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2013 Arkansas Football Preview

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Featuring the Pressbox Roundtable With

Jim Harris | Bruce James
Doc Harper | Chris Bahn
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Sporting Life Arkansas

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Razorback Schedule Breakdown

Jim Harris

Arkansas' 2013 football schedule can be neatly broken down into three parts, with each section distinctly separate from the other. But where most teams could see each portion of their own slates influencing how the season could play out, with the possibility of building momentum over 12 games, the Razorbacks are unlikely to enjoy such luxury.

For the Hogs, their 12-game run features:

- An opening grouping of four non-conference games, with only one apparent cupcake and a difficult road challenge
- A four-game murderers' row of powerhouse contenders from each of the SEC's two divisions
- A four-game finish with three lesser league challenges before the season finale against always-stout LSU

So, on its face, this Razorback schedule could offer some early momentum to lead into a near-impossible stretch for a team considered bereft of top SEC talent. Or, a few stumbles in that early stretch could lead to the longest run of futility Arkansas has seen since, well, last season.

You remember last season, right? Arkansas was coming off a No. 5 finish and a Cotton Bowl victory over Kansas State and, even with the sudden departure of head coach Bobby Petrino in the spring, preseason forecasters saw a Top 10 team in the Hogs led by Heisman Trophy hopefuls Tyler Wilson and Knile Davis with a defense that would be magically improved with a new coordinator in charge.

Of course, all those dreams turned into a 4-8 nightmare and a 2-6 SEC record. There is no Kentucky on the schedule this time. There is Florida in the Wildcats' place, on the road, plus a return road trip to Rutgers, which handled the Hogs in Fayetteville as the 2012 season fell apart.

That other SEC win from last year came at the expense of an Auburn team that was in more disarray than the Hogs and saw head coach Gene Chizik axed after an 0-8 league run. The Tigers won't be terrible this year under Gus Malzahn.

The question begs, where might Arkansas scratch out six wins to be bowl eligible?

Let's look at the slate:

Louisiana-Lafayette, Aug. 31, Fayetteville — Not exactly the best opponent to introduce new schemes, particularly on defense. The high-scoring Ragin' Cajuns under Coach Mark Hudspeth and junior quarterback Terrance Broadway will be looking for a third-straight bowl appearance and to challenge for the Sun Belt Conference after finishing second to Arkansas State last year in a 9-4 season.

Samford, Sept. 7, Little Rock — If Arkansas doesn't take care of this one FCS patsy on the schedule, start looking forward to basketball or the football recruiting season.

Southern Mississippi, Sept. 14, Fayetteville — After the quick end to the Ellis Johnson error, the Golden Eagles went back where they got their last successful head coach, Oklahoma State. Todd Monkin will get them turned around, and they will test the Hogs' pass defense.

Rutgers, Sept. 21, Piscataway, N.J. — The Scarlet Knights won't have many of the receiving weapons that hurt the Hogs last year, but it is a long road trip nonetheless.

Texas A&M, Sept. 28, Fayetteville — Maybe Johnny Football will have gotten too big for his britches and A&M could take a step back after last year's SEC coming-out party and Heisman year for quarterback Manziel. His offensive line won't be quite as good, and the A&M defense is still suspect.

Florida, Oct. 5, Gainesville — Arkansas has beaten Florida just once ever, and never since joining the SEC. The Hogs had the Gators beat in Gainesville the last time, 2009, before Marc Curles' officiating crew let Tim Tebow steal it away.

South Carolina, Oct. 12, Fayetteville — Hogs hold a 13-8 edge in the all-time series of cross-division rivals (which will end after this season). And it's at home. But the Gamecocks have two able quarterbacks plus Jadeveon Clowney and more talent on defense.

Alabama, Oct. 19, Tuscaloosa — Please, Hog fans, don't say you see this as a possible win, though the game could be closer than last year's.

Auburn, Nov. 2, Fayetteville — After a week off to heal the wounds from a monster four weeks, Arkansas might actually be entertaining bowl thoughts. Auburn might be thinking "bowl" too.

Ole Miss, Nov. 9, Oxford — Hogs' success here is rare, but Rebels were somewhat the anointed surprise team last year and it might be time for a step backward. Or maybe ace recruiter Hugh Freeze will have his fast-developing program contending for the division with 'Bama already.

Mississippi State, Nov. 16, Little Rock — Arkansas doesn't lose to the Bulldogs inside the state. Surely this year won't be the first time it happens, will it? That always dependable Little Rock crowd won't let it happen, right?

LSU, Nov. 22, Baton Rouge — On paper, it shouldn't be a contest. But the Hogs shouldn't have had a chance last year and nearly stunned the Tigers, only to let John L. Smith's decision-making get in the way. He's gone. Les Miles isn't.

So, just a guess: if everything falls completely into place for the Hogs, if new quarterback Brandon Allen proves capable and they turn around the minus-19 turnover margin of a year ago, they could be this season's Ole Miss and win up to seven games, maybe even eight. If they stumble early in the non-conference games, however, it could be another four-win year. Petrino won five in his first year.

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FEATURED
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Jim
Harris

11 Questions About the Hogs

Jim Harris

Bret Bielema has never had a losing team in his seven years as a head coach, all at Wisconsin. He inherited a program on solid footing from Barry Alvarez in 2006 and improved on it, taking the Badgers to a 12-1 record and a win over Arkansas in the Capital One Bowl.

He accomplished at Wisconsin what only one Razorback coach, Ken Hatfield, managed during his Hog coaching tenure: reaching a bowl game every season.

Coincidentally, just as Hatfield escaped from the meddling presence of his athletic director, Frank Broyles, while putting a conference championship team on the field in consecutive years, Bielema won a third straight Big Ten title and yet moved out from the looming shadow of his athletic director, Alvarez, to take the Arkansas job last December.

For Hatfield, a move to Clemson — where its fan base regularly suffers from over-expectations and where the program had run afoul of the NCAA — was the wrong one, and he was all but told by Clemson boosters after three years to take the new job opening at Rice. It looked good early, though, as one Hatfield assistant confided to someone back in Arkansas that they'd "never seen this kind of defensive talent on one team."

Surely there is no current Bielema assistant telling friends back in Wisconsin that the UA staff has landed in a mother lode of talent in Fayetteville. Arkansas hasn't seen a truly great defensive player, an NFL first-rounder, since that 2006 team that played Wisconsin. The Hogs haven't stopped anybody defensively since before Bobby Petrino's arrival.

Arkansas enjoyed outscoring folks under Petrino in the go-go years of 2010 and 2011, though. Before Petrino, Houston Nutt tended to play defense with his methodic offense.

The national writers surveying the Arkansas landscape now expect Bielema to bring a grind-it-out offense to Fayetteville again. Program insiders, however, believe Bielema when he's told them he's handed the offense over to new coordinator Jim Chaney, who had Tennessee piling up huge offensive numbers last year that still weren't good enough to translate into enough wins for the deposed Derek Dooley.

Meanwhile, Bielema brought his defensive aces — coordinator Chris Ash and line coach Charlie Partridge — from Wisconsin to restore a one-time Hog tradition of great defense.

Unlike the Clemson where Hatfield landed in 1990, Bielema has to recruit Arkansas into a better place to match the rest of the SEC powers. In the West Division alone, Arkansas is liable to be outgunned across the board in talent this first season under its new coach.

It's why few prognosticators are willing to step out beyond six wins for the Hogs in 2012, despite Bielema's perfect run of bowl games and winning seasons to this point.

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Here are the 11 most-asked questions about this Razorback team and what fans should expect:

1. Can Brandon Allen be successful at quarterback?

In time, yes. He possesses a strong-enough arm and a good-enough touch with a variety of throws, and he displays solid on-field leadership qualities. But the question is whether he has adequate protection up front for any passing game, especially when the Hogs must pass. In Bobby Petrino's offense, the quarterback made everything go. Bielema's Wisconsin teams were good with a "manager" at quarterback. What will the Chaney model look like? Allen isn't Tyler Bray, the former Tennessee quarterback, nor does he have three difference-making receivers like the Vols had last year. If Arkansas can convert its offensive linemen from pass protectors to steam-rollers for a running game, Allen will be fine. He has to stay healthy.

2. What if Allen doesn't stay healthy?

We can't see a freshman playing in year one in the SEC, but Arkansas might have to go to Austin Allen or Du-Wop Mitchell, no relation to the departed transfer Brandon Mitchell. It would be quite a story, though, if a former walk-on linebacker at Iowa, A.J. Derby, somehow ended up as the starting Hog quarterback.

3. Can Arkansas stop anyone?

If the opponent is one-dimensional, yes. If they have a good blend of running and passing, the secondary and linebackers will still have problems. The defensive tackles are OK but in two seasons have shown nothing spectacular. The ends remain well-manned with all-conference type talent. Look for Arkansas to deploy an array of stunts up front to keep offenses guessing. Big receivers again will be a problem to contain, and secondary tackling will be an issue.

4. Will Alex Collins start?

Maybe not in week 1 or even week 3, but Collins, the five-star running back from Miami, will be in the lineup and receive plenty of opportunities. Returning sophomore Jonathan Williams must prove he can hold onto the football. Arkansas may use bruisers Patrick Arinze and Kiero Small more than anyone expects, allowing the Hogs to establish a "downhill" running game and take some responsibility out of Brandon Allen's hands.

5. Will Denver Kirkland start?

He may be the best offensive lineman to enroll at Arkansas since Shawn Andrews, and Andrews eventually started by the midway point of his freshman year. There is less ability at tackle now, sad to say. So yes, Kirkland will land a starting role early in the season. It will be easier to move Kirkland in than to reform some of the tackles (some who walked on) into run blockers.

6. What's Arkansas' strongest area?

The offensive guard-center-guard trio led by veteran center Travis Swanson will help the Hogs establish the inside running game early. Brey Cook at guard is ready to break out.

7. Where else is Arkansas strong?

Defensive ends. Fullbacks. Possibly at tight end.

8. What is Arkansas' weakest area?

The Hogs will have maybe the smallest linebacking corps in the SEC. It would be good if most of these guys were large, great, speedy high school safety types like Randy Shannon converted at Miami into quick linebackers, but they are not. They are undersized linebackers. The returning sophomores, Otha Peters and A.J. Turner, were indoctrinated by fire out of necessity last year when the upperclassmen gave up. Martrelle Spaight, a juco newcomer, didn't have a spring to get acclimated, but he'll have to play. Anybody who can breathe, move and tackle will have to play.

9. What other areas are weak?

Safety. Offensive tackle. Wide receiver. Which brings up another point — how can Arkansas be so weak at wide receiver just one year removed from the Petrino era? What kind of recruiting was that? Oh wait, you're asking the questions and we're answering them. Sorry.

10. What area must improve immediately?

Arkansas had a ridiculous minus-19 turnover margin last season, worst in the country. The defense as a whole hasn't forced turnovers at even a decent rate in several years. The one game Arkansas had the edge in turnover margin last year was the upset win at Auburn. One game out of 12. Bielema's calling card is limiting mistakes — penalties and turnovers. That area alone could help turn the Hogs around faster than the needed talent influx, which will take more time.

11. Who will be the Hogs' MVP?

Senior kicker Zach Hocker might help Arkansas win a couple of games it otherwise wouldn't with his fantastic leg. Hocker seemed plagued with the same virus that invaded the whole program last fall, even being benched in the LSU game. But he returned stronger in the spring to prove himself again. Bielema prefers not to use a punter-kicker combo, but Hocker's punting was fantastic in the spring as well.



Pressbox Roundtable

Jim Harris

A weekly fan favorite locally during football season in recent years has been the “Pressbox Roundtable,” when Jim Harris conducts a discussion about the pressing issues involving the Razorbacks and other state college teams, as well as national subjects. We thought fans would enjoy a Preseason “Pressbox Roundtable” with many of our usual subjects discussing the upcoming season.

Joining the roundtable are:

- Bruce James** - Razorback All-American featured every Tuesday on *The Show With No Name*
- Doc Harper** - Editor of *Arkansas Expats* and *Sporting Life Arkansas* contributor
- Chris Bahn** - Northwest Arkansas editor of *Arkansas Business* and long-time Razorback reporter
- Mark Edwards** - *THV 11* sports anchor
- Jessica Duff** - *THV 11* producer and *Sporting Life Arkansas* contributor
- Steve Sullivan** - *KATV - Channel 7* sports anchor and voice of the UCA Bears Football team
- Justin Aciri** - *103.7 The Buzz* program director and host of the *Clint Conque Show*

Let’s get the ball rolling.

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Jim Harris: What do you see in store for Arkansas and Bret Bielema in the coach’s first season in Fayetteville?

Bruce James: Even though he’s had a spring with the team, Bielema is going to have to continue evaluating who will be productive in his type of offense and defense. He’s going to attempt, and hopefully succeed, in running the football. I think it’s going to be a season that, as a fan, we see improvement; that we see younger players maybe step up a little bit. It will be a developmental situation all year. This is not a quick fix. In what I’ve seen and what I’ve gathered talking to people around the league, I don’t believe there is the talent in this first year compared to the rest of the SEC West. These players weren’t recruited under Bobby Petrino to be a run-first, throw-when-we-want-to team. This guy has to be given time to recruit the players to fit his system. These defenses will stack up against his running game and force him to throw, whereas against Petrino the opposing defenses brought everybody, forcing him to run.

Doc Harper: It’s going to be a grind. It’s going to be tough. It will be great for the team to start out 4-0 before conference play starts, but that’s going to be a challenge. After seeing so much quitting going on last year, it will be good to see,

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if it happens, the team fighting throughout the year knowing how difficult it may be. We all know about the tough stretch in October, but if they can fight their way through it and possibly win a game or two in November, which may be enough to become bowl eligible, that would be an extremely positive sign for the future.

Jessica Duff: There is a lot of hype surrounding Arkansas football this year, as there should be. The good thing about the timing of Bielema's arrival is it can only go up from here. Bielema is bringing the energy and focus the team needs. But, more importantly, I think his game plan, and some of the talent he's assembled to execute that plan, is just what the Hogs need to be successful this season.

Bruce: With the exception of Samford, though, we don't have a gimme on the schedule. Southern Miss will be an entirely different team than the one that didn't win a game last year, and Louisiana-Lafayette will bring a high-powered team with an experienced quarterback for the opener. We play one of the most difficult schedules in college football. I'd think at the most they win four or five ball games; six wins and I'd be elated. But you're starting a quarterback that has never really played in the SEC. It's not just whether he has the talent, it also takes quite a bit of time to learn to read these SEC defensive coordinators. They are pros. When you play Alabama, LSU and Florida, those defenses are basically pro-coached.

Doc: For me, what I'm looking for is seeing on the field something tangible that says they are going in the right direction for future seasons. It may be an upset or a bowl bid or something else, but I'd like to see them improve throughout the year, even if they don't win a lot of games, and give fans something to believe in going forward.

Chris Bahn: This feels a lot like a rebuilding year that could be considered a success just by Arkansas getting bowl eligible. Bielema has never missed a bowl and has a strong track record in the Big Ten. But there's so much talent in the SEC, the league's head coaches continue to get better and the Razorbacks' cupboard isn't as full as it should be considering 2010-11 featured 21 wins, a BCS bowl appearance and a Cotton Bowl victory. Plus, there's the tricky task of marrying styles from the old staff(s) and new. Get to the Independence or Music City bowls and Bielema is probably looking at an open bar anywhere he finds himself in Fayetteville next offseason.

Justin Acri: I think some rough days in the early going, but I would love to see Arkansas find some way to scrap its way into a bowl game in year one. That would almost be an overachievement with the toughest schedule in the SEC this year and top 10 most difficult in the country. Phil Steele, whose opinion I respect, says he thinks they could win six, seven, or even eight games. I think even six is a chore. I will say that the fan part of me is pulling hard for these coaches because they all just seem like great guys.

Mark Edwards: I think he'll be fairly successful. The thing about it is, no one expects much from this first season so I believe that will take a lot of the focus and attention.

Steve Sullivan: I have no idea. I do believe that this is one team that will play its best ball late in the season. I'm expecting 6-8 wins. Anything better would be a nice surprise.

Harris: Who will be Arkansas' breakout player this year, and why?

Bruce: Let's hope there are about 22 of them that are vying for it. I don't know if I can name one breakout player. I think our two defensive ends [Chris Smith and Trey Flowers] will be special. I'm a very big Trey Flowers fan, I think he's highly underrated. He closes extremely well on the run, plus he drop-steps and rushes the passer well and he covers well. On offense, I think the fullback, [Keiro] Small, will be better known this year by Arkansas fans, especially on short yardage and the goal line. I think we're going to see the return of a real fullback.

Duff: Let's go with Jonathan Williams. As a true freshman running back, Williams played in every game except one (ULM). He even had two starts last year. He is a dual-threat running back and has proven that he can run and catch the ball. Impressive that as a freshman he had more than 200 yards rushing and 200 receiving. I think his success will continue, as it does from kids out of Allen, Texas!

Sully: I like [freshman running back] Alex Collins or [freshman tight end] Hunter Henry. Collins is one of those special athletes. Track, football, even lacrosse. Hall of Famer Jim Brown was also a star lacrosse player. I think Henry is SEC ready and will excel in the Bielema offense.

Edwards: I expect a lot from Tevin Mitchell. He's a junior and he's going to be trying to step up on that main stage with some of the best CB's in the country. He's bigger now and understands what's expected of him.

Bahn: Sophomore running back Jonathan Williams is a guy I'd keep an eye on in 2013. He showed some flashes last year in averaging 5.1 yards per carry, and when you consider Bielema's track record with the run game, Williams is a guy I could see having a big impact.

Doc: If Hunter Henry can provide a reliable short-yardage tight end for Brandon Allen, that could be huge for the Hogs. You never want to put too much on freshmen, but I think Henry has potential to have an impact this year.

Acri: How about [running back] Patrick Arinze? He should benefit with some carries in the run-first offense and he blew up in the spring game. I love the thunder to Williams' lightning. Hopefully the Hogs can present a semi-effective pass game to allow them some space to run.

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Harris: What position area is most precarious for the Hogs?

Bahn: There are a few positions that looked like question marks coming out of the spring — particularly quarterback and linebacker — but the one that really stands out to me is wide receiver. Think about how much time, energy and scholarship money was previously tied up in recruiting the position. Then tell me who the legitimate game-changing threats are there. Granted, this offense probably won't want or need four great college receivers on the field at once like you had at times with Childs/Adams/Wright/Hamilton, but I'm not sure if you even have a single candidate as difference-maker there.

Harris: Which goes back to what I've said since April 2012 — that Petrino's penance for the motorcycle wreck and the lying shouldn't have been a firing, but requiring him to coach this team he'd recruited for these two seasons. It was not going to be pretty, folks. The SEC is a lot better overall than it was in 2011.

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Acri: Linebackers. Do I need to expound?

Sully: Quarterback. I think when Bielema gets rolling .. great quarterback play won't be a must. This season, with a less dominant supporting cast.. Brandon Allen will be called on to do big things for this offense.

Bruce: I worry a lot about our secondary and specifically our safeties. There are so many teams now that can throw the football. Obviously Ole Miss now is very, very good at throwing the football. Alabama can throw it. Florida can throw it. Texas A&M can. We not only need someone who can play the run but can close and make tackles. It would be nice if there were someone like Steve Atwater out there.

Edwards: The quarterback and offensive line concern me.

Doc: The secondary. I do think the defense will be better than last year, and the run defense was actually decent, but the passing defense was atrocious. The team will have a hard time being competitive in several games if the secondary is anywhere near as porous as it was last year.

Duff: The most obvious, quarterback. Although Tyler Wilson wasn't as superb as we thought he'd be last year, he still left some big holes to fill. The departure of backup Brandon Mitchell didn't help the cause either. One quarterback, Brandon Allen, now leads the way for the Hogs. One guy with experience on the field from last year. That's pretty scary if you ask me.

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Harris: Bruce, you've spent a significant amount of time recently on the South Mississippi gulf coast and you've attended the SEC meetings and visiting other campuses. How do you see the SEC West playing out?

Bruce: My Alabama friends and sources and everybody down here in southern Louisiana and Mississippi, they are convinced Auburn is going to be a better football team than people think. Now, these aren't Auburn people saying this. These are Alabama people, LSU people, Ole Miss people. They believe there was talent there and before last season something happened. There was a philosophical coaching change offensively and a new defensive coordinator also came in and everything fell apart, Gene Chizik was fired, Gus Malzahn was brought back. They look for being a better Auburn team than the average sportswriter or magazine will say this summer.

Obviously Alabama is Alabama and they are going to completely play the same style of football and reload their talent. They'll be very good. LSU might be the huge surprise offensively. I've been around some of their offensive players this summer, and to a man they are super excited about their new offensive coordinator, Cam Cameron [formerly of the Baltimore Ravens], and they believe they are going to be a much better offensive football team this season. Ole Miss has a chance to get out of the gate real strong if they can beat Vanderbilt that first football game. They can be a dangerous team if they get on a winning streak real fast. Mississippi State will still be lacking. I don't think they've put all the pieces together offensively or have enough talent assembled to be a front-runner in the division.

As for Texas A&M, I guess you would have to say this guy [head coach Kevin] Sumlin is for real. They lost their offensive coordinator but I'm pretty sure the

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head coach was the offensive coordinator, so I wouldn't make a big deal about that. Johnny Manziel, Johnny Football, he has a big bull's eye on him real big now. We'll know real soon about them when they play Alabama early.

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Harris: Does Arkansas State return to a bowl for the third straight year under its fourth different coach in four years, Bryan Harsin?

Duff: You better believe it! I think Arkansas State is playing really good football these days. Their success comes despite the constant coaching carousel in Jonesboro. To see that success on the field shows the maturity of the players on the team. Bringing a coach like Bryan Harsin in to help guide these kids beyond their current talents is going to be a sight to see. I'm looking forward to a good season for the Red Wolves and, yes, another bowl game.

Bruce: I sure hope so. The thing is, unless they can win seven, eight or nine ballgames, if they don't win their conference they aren't a sure thing to go to a bowl game. They could have a good team, win the required six games, and still be left out of a bowl game. It's up in the air, but I think they are going to have a good football team.

Edwards: I believe so. I think most importantly (Harsin) has that offensive mindset. He understands that no-huddle system and he was at this year's bowl game in Mobile and saw how effective it was. He comes from a winning tradition in small college settings. That too is a plus.

Acri: Tough to do with new coach, new QB and a tough Sun Belt Conference this year. I'll say they get to bowl eligible, but may be on the outside looking in.

Sully: I really don't know. Harsin loses the guy who helped launch two SEC head coaching careers, quarterback Ryan Aplin. I think the goal this year should be to get bowl eligible.

Bahn: It's possible. Look at the talent signed under Hugh Freeze and Gus Malzahn that are on campus with a few remnants of the Steve Roberts era. Roberts seemed to have a knack for finding guys who could develop into players with all-conference or pro potential. Plus, it helps that there are now multiple bowl options for Sun Belt teams. But the Sun Belt continues to get stronger and I'm not totally sold on Harsin being in the same league as Freeze/Malzahn.

Doc: I think they can, but it will be tough. I certainly don't expect them to win the conference again, but they can earn their way to a bowl bid. If you look at their schedule, there's a few games they'll certainly be underdogs and a few games they'll certainly be favored, and then a few that will likely decide how well they do. But I think they can win six games.

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Harris: What is Harsin's biggest challenge with the Red Wolves in year one?

Bruce: I don't know a lot about them, but I assume it's replacing the quarterback. I know he has some talent over there, but how long was Ryan Aplin over there, 29 years? I assume after the great career he had that their biggest challenge is finding a new quarterback. In that kind of offense the quarterback has to trigger it.

Sully: The obvious thing is finding a quarterback. Harsin runs a quarterback driven-offense. Good QB play means a good season.

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Bahn: Having to replace Ryan Aplin at quarterback. Aplin was the two-time Sun Belt offensive player of the year and he rewrote the school record books despite having to learn playbooks under three different head coaches and four or five different coordinators. Fortunately, the new guy could have some options at receiver and a strong running back in David Oku to take off some pressure.

Doc: Replacing Ryan Aplin. Installing his own system. It's not going to be the same team. It's a program he's going to have to rebuild to a certain extent and that's always difficult. The Sun Belt is as good as it's ever been. Louisiana-Lafayette will be good. Louisiana-Monroe and Western Kentucky should be good. Troy is usually decent. Combine that with games against Auburn and Missouri with a new quarterback and learning a new system? It's going to be a challenge.

Acri: Installing the offense would be my guess. Luckily Coach Harsin keeps defensive coaches including DC John Thompson, who did a great job last year and there is a recent expectation of success and winning, so he inherits a pretty good situation.

Duff: I think his toughest challenge will be to maintain the fan base. Red Wolves fans have been through quite a bit the past three years. They need reassurance that not only will their coach produce a winning record for ASU, but that this same guy will stick around for more than a season. Keeping the fans appeased will be a tough task, but not impossible, this season for Harsin.

Harris: Thank you, Duff. I agree that over the long term, it's keeping the fan base interested and growing it the way Gus Malzahn was. I'm not convinced the same excitement is still in place, even if they're paying the new coach Gus-like dollars. What they had going the last month of the season and on into the bowl game in Mobile was something else.

Edwards: I believe finding an identity will be an issue. In the past we knew ASU was hard to stop. They've developed a defense that should be just as good this year. Harsin has the offensive mind but how good will they be? How will they compare to the previous two years?

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Harris: *Does UCA and Clint Conque continue their success in the Southland Conference and contend for the FCS playoffs?*

Bruce: Yes, I think they will. He's done a great job recruiting there and always has a high-powered offense that scores points. I think they'll continue to do well.

Sully: It's hard to bet against UCA. The defense gets better every year, and they have Wynrick Smothers back. Last season, Smothers was the SLC's offensive player of the year.

Duff: UCA returns a handful of starters next year, including QB Wynrick Smothers. Smothers had a great year last season and I expect this year to be no different as a senior. Cole Caruthers and Justin Heard should be pretty impressive again once more.

Edwards: I know he had a great group of freshmen that were redshirts a year ago. They were young in some areas and should be ready to step in and make an impact this year.

Acri: Absolutely. As usual, Conque and his coaches appear to have done well addressing needs in February, which is the case about every year. Attention to the most minute details could help push the Bears even deeper into the postseason this

year with a very talented QB, playmakers on defense and a physical offensive line.

.....
Harris: *Was UAPB's season last year a fluke or do the Golden Lions repeat in the SWAC?*

Bruce: I think Monte Coleman has done a very good job down there and the SWAC is very full of talent, it's tough competition. I wouldn't be surprised if they win it again, but when you have Alcorn, Jackson State, Grambling, Southern and teams like that, there is a tremendous amount of talent at those schools and it's difficult, but he's done a good job there.

Edwards: I won't say last year was a fluke. They had great leadership. The trick is what can they do for an encore that the SWAC hasn't seen.

Duff: I hope last season wasn't a fluke for the Golden Lions. Seeing success from every corner in the state for football is exciting. Monte Coleman has the reputation and resume to continue to bring a winning record in the southeast corner of the state.

Acri: I am not sure how the rest of the league looks this season, but I love how the Lions did it in 2012. Is it any surprise that Coach Coleman did it with defense and running the ball? The Lions ended the season No. 1 in scoring defense and No. 1 in rushing offense in the SWAC. They lose two of the top defenders in all of the FCS and OL Terron Armstead was a third round draft pick, but if the next wave can step up and come close to doing that again, you have to like their chances.

Sully: I don't think it was fluke. Monte Coleman had a solid team. Repeating is never easy. I'm taking a wait-and-see approach with the Golden Lions.

.....
Harris: *Who will be the top high school player in Arkansas in 2013?*

Bruce: The kid from El Dorado.

Harris: Defensive tackle Bijhon Jackson?

Bruce: Yes.

Bahn: I'll leave it to the recruiting experts to declare a winner between Springdale Har-Ber's Josh Frazier and El Dorado's Bijhon Jackson. But there is no question that Arkansas football is helped tremendously by having two defensive tackles of that size/caliber in the state. Assuming, of course, that they both wind up at Arkansas.

Doc: Bijhon Jackson should be a lot of fun to watch this season. Obviously, he's already committed to Arkansas so he'll have the spotlight on him each week, but I'm looking forward to seeing what he can do with El Dorado.

Acri: Josh Frazier.

Sully: Ha. I have no idea. It's always fun seeing star players emerge during the season. The 2013 Landers Award race is officially wide open.

Harris: You've never had a defensive tackle win it, have you?

Edwards: Who knows? It will all depend on who can be successful this year.

Duff: Ummm....we'll have to wait and see? Sorry, guys, that's a big call to make considering how many outstanding high school players to choose from.



**FEATURED
WRITER**

*Jeff
Reed*

2013 Arkansas State Red Wolves

Jeff Reed

The world around Arkansas State Red Wolves football is changing, and the Red Wolves' conference is now starting to see changes, too.

But nothing has changed more than the expectations surrounding the Red Wolves' program the past two seasons. New coach Bryan Harsin knows he is stepping into a tough situation.

"I know there are expectations," he said. "They want you to win. It is like that everywhere."

After a decade of hitting around the .500 mark, although most years finishing in the upper half of the conference standings and even winning a share of the title in 2005, things changed drastically for the Red Wolves the past two seasons.

Now, after back-to-back 10-victory seasons and two conference titles, Harsin, who was named the head coach in December after Gus Malzahn bolted for Auburn after one season, is at the helm.

The new head football coach has watched from afar the past two seasons as Arkansas State put together its two best seasons in school history as a Division I school.

"Oh yeah, I knew what they were doing," he said.

Now it is his turn.

He steps in after Hugh Freeze and Malzahn led the Red Wolves to back-to-back conference titles.

Harsin has made all the right moves so far. His first was to join the team immediately after being hired and not going back to Texas for the Longhorns' bowl preparation.

"I belong here," he said at the time.

He used that time to evaluate coaches -- he kept two from Malzahn's staff -- and players. He also saw what the team had in senior quarterback Ryan Aplin.

And that brings us to the most asked question in the A-State Nation: Who is going to replace Aplin?

Greenwood sophomore Stephan Hogan, a former wide receiver, appeared (there is no depth chart so only speculation) to come out of spring practice as the No. 1 quarterback. He showed a nice arm and the ability to escape tacklers.

"I was looking at his bio and saw he threw for all those touchdowns in high school and asked, why is he at receiver," Harsin said. "Let's see what he can do at quarterback."

Also in the mix are Pulaski Academy-QB product and Red Wolves sophomore Fredi Knighten, Lake Hamilton-product, senior Phillip Butterfield and junior college transfer Chandler Rogers.

Over the summer former Utah State quarterback Adam Kennedy, who was 6-1 as a starter, announced he would transfer to ASU. With a degree in hand, he will be eligible immediately.

Continues

2013 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE RED WOLVES RISING

2011 : 2012 BACK-2-BACK SUN BELT CONFERENCE CHAMPS
& 2013 GODADDY.COM BOWL CHAMPS



DATE	OPPONENT	LOCATION
AUG. 31	ARKANSAS-PINE BLUFF	JONESBORO
SEPT. 07	AUBURN	AUBURN, AL
SEPT. 12	TROY*	JONESBORO
SEPT. 21	MEMPHIS	MEMPHIS, TN
SEPT. 28	MISSOURI	COLUMBIA, MO
OCT. 12	IDAHO #	JONESBORO
OCT. 22/23	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE*	JONESBORO
NOV. 02	SOUTH ALABAMA*	MOBILE, AL
NOV. 09	LOUISIANA-MONROE*	MONROE, LA
NOV. 16	TEXAS STATE*	JONESBORO
NOV. 23	GEORGIA STATE*	JONESBORO
NOV. 30	WESTERN KENTUCKY*	BOWLING GREEN, KY

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HOME GAMES IN WHITE | CONFERENCE GAME * | HOMECOMING †

“We are not going to name a starter,” said Harsin. “It is still open. They all have some things they can do well.”

Kennedy, a California product, arrived in Jonesboro in June and is on a crash course to learn the system.

If the quarterback play comes through, the Red Wolves should be in good shape on offense. There is depth on the offensive line and some quality skill players return.

Senior David Oku was first-team All-Conference running back and ran for 1,008 yards and scored 16 touchdowns last season. Freshmen of the Year receiver J.D. McKissic caught 103 passes. Rocky Hayes, who has been moved to cornerback, will still see time on offense. He ran for 538 yards in limited action last season. Sophomore Michael Gordon had an impressive spring and will see playing time.

Other top returning skill players are tight end Darrion Griswold (6-5, 240) and Kenny Rains (6-4, 250). Also in the mix at tight end is redshirt (Morrilton) freshman Warren Leapheart (6-4, 220).

“I love our tight ends,” said Harsin. “That is going to be a battle until fall.”

Back at the receiver spots are 6-5 senior Allen Muse, who is back after leaving the team last fall, sophomore Derek Keaton, senior R.J. Fleming, Carlos McCants and Julian Jones, who only caught 13 passes but scored on seven of them.

On the offensive line, All-Conference tackle Aaron Williams (6-5, 298) returns along with sophomore center Bryce Giddens (6-0, 285), guard Steve Haunga (6-1, 315) and Cliff Mitchell (6-5, 277). All are seniors except Giddens.

Others under consideration are Allen Wright (6-4, 295), Tyler Greve (6-3, 277), transfer Travis Bodenstein (6-5, 310), Jake Campbell (6-6, 320) and redshirt freshman Colton Jackson.

On defense, the front liners are talented. However, depth could be an issue.

“We still have some of the same issues we had going into spring,” said defensive coordinator John Thompson.

The front line with Ryan Carrethers (6-2, 310) and Amos Draper (6-3, 270) and Dexter Blackmon (6-4, 273) are all seniors and proven performers, Carrethers was First-Team All-Conference and could be a very high draft choice by the NFL.

Defensive end Eddie Porter was a playmaker and had a strong year. Chris Stone, a redshirt sophomore, is a converted defensive end who showed improvement all season at the other end spot. John Gandy had a big spring and is in the mix as well. Former running back Frankie Jackson moves into the wolf spot and will battle former Dollarway Cardinal Charleston Gurley for playing time.

The linebackers are led by Qushaun Lee, who was honorable mention All-Conference and had a big bowl game in the victory over No. 25 Kent State. Kyle Coleman was moved to a linebacker spot in the spring and performed well.

In the secondary, safety Sterling Young is back. Artez Brown is one of the corners along with Andrew Tryon. Chris Humes saw playing time as a freshmen.

The punting duties are open going into fall camp. Place kicker Brian Davis earned second team all-conference honors.

The Red Wolves open the season Aug. 31 with UAPB in Jonesboro.

ASU RED WOLVES NOTES:

- The Red Wolves finished last season with a victory over Kent State at the GoDaddy.com Bowl in Mobile, Ala. in January by a final score of 17-13. It was the football program's first victory over a Top-25 ranked team and first bowl victory becoming a member of the Football Bowl Subdivision.
- The win in Mobile saw the Red Wolves end the season ranked 32 in both the Associated Press (28 votes) and the USA Today Coaches Poll (13 votes).
- As of this printing, the Red Wolves have three players on watch lists - Center, Bryce Giddens - Rimington Trophy; DL, Ryan Carrethers - Bednarik Award; and Placekicker, Brian Davis, Lou Groza Award and CFPA Trophy.
- The Red Wolves are scheduled for at least two televised games this season and likely more. Thursday, Sept. 12, the Arkansas State plays Troy on ESPN2 in Jonesboro. The Red Wolves also host a home game with the University of Louisiana-Lafayette that will be televised on either ESPN or ESPN2. The game with Auburn in Alabama on Sept. 7, and the game with Missouri in Columbia, Mo. on Sept. 28 are likely to be televised.
- The game at Auburn in early September pits a team of Red Wolves who will be facing Gus Malzahn who coached many of the players last season, in his one year at Arkansas State. Not only is the game a chance to play against a former coach, it represents an early test on the road against an foe from the Southeastern Conference.
- The Red Wolves get two more cracks at coaches with ties to Arkansas this season - Idaho on Oct. 12 in Jonesboro, a team coached by former Razorbacks offensive coordinator Paul Petrino and at Western Kentucky for the final game of the season to face former Razorbacks head football coach Bobby Petrino.
- The Red Wolves are one of three teams in the Sun Belt Conference to face more than one SEC opponent this season. Western Kentucky plays Kentucky to open the season and at Tennessee the next week. Troy plays at Mississippi State Sept. 21 and at Ole Miss Nov. 16.
- The new head football coach of the Arkansas State Red Wolves, Bryan Harsin, was named in the off-season by Athlon Sports as one of the Best Coaches Under 40 in the nation. He came in at No. 8 on the top-10 list. Harsin comes to Jonesboro from Austin, where he was the co-offensive coordinator for the Texas Longhorns in 2012.
- Before his days in Texas, Harsin worked as the offensive coordinator at his alma mater, Boise State University. One claim to fame for Harsin? He called the “statue of liberty” play for a two-point conversion in the 2007 Fiesta Bowl against the Oklahoma Sooners, giving the Broncos a 43-42 victory in overtime.



UCA Bears Bound With Experience, Though Skill Spots Are A Concern

Donna Lampkin Stephens

Although Central Arkansas returns 18 starters from a team that finished 9-3 last year, won the Southland Conference championship and reached the second round of the NCAA Football Championship Subdivision playoffs, the Bears have

enough question marks to keep head coach Clint Conque on edge.

"Overall, we have a talented group; our front line guys are very experienced, and at certain positions we have a great deal of depth," said Conque, who has compiled a 98-54 record in 13 seasons at UCA. "At other positions we'll have to manufacture some depth.

"Certainly, like any coach with what you feel like is a contending football team, you've got to stay healthy. A 12-game schedule is very demanding. We're on the road quite a bit at the beginning of the year, and certainly the Southland Conference is as balanced and demanding as it's been since we joined the league. The good news is we've got some of the upper-tier teams coming to Conway. Once we get to conference, we like the way the schedule sets up."

UCA opens the season at home Aug. 29 against Incarnate Word. The rest of the nonconference schedule is on the road (at Colorado of the Pac-12 Conference and FCS-level programs Tennessee-Martin and Missouri State).

Wynrick Smothers (6-foot-1, 208 pounds), a senior quarterback from Drestrehan, La., returns as the face of the program. As a first-year starter last year, Smothers was named SLC Offensive Player of the Year after throwing for 3,103 yards and 31 touchdowns (tying a school record), completing 64.9 percent of his passes and earning another 449 yards and three touchdowns rushing.

Conque said Smothers surpassed expectations last year in replacing 2011 starter Nathan Dick.

"He stepped right in and assumed responsibility and went about his work," Conque said. "You could see him growing leaps and bounds during the offseason prior to last year, and I thought he had a nice coming out against Ole Miss. He made excellent decisions. He was able to stay humble, stay grounded, and he continued to work. He has embraced that in the right way."

Last year, an experienced receiving corps helped Smothers' transition to starter. This season, he will be the experienced quarterback guiding a young receiving corps after the departure of two of the Bears' top three receivers. Gone are Dominique Croom, now with the Cleveland Browns, and Jesse Grandy, who starred for two years at UCA after transferring from Ole Miss. They combined for 280 career catches.

"This year the quarterback obviously is going to have to be the bellow to bring our young receiving corps along," he said. "But the position is not void of talent."

Smothers said last year's experience, which helped his confidence because "I've been through the battles already," would also help the new receivers in 2013.

"I'm just going to have to get them along as fast as possible because it's a fast game and it will leave them behind if they don't catch up," he said. "But I will also do my best to help them out from my experiences so they will also be more confident."

Junior Dezmin Lewis (6-4, 206) will be the first option at wide receiver after catching 57 passes a year ago. Others expected to fill the void include Justin Burdette (6-2, 206), a sophomore transfer from Southern Miss; sophomore Courtney Whitehead (6-2, 211), a redshirt transfer from Air Force; junior Jacoby Walker (6-2, 210), who switched positions from quarterback following his transfer from Arkansas; redshirt freshman Desmond Smith (6-1, 198), and sophomore Blake Gardner (5-11, 174).

"We have some options," Conque said.

Running back is the other major question mark following the departure of the Bears' top two backs in Jackie Hinton and Terence Bobo. Conque said junior Willie Matthews (5-9, 194) and sophomore Blake Veasley (6-0, 210) would enter fall camp 1 and 2, but Danzel Williams, a summer transfer from Oklahoma, as well as three touted high school signees, would help with depth.

"Matthews is the only one with any significant playing time, thus the need to get a more mature player here like Williams," Conque said.

Despite the loss of center Corey Howard, the SLC Offensive Lineman of the Year who signed with the NFL's Atlanta Falcons, Conque said he felt good about the offensive line.

"We have some options there and everybody else back, all the tight ends back," he said.

Defensively, tackle returns a good bit of depth, Conque said, although it would be young. Sophomore Jonathan Woodard (6-5, 271), senior Markeith Gaines (6-0, 265) and sophomore Derek Floyd (6-2, 255) lead the depth chart heading into the fall.

"We've got three options but we're young behind them," the coach said. "We're a little bit thin but talented."

Senior Justin Heard (6-1, 225) is the leader at middle linebacker. Senior Radarius Winston (5-11, 192) has moved from safety to strong-side linebacker, while junior Blake Childress (6-2, 217) and sophomore Ricky Wyatt (5-11, 233) are vying for the weakside spot.

"(Linebacker) is a real strong position for us," Conque said. "I feel great about the secondary. We've got everybody back from last year, and I mean everybody, plus some redshirts, and we recruited well."

Eddie Camara (5-9, 168), a two-time all-conference kicker, is back for his junior season. Jonathan Harrison (6-4, 200), a junior college All-American from Northeast Mississippi Community College, will take over punting duties. But the void left by Grandy and Croom will affect the kick return game, Conque said.

"That will be a position under construction during fall camp," he said. "But we feel good about our candidates, and Jestin Love (6-0, 208 senior strong safety) looks to settle in at punter returner. He's returned six interceptions for touchdowns."

Overall, the Bears return about 40 lettermen, and Conque said several quality athletes from the 2012 signing class had redshirted.

"A lot of those guys really flashed during the spring and will be counted on to compete and provide depth and certainly have a chance to have an impact on our kicking game," he said.

Continues

Through 13 seasons at UCA, Conque has added some perspective. “Each phase of your program has its own challenges, and one of my favorite sayings is the wind blows hardest at the top of the mountain,” he said. “We did not handle success after 2008, when we won the [conference] title but couldn’t go to the postseason. We came back and had what we thought was a really good team, but I did a poor job preparing us, and I hope I learned some lessons.

“This time last year we were coming off nine wins, and we followed that with a 9-3 season and a championship. You worry about complacency and entitlement, but as long as we stay hungry and don’t feel entitled and get complacent, I think good things will happen.

“Now we want to remain a consistent player at the national level, and to do that presents its own challenges. But at 52, I am as motivated and energized as I was the first year I came to the university. I look forward to it. It’s a challenging schedule, playing a Pac-12 team, being on the road a good bit of September, but we’re excited about the opportunity to defend our championship.”

QUICK NOTES ABOUT THE UCA BEARS

- The Bears begin the 2013 season ranked as high as No. 7 in the NCAA Football Championship Subdivision preseason polls after finishing 2012 as high as eighth. They have finished in the Top 25 four times during seven years as a member of the FCS.
- Since joining the Southland Conference in 2006, UCA has compiled a 31-13 record (.705) against league foes.
- The Bears’ offense has averaged 3,139 passing yards and 25 touchdowns per season since joining the SLC, with a 3,000-yard passer in four of the last six seasons and three different quarterbacks throwing for 30 or more TDs per season over the last five years.
- Five UCA players are on the preseason College Performance Awards Watch Lists: Jonathan Woodard (Defensive End list), Wynrick Smothers (Quarterback), placekicker Eddie Camara (Special Teams), safety Jestin Love (Defensive Back) and Chase Dixon (Tight Ends).
- Sophomore DE Jonathan Woodard, a Freshman All-American in 2012 and the SLC Freshman of the Year, is a Sporting News Preseason All-American for 2013.
- At press time, the Bears were scheduled to play on television five times: at home against McNeese State (Oct. 5), Stephen F. Austin (Oct. 26) and Southeastern Louisiana (Nov. 9) and at Lamar (Oct. 19) and Northwestern State (Nov. 2). However, Conque said another couple of games were possibilities for TV. “We could have seven, maybe eight opportunities to brand our program,” he said.

2013 ARKANSAS RAZORBACKS

Sat, Aug 31	Louisiana-Lafayette	Fayetteville
Sat, Sep 07	Samford	Little Rock
Sat, Sep 14	Southern Mississippi	Fayetteville
Sat, Sep 21	Rutgers	Piscataway, N.J.
Sat, Sep 28	Texas A&M	Fayetteville
Sat, Oct 05	Florida	Gainesville
Sat, Oct 12	South Carolina	Fayetteville
Sat, Oct 19	Alabama	Tuscaloosa
Sat, Nov 02	Auburn	Fayetteville
Sat, Nov 09	Mississippi	Oxford
Sat, Nov 23	Mississippi State	Little Rock
Fri, Nov 29	LSU	Baton Rouge

2013 ARKANSAS STATE RED WOLVES

Aug. 31	Arkansas-Pine Bluff	Jonesboro
Sept. 7	Auburn	Auburn
Sept. 12	Troy	Jonesboro
Sept. 21	Memphis	Memphis
Sept. 28	Missouri	Columbia
Oct. 12	Idaho	Jonesboro
Oct. 23	Louisiana-Lafayette	Jonesboro
Nov. 2	South Alabama	Mobile
Nov. 9	Louisiana-Monroe	Monroe
Nov. 16	Texas State	Jonesboro
Nov. 23	Georgia State	Jonesboro
Nov. 30	Western Kentucky	Bowling Green

2013 UCA BEARS

Aug. 29	Univ. of the Incarnate Word	Conway
Sept. 7	Colorado	Boulder
Sept. 14	Tennessee-Martin	Martin
Sept. 21	Missouri State	Springfield
Oct. 5	McNeese State	Conway
Oct. 12	Nebraska Kearney	Conway
Oct. 19	Lamar	Beaumont
Oct. 26	Stephen F. Austin	Conway
Nov. 2	Northwestern State	Natchitoches
Nov. 9	Southeastern Louisiana	Conway
Nov. 16	Nicholls State	Thibodaux
Nov. 23	Sam Houston State	Conway

ARKANSAS COLLEGES FOOTBALL SCHEDULES



University of Arkansas - Pine Bluff Golden Lions

The Golden Lions look to repeat as SWAC Conference champions in 2013. The team opens on the road in Jonesboro to face the Arkansas State Red Wolves in an in-state match-up. UAPB opens conference play at home against Alabama State Sept. 14.

UAPB	at A-State	Aug. 31
UAPB	at McNeese State	Sept. 7
UAPB	vs. Alabama State	Sept. 14
UAPB	vs. Alcorn State	Sept. 21
UAPB	at Jackson State	Oct. 5
UAPB	vs. Texas Southern	Oct. 12
UAPB	vs. Southern	Oct. 19
UAPB	at Miss. Valley	Oct. 26
UAPB	vs. Grambling	Nov. 9
UAPB	at Ala. A&M	Nov. 16
UAPB	at Prairie View	Nov. 23

Hendrix Warriors

For the first time in 53 years, Hendrix College will field a football team. The Warriors are the only Div. III team in the state.

Hendrix	vs. Westminster	Sept. 7
Hendrix	at Birmingham Southern	Sept. 14
Hendrix	vs. Southwestern (TX)	Sept. 28
Hendrix	at Millsaps	Oct. 5
Hendrix	vs. Washington (Mo.)	Oct. 12
Hendrix	vs. Berry	Oct. 19
Hendrix	at Austin	Oct. 26
Hendrix	at Centre	Nov. 2
Hendrix	vs. Rhodes	Nov. 9
Hendrix	vs. Sewanee	Nov. 16

Arkansas Tech Wonder Boys

With a team of new talent and successful in-state recruiting, the Wonder Boys take the field in 2013, starting on the road.

TECH	at Northwestern Okla. State	Sept. 5
TECH	vs. Southwestern Okla. State	Sept. 14
TECH	at Southern Nazarene	Sept. 21
TECH	at Nicholls State	Sept. 28
TECH	at UAM	Oct. 5
TECH	vs. SAU	Oct. 12
TECH	at Henderson State	Oct. 19
TECH	vs. OBU	Oct. 26
TECH	at East Central	Nov. 2
TECH	vs. Southeastern Okla.	Nov. 9
TECH	vs. Harding	Nov. 16

Harding Bisons

The 2013 season features a first for the Harding Bisons - a nationally televised game against a Great American Conference and in-state foe, the SAU Muleriders. The game is slated for Oct. 3 and will showcased on CBS Sports Network.

Harding	at Southwestern Okla. State	Sept. 5
Harding	vs. Northwestern Okla. State	Sept. 14
Harding	vs. Southern Nazarene	Sept. 28
Harding	at SAU	Oct. 3
Harding	vs. UAM	Oct. 12
Harding	at OBU	Oct. 19
Harding	vs. Henderson State	Oct. 26
Harding	at Southeastern Okla. State	Nov. 2
Harding	vs. East Central	Nov. 9
Harding	at Arkansas Tech	Nov. 16

Henderson State Reddies

The Reddies come off of a 2012 Great American Conference championship season and look to continue. All eyes are on one of the fiercest and most unique rivalries in all of sports - The Battle of Ravine - the last game of the season when the Reddies walk across the street to face in-town conference foe Ouachita Baptist on Nov. 16.

HSU	vs. Southern Nazarene	Sept. 7
HSU	vs. McKendree	Sept. 14
HSU	at Southern Okla. State	Sept. 21
HSU	vs. East Central	Sept. 28
HSU	at Northwestern Okla. State	Oct. 5
HSU	vs. Southwestern Okla. State	Oct. 12
HSU	at Ark. Tech.	Oct. 19
HSU	at Harding	Oct. 26
HSU	at UAM	Nov. 2
HSU	vs. SAU	Nov. 9
HSU	at OBU	Nov. 16

Ouachita Baptist Tigers

The Tigers started last season as the defending Great American Conference champs and look to get back to the title in 2013. A marquee game for the Tigers this season is hosting the Battle of Ravine.

OBU	at Southern Nazarene	Sept. 14
OBU	at East Central	Sept. 21
OBU	vs. Southeastern Okla. State	Sept. 28
OBU	at Southwestern Okla. State	Oct. 5
OBU	vs. Northwestern Okla. State	Oct. 12
OBU	vs. Harding	Oct. 19
OBU	at Ark. Tech.	Oct. 26
OBU	at SAU	Nov. 2
OBU	vs. UAM	Nov. 9
OBU	vs. Henderson State	Nov. 16

Southern Arkansas University Muleriders

The Muleriders get a shot at Harding University during a nationally televised game on a Thursday night, Oct. 3. The game is televised on CBS Sports Network and as a result, the Muleriders' homecoming game has been rescheduled to Nov. 2 against OBU.

SAU	at Southeastern Okla. State	Sept. 5
SAU	vs. East Central	Sept. 14
SAU	vs. Southwestern Okla. State	Sept. 21
SAU	at Northwestern Okla. State	Sept. 28
SAU	vs. Harding	Oct. 3
SAU	at Arkansas Tech	Oct. 12
SAU	at Southern Nazarene	Oct. 19
SAU	vs. OBU	Nov. 2
SAU	at Henderson State	Nov. 9
SAU	vs. UAM	Nov. 16

University of Arkansas-Monticello Boll Weevils

The Boll Weevils come off a disappointing 2012 season having lost every conference match up and winning only one game - a 78-0 thumping of College of Faith in Monticello to the end the season. Looking to rebound in 2013, the Boll Weevils face stiff in-conference competition once again.

UAM	at East Central	Sept. 7
UAM	vs. Southeastern Okla. State	Sept. 14
UAM	vs. Northwestern Okla. State	Sept. 21
UAM	at Southwestern Okla. State	Sept. 28
UAM	vs. Arkansas Tech	Oct. 5
UAM	at Harding	Oct. 12
UAM	vs. Lindenwood	Oct. 19
UAM	vs. Southern Nazarene	Oct. 26
UAM	vs. Henderson State	Nov. 2
UAM	at OBU	Nov. 9
UAM	at SAU	Nov. 16

Arkansas Baptist College Buffaloes

The Buffaloes come off a one-win 2012 season, but last year, the fifth year of football for the school, produced nine players who will continue their football careers at four-year institutions, including Jeremy Winfield who signed to play with the University of Louisiana - Lafayette and Dalton Patterson (Western Kentucky).

Ark. Baptist	at Northwest Miss. CC	Aug. 15 (Scrimmage)
Ark. Baptist	at Navarro College	Aug. 24
Ark. Baptist	at College of DuPage	Aug. 31
Ark. Baptist	vs. Independence	Sept. 7
Ark. Baptist	vs. Ellsworth	Sept. 14
Ark. Baptist	at Georgia Military	Sept. 21
Ark. Baptist	vs. Southeast Prep	Sept. 28
Ark. Baptist	vs. Iowa Western	Oct. 5
Ark. Baptist	at Concorde College	Oct. 12
Ark. Baptist	vs. Fort Scott	Oct. 26



**FEATURED
WRITER**

*Nate
Olson*

Arkansas High School Report

Nate Olson

The 2014 Arkansas prep recruiting class is a work in progress. It's loaded with players with potential. That potential could be realized later this summer in camps, this season or once they settle into a college program. This isn't a class that national recruiters have flocked to see — yet.

First-year Arkansas coach Bret Bielema said he is committed to keeping top in-state players at home. However, in early June he had only offered four players. That could change during the camp season. However, if the Hogs staff were confident in this class they could have already offered several other players. They, like others Division I coaches, are taking a wait-and-see approach with several players.

The Hogs have a commitment from one of the two players they want desperately. El Dorado defensive lineman Bijhon Jackson committed to Arkansas and is ranked one of the top DL in the nation. His friend, and Har-Ber D-lineman Josh Frazier, is even more sought after than Frazier with offers from most of the major programs in the nation. Frazier has cut his list to Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, Texas A&M and USC.

After those mammoth linemen, there doesn't seem to be any can't-miss prospects. Jarvis Cooper has had an outstanding career at West Memphis and sits at No. 3 but his only offer currently is to Arkansas State.

Arkansas has a commitment from North Little Rock running back Juan Day, who sits at No. 4. His stock could skyrocket this season after he ran for 1,000 in the shadow of Alabama signee Altee Tenpenny. More carries spells a breakout season for Day. Credit Bielema and company for spotting him early. The same goes for Bentonville tight end Jack Kraus. He's flown under the radar nationally, but assistant coach Barry Lunney has seen what he can do up close for two years as his high school offensive coordinator. He, too, could see more touches for the Tigers this season.

Jabe Burgess is the state's top quarterback. He visited with Arkansas coaches, but they seem set at quarterback with highly regarded Bolivar, Mo. signal caller Rafe Peavey firmly committed. Seeing the writing on the wall, Burgess committed to Tulsa.

At this point, you won't see many ranking North Little Rock cornerback Kavin Alexander very high because he hasn't received an offer, but I think that changes soon. He dominated the combine circuit and ran a sub-4.4 40 in the offseason. His deficiency is his height (5-foot-8), but he can sprint and move laterally and leap. You won't find many better athletes in the country.

Some quality linemen sit in the middle of the pack. Springdale Har-Ber offensive lineman Isaac Johnson has several mid-major offers and Jonesboro defensive lineman Chuks Ota has a ton of potential.

Arkansas Prep Players To Watch In 2013

Player	School	POS.	HT.	WT.	Commit/Offers
Josh Frazier	Springdale Har-Ber	DT	6-3	324	Arkansas, Alabama, Auburn, Texas A&M
Bijhon Jackson	El Dorado	DT	6-2	334	Arkansas
Jarvis Cooper	West Memphis	DE	6-2	253	ASU, Memphis
Juan Day	North Little Rock	RB	6-1	210	Arkansas
Jabe Burgess	Greenwood	QB	6-2	200	Tulsa
Deandre Murray	Springdale	ATH	5-11	175	ASU, Illinois State, Tulsa
Jack Kraus	Bentonville	TE	6-5	250	Arkansas
Kavin Alexander	North Little Rock	CB	5-8	182	--
Isaac Johnson	Springdale Har-Ber	OL	6-6	275	ASU, LA-Tech, LA-Monroe, Memphis, Tulsa
Chuks Otta	Jonesboro	DL	6-2	285	ASU (offer)
Jake Hall	Springdale Har-Ber	DE	6-5	245	Cincinnati, Louisiana-Monroe
Jahmal Bell	Warren	OL	6-4	290	ASU (offer)
Josh Qualls	Rogers Heritage	QB	6-1	185	--
Aaron Hamaker	LR Catholic	OL	6-6	260	Troy, Wyoming
Dillon Cagle	Hoxie	OL	6-8	315	Southern Arkansas, Ouachita Baptist
Kevante Lowery	Smackover	ATH	6-4	200	Louisiana Tech (offer)
Blake Mack	Lonoke	WR	6-2	210	ASU (offer)
Isaac Jackson	Fort Smith Southside	WR	6-2	185	ASU (offer)
Bo Weddle	Carlisle	RB	5-11	196	--
Michael Perry	Pottsville	ATH	5-11	175	UCA (offer)
Curtis Parker	North Little Rock	OL	6-2	260	--
Tim Quickel	North Little Rock	LB	6-2	210	--
Jordan Jones	Bryant	OL	6-3	285	--
Brock Dassero	Springdale Har-Ber	LB	6-2	230	--
Logan Moragne	LR Central	RB	5-9	185	--



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