

Welcome To Week 1: Akron



OPPONENT: Akron (0-0, 0-0 Mid-American Conference)

The past two years, Ohio State's opening game was a big one for one reason or another. It's opener in 2022 was an exciting ranked matchup against Notre Dame, and the Buckeyes went into enemy territory for a conference matchup against Indiana to begin the 2023 season.

A season opener against a team predicted by the conference's coaches to finish last in the MAC might not bring the excitement of a good game like those others do, but it does bring the excitement of college football Saturdays being back for the next couple of months.

This is one of three tune-up games for the Buckeyes, opening at home against the Zips for a 3:30 kickoff - televised on CBS - in what should be an easy win for Ohio State. It will also be an early way to show the depth that this team is going to have in what could be a 17-game season.

Even Akron head coach Joe Moorhead, entering his third season with the program, has realistic expectations for what to expect when they head into Ohio Stadium on Aug. 31.

"It's going to be great. Unfortunately, it's not a fantasy baseball camp where you're going in and Whitey Ford is going to throw you some meatballs and Mickey Mantle is going to strike out on purpose," Moorhead said at MAC Media Day. "I mean, they're going to kick our butts. But all of that being said, I know it's something that the kids will be excited about."

It's a safe bet to have those expectations since the Zips are coming off of its third straight 2-10 season - although three of their losses in 2023 were in overtime. Not only do their recent struggles not leave much confidence, but Akron has never had a win over Ohio State... sort of.

The last time the Buckeyes were beat by Akron, the school was known as Buchtel College, a 12-6 win in 1894 when they were led by John William Heisman, the namesake of the Heisman Trophy. Since then Ohio State has taken every matchup, the most recent of which was a 59-7 win on Sept. 25, 2021, in

which the Buckeyes outgained the Zips 622-229. The game will likely yield similar results this time around, but that's not to say that Moorhead and the Zips won't still be giving everything they've got.

"You've got one of the prohibitive favorites to win the national championship," Moorhead said. "We'll go up and compete one play at a time and see what happens."

PLAYERS TO WATCH:

- DE CJ Nunnally IV - Nunnally led the Zips in 2023 in both tackles for a loss and sacks, finishing the season with 15½ tackles for loss and seven sacks, leading his team by 9½ and 4½ in those categories, respectively.
- LB Antavious Fish - Fish is another defensive returning starter for the Zips and led the team in tackles in 2023 with 95. He also had four tackles for a loss and a sack, appearing in all 12 games.
- LB Bryan McCoy - McCoy was second on the team in tackles last year, just trailing Fish with 94. He added six tackles for a loss, a sack and a forced fumble.

Since 2000, Ohio State holds a 21-3 record in home openers, last season coming as a 35-7 win over FCS opponent Youngstown State. This will be Ohio Stadium's 102nd year of holding Buckeyes football games since the first game was played there in 1922.

SERIES HISTORY: This is the 10th meeting between Ohio State and Akron with the Buckeyes holding an 8-1 advantage in the series. Only four of those games have been in the 21st century, with the other four coming in the 18th century. In those four games, Ohio State won 28-14 (2001), 20-2 (2007), 42-0 (2011) and 59-7 (2021).

Check back every Monday at BuckeyeSports.com for a brief preview of the Buckeyes' upcoming opponent, with stories and features throughout the week.

| Date | Opponent | Location | Time/Results | TV |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Aug. 31 | Akron | Columbus | 3:30 | CBS |
| Sept. 7 | Western Michigan | Columbus | 7:30 | BTN |
| Sept. 14 | Off | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Sept. 21 | Marshall | Columbus | TBA | TBA |
| Sept. 28 | at Michigan State | East Lansing, Mich. | TBA | TBA |
| Oct. 5 | Iowa | Columbus | TBA | TBA |
| Oct. 12 | at Oregon | Eugene, Ore. | TBA | TBA |
| Oct. 19 | Off | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Oct. 26 | Nebraska | Columbus | TBA | TBA |
| Nov. 2 | at Penn State | State College, Pa. | TBA | TBA |
| Nov. 9 | Purdue | Columbus | TBA | TBA |
| Nov. 16 | at Northwestern | Chicago, Ill. | TBA | TBA |
| Nov. 23 | Indiana | Columbus | TBA | TBA |

| Date | Opponent | Location | Time/Results | TV |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Nov. 30 | Michigan | Columbus | Noon | FOX |