



UTSA ROADRUNNERS

2023 Record: 9-4

American Athletic Conference

San Antonio, TX

FBS Ranking

64



OWEN MCCOWN – QB

Photo via theScore.com

Meep meep. Hear that? That’s the sound of a team with AAC Championship hopes *and* a team that feels like a spot in the College Football Playoff is theirs for the taking. They’re not crazy to put those expectations on themselves. Those goals make road games against Texas State and Texas in back-to-back weeks critical. The Bobcats are on the short list of heavy favorites in the Sun Belt (and are many people’s pick for the Group of 5 playoff spot) and the Longhorns need no introduction.

Why shouldn’t the Roadrunners have confidence? UTSA lost the season finale on the road to Tulane in what was essentially an AAC semifinal game. Otherwise, Jeff Traylor and company would have marched into a third straight conference championship game. Traylor’s return means that the program expects to pick up right where they left off, even with the loss of some of the biggest legends the program has seen since its inception in 2012.

OFFENSE

Frank Harris was *everything* to the Roadrunners offense. That’s no disrespect to the many talented individuals that have played on UTSA’s offense the past few years, but it’s not every day a quarterback finishes his career as the all-time leader in passing yards and third all-time in rushing yards, yet, that’s exactly what Harris did with 11,858 passing yards and 2,143 rushing yards. How can a team replace a player like that? You can’t, really. But, if there’s a path to another successful season (the Roadrunners have averaged 31 points or more in each of the last three seasons) it’s through the three-headed running back monster of **Kevorian Barnes**, **Robert Henry**, and **Rocko Griffin**. The trio produced a combined 1,786 yards and 23 touchdowns. All three backs return in 2024 and Jeff Traylor will presumably rotate all three just like he did last season.

So, that takes care of the ground game, but who will attempt the impossibly large shoes of Frank Harris? **Owen McCown** is the leading candidate. He had a strong showing in the Roadrunner’s Frisco Bowl victory over Marshall and completed 22 of 31 passes for 251 yards and 2 touchdowns. He’s not the runner that Harris is, but he’s athletic enough to navigate out of danger and he did pull of a 26 yard run against the Thundering Herd. His performance against Tennessee when Harris was out injured was remarkable and included 18 of 20 passes completed for 170 yards and 2 touchdowns. **Eddie Lee Marburger** also played in Harris’ brief absence.

Another key loss on offense is wide receiver Joshua Cephus, who leaves UTSA as the school’s all-time leader with 3,639 yards, topping the mark set by his teammate Zachari Franklin just a year prior. **Devin McCuin** will take the “WR1” role after a 546 yard season and tight end **Oscar Cardenas** is a seasoned veteran with 200 yards or more receiving in each of his last three seasons. The offensive line should be strong with several returning starters back including **Cory Godinet** and **Venally Tatafu**. Giving McCown a clean pocket as he identifies new go-to targets will be very important especially early in the season against stiff competition.

DEFENSE

The “defense wins championships” adage has come true for the Roadrunners. In their Conference USA championship seasons of 2021 and 2022, UTSA held opponents to 24.6 points and 25.9 points respectively despite how quickly their own offense likes to move with the football. Last year the defense was just as strong, allowing 24.1 points per game and sacking quarterbacks like there was a shortage at the grocery store, ranking second in the FBS with 46. The defense does lose star linebacker and 2023 American Defensive Player of the Year winner Trey Moore who contributed 14 sacks to that gaudy total, but there is still a lot of quality talent and depth.

Surprisingly, no player had 70 or more tackles on the team but safety **Ken Robinson** as well as linebackers **Jamal Ligon** and **Martavius French** all had at least 60. The secondary is probably the least settled of the three defensive levels, but former four-star recruit **Denver Harris** arrives after transferring from LSU and **Zach Morris** was a full-time starter at New Mexico.

The defensive front should be quite scary again in 2024. UTSA wields major size the line with **Joseph Evans** and **Brandon Brown** and **Jimmori Robinson** produced 11 tackles for loss and 4.5 sacks. Combine this group with a talented veteran linebacker corps and you have the best front six (since the Roadrunner use a 4-2-5 base) in the conference.

Can stingy defense lead Roadrunners to American title and beyond?

HC: Jeff Traylor (5th Year, 39-14)

OC: Justin Burke (2nd Year)

DC: Jess Lope (3rd Year)

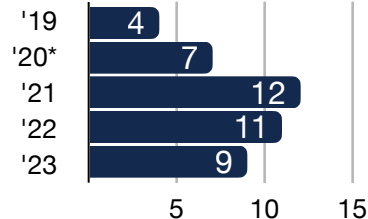
2024 Class Rankings

Recruiting 102

Transfer Portal 77

Via 24/7 Sports

UTSA WIN TREND



2023 Results (9-4)

- @ Houston (L 14-17)
- Texas State (W 20-13)**
- Army (L 29-37)
- @ Tennessee (L 14-45)
- @ Temple (W 49-34)**
- UAB (W 41-20)**
- @ Florida Atlantic (W 36-10)**
- East Carolina (W 41-27)**
- @ North Texas (W 37-29)**
- Rice (W 34-14)**
- South Florida (W 49-21)**
- @ Tulane (L 16-29)
- Marshall (W 35-17)**
- Frisco Bowl



Wk	2024 UTSA Schedule	
1	Sat, Aug 31	vs. Kennesaw St.
2	Sat, Sept 7	@ Texas State
3	Sat, Sept 14	@ Texas
4	Sat, Sept 21	vs. Houston Chr
5	Sat, Sept 28	@ East Carolina
7	Sat, Oct 12	@ Rice
8	Sat, Oct 19	vs. Florida Atlantic
9	Sat, Oct 26	@ Tulsa
10	Sat, Nov 2	vs. Memphis
12	Fri, Nov 15	vs. North Texas
13	Fri, Nov 22	vs. Temple
14	Sat, Nov 30	@ Army

■ Home ■ Away

Key Games

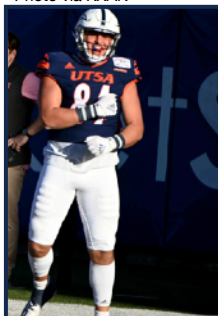
@ Texas State: The I-35 rivalry already has plenty of energy leading into the game itself, but throw in potential College Football Playoff implications and the matchup goes to an all-new level.

vs. Memphis: The only prior meeting came in 2021 when the Roadrunners eked out a 31-28 road victory. As conference opponents, this game carries major weight in the AAC title race.

vs. North Texas: UTSA hosts back-to-back Friday night contests beginning with the Mean Green. The Roadrunners will have the benefit of a bye week before they go for a fourth straight win against North Texas.

Player Spotlight

Photo via KXAN



OSCAR CARDENAS – TE

Cardenas has never had an enormous statistical season like some of his teammates, but he has provided a steadying force and is one of the most experienced players on the roster, having appeared in 53 games for the Roadrunners. He made a catch in every single game during the regular season and could have an expanded role in the passing game with UTSA's all-time leading receiver Joshua Cephus gone.

2023 Stats: 32 REC, 280 YDS, 2 TD

Photo via San Antonio Express-News



MARTAVIUS FRENCH – LB

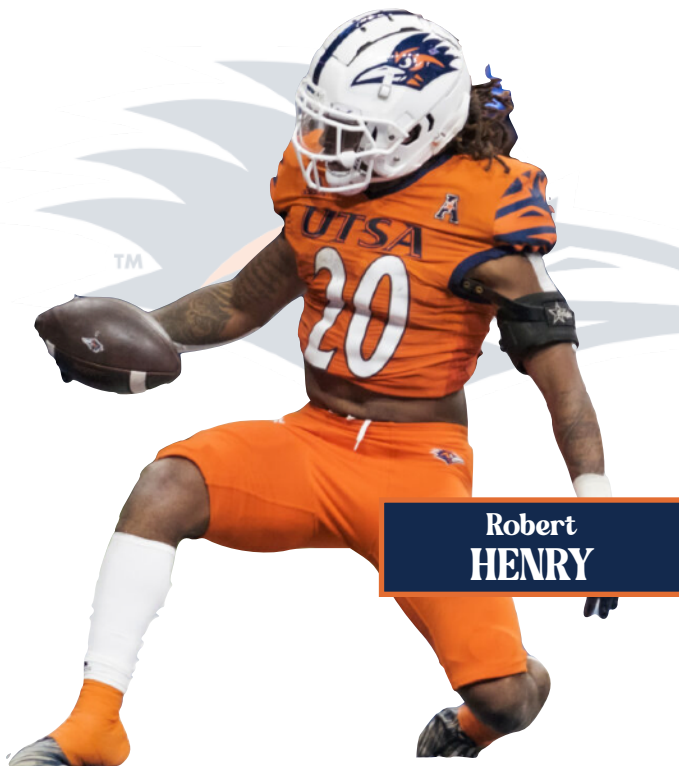
No one player is going to be able to replace the insane production of Trey Moore (45 tackles, 14 sacks), so the job will have to be done by committee. French could be the one to lead that committee after three pass breakups to go along with his 61 tackles and 1.5 sacks. The sacks came in the final three weeks of the season and he had two double-digit tackle games against Army and Temple.

2023 Stats: 61 TKL, 4.5 TFL, 1.5 SACK

Photo via UTSA Athletics



Alamodome (36,582)



Robert HENRY

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Roadrunners have one of the best kickers in the conference, at least based on his performance last season. **Chase Allen** made all but two of his field goal attempts including a remarkable 7 of 8 tally from 40 yards or longer. He hit a 53-yarder against UAB. Wide receiver **Chris Carpenter** had a 50 yard punt return for a touchdown.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The best case scenario for the Roadrunners is an 11-1 record followed by an AAC championship and a Playoff birth. How realistic is that scenario? It all depends on how quickly the offense can figure out life without Frank Harris and Joshua Cephus and if the defense will be as good as advertised.

Early season games against Texas State and Texas are a blessing and a curse. On one hand, the Roadrunners could ulose both and find themselves with a 1-2 record (that didn't stop them from winning the 2022 C-USA title). On the other hand, a win against another potential playoff team Texas State is a huge momentum builder. Just giving Texas a competitive game could be a "moral victory" (which doesn't exist in Traylor's mind or anybody on the team, for the record). The Roadrunners avoid Tulane and South Florida which puts added emphasis on their matchup against Memphis, which they get at home. It's hard to see this offense being quite as effective as last year, but they are a team to be feared in the American.

Appointment Television



Sat, Sept 7 - 4:00 PM ET ESPNU

The I-35 Rivalry predates the start of UTSA's football program by over two decades but that hasn't stopped the Roadrunners from winning all five contests dating back to 2012 including last season's 20-13 victory. The sixth edition of the rivalry will be the most intense meeting yet as both the Roadrunner and Bobcats have legitimate conference title and College Football Playoff aspirations.

2023 Statistics

Offense			Defense		
Statistic	Per Game	FBS Rank	Statistic	Per Game	FBS Rank
Points	31.9	32	Points	24.1	52
Rushing	171.8	51	Rushing	135.5	40
Passing	249.8	47	Passing	233.6	79
Total	421.6	36	Total	369.1	55
Sacks	25	T-56	Sacks	46	2

2024 Projection

9-3

3rd in AAC

Trophy Case



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