
13	Sat, Nov 25	 vs. Houston

Conference Games in Bold

### KEY GAMES

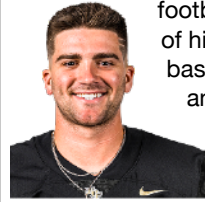
**Sat, Sept 9: @ Boise State** - The Knights and Broncos opened the season in 2021 where UCF claimed a 36-31 victory. If the Knights can conquer Boise State and the long journey to the Smurf Turf a 3-0 start is a near-certainty.

**Sat, Sept 23: @ Kansas State** - There's no easing into the Big 12 schedule for UCF who faces the defending champions on the road. If the Knights are 3-0 there will be added intrigue to this matchup.

**Sat, Nov 4: @ Cincinnati** - The two biggest "Group of 5" success stories in the CFP era now face each other as Big 12 opponents. UCF got the better of Cincinnati last season but the Knights have lost the previous two games at Nippert.

## KEY PLAYERS

### John Rhys Plumlee - QB



Plumlee is one of the most unique talents in college football both because of his play style and because of his overall athleticism that translates to the baseball diamond. He did split time between football and baseball in the spring which is a factor to be considered with a new offensive coordinator in place, but Plumlee has natural athletic ability and can make challenging plays look easy.

### Jason Johnson - LB

Had UCF been in the Big 12 last season, Johnson's 126 tackles in 2022 would have been tied for tops in the conference. He was a two-time All-American at FCS Eastern Illinois and he didn't skip a beat in his transition to the FBS. He's dominated at every step of his college career and don't expect that to that to change just because he's matchup up against Big 12 offenses. He has a nose for the football and I'd expect more than four TFLs in 2023.



## 2022 RESULTS (9-5)

**South Carolina St. (W 56-10)**

Louisville (L 14-20)

**@ Florida Atlantic (W 40-14)**

**Georgia Tech (W 27-10)**

**SMU (W 41-19)**

**Temple (W 70-13)**

@ East Carolina (L 13-34)

**Cincinnati (W 25-21)**

**@ Memphis (W 35-28)**

**@ Tulane (W 38-31)**

Navy (L 14-17)

**South Florida (W 46-39)**

@ Tulane (L 28-45)

Duke (L 13-30)

*Knights*

## RECRUITING

2023 Class Ranking

**50th**

(Via 24/7 Sports)