



2023 SUN BELT FOOTBALL

WEEK 1 • AUGUST 30, 2023

APP STATE • ARKANSAS STATE • COASTAL CAROLINA • GEORGIA SOUTHERN • GEORGIA STATE • JAMES MADISON
LOUISIANA • ULM • MARSHALL • OLD DOMINION • SOUTH ALABAMA • SOUTHERN MISS • TEXAS STATE • TROY

2023 SUN BELT CONFERENCE STANDINGS

	CONFERENCE					OVERALL							
	W-L	Pct.	PF	PA	Streak	W-L	Pct.	PF	PA	H	A	N	Streak
EAST DIVISION													
App State	0-0	.000	0	0	Lost 1	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	Lost 1
Coastal Carolina	0-0	.000	0	0	Lost 1	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	Lost 3
Georgia Southern	0-0	.000	0	0	Won 1	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	Lost 1
Georgia State	0-0	.000	0	0	Lost 3	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	Lost 3
James Madison	0-0	.000	0	0	Won 3	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	Won 3
Marshall	0-0	.000	0	0	Won 4	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	Won 5
Old Dominion	0-0	.000	0	0	Lost 6	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	Lost 6
WEST DIVISION													
Arkansas State	0-0	.000	0	0	Lost 6	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	Lost 2
Louisiana	0-0	.000	0	0	Won 2	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	Lost 1
ULM	0-0	.000	0	0	Lost 2	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	Lost 2
South Alabama	0-0	.000	0	0	Won 5	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	Lost 1
Southern Miss	0-0	.000	0	0	Won 1	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	Won 2
Texas State	0-0	.000	0	0	Lost 1	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	Lost 1
Troy	0-0	.000	0	0	Won 8	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	Won 11

WEEK 1 SCHEDULE

Thursday, Aug. 31

Rhode Island at Georgia State 6:00 p.m. ESPN+

Saturday, Sept. 2

Arkansas State at No. 20/19 Oklahoma 11:00 a.m. ESPN
Gardner-Webb at App State 2:30 p.m. ESPN+
The Citadel at Georgia Southern 5:00 p.m. ESPN+
Bucknell at James Madison 5:00 p.m. ESPN+
Albany at Marshall 5:00 p.m. ESPN+
Army at ULM 6:00 p.m. NFL Network
Alcorn State at Southern Miss 6:00 p.m. ESPN+
Texas State at Baylor 6:00 p.m. ESPN+
Stephen F. Austin at Troy 6:00 p.m. ESPN+
Old Dominion at Virginia Tech 7:00 p.m. ACC Network
South Alabama at No. 24/23 Tulane 7:00 p.m. ESPNU
Northwestern State at Louisiana 7:30 p.m. ESPN+
Coastal Carolina at UCLA 9:30 p.m. ESPN

All Times CT

IN THE POLLS

Associated Press Top 25 Poll

RV Troy
RV Coastal Carolina
RV South Alabama
RV James Madison

USA TODAY Sports AFCA Coaches Poll

RV Troy
RV South Alabama
RV James Madison

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SBC PRESEASON COACHES POLL

East Division

1. James Madison - 78 Points (4)
2. App State - 75 Points (4)
3. Coastal Carolina - 71 Points (3)
4. Marshall - 68 Points (2)
5. Georgia Southern - 52 Points (1)
6. Georgia State - 31 Points
7. Old Dominion - 17 Points

West Division

1. Troy - 92 Points (10)
2. South Alabama - 85 Points (4)
3. Louisiana - 64 Points
4. Southern Miss - 62 Points
5. Texas State - 36 Points
6. Arkansas State - 33 Points
7. ULM - 20 Points

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

KICKOFF CONTESTS

Georgia State will officially open the 2023 Sun Belt football season when it hosts Rhode Island at 6 p.m. on Thursday, August 31, on ESPN+. The contest is 1-of-8 Sun Belt season-openers against FCS opposition in 2023. App State, which has won more games than any other non-autonomy conference program since 2015, will host in-state foe Gardner-Webb at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 2, on ESPN+. Other in-state matchups include Alcorn State at Southern Miss at 6 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 2, on ESPN+ and Northwestern State at Louisiana at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 2, on ESPN+. Reigning Sun Belt champion Troy will put its 11-game winning streak—the second-longest in the nation—on the line when it hosts Stephen F. Austin at 6 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 2, on ESPN+. The Trojans will retire DeMarcus Ware's No. 94 at halftime, after Ware became the first Sun Belt student-athlete to be enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame this summer.

GAMEDAY VIBES

Following the conclusion of ESPN's College GameDay on Saturday, Sept. 2, stick around to catch Arkansas State at No. 20/19 Oklahoma at 11 a.m. on ESPN. Still a youthful club with just 12 seniors on the roster in their third season under head coach Butch Jones, the Red Wolves will attempt to showcase their ability to return to postseason form in 2023. Despite rebuilding years in 2021 and 2022, Arkansas State is just three years removed from a run of nine-straight bowl appearances from 2011-19—a span that included five Sun Belt titles and four bowl victories.

FAMILIAR FOES

ULM and Texas State will open with familiar foes on Saturday, Sept. 2. The Warhawks will host Army at 6 p.m. on NFL Network, while the Bobcats will visit Baylor at 6 p.m. on ESPN+. This will be the third meeting between ULM and Army over the past four seasons, with this year's matchup being the first time one of the service academies has visited Monroe. Texas State will square off against Baylor for a third-straight year as it opens the GJ Kinne era. Kinne's connections to the Bears program run deep—his father Gary Joe was a four-year player and two-time team captain for the Bears and his brother Landry is currently a redshirt junior for the team.

ONE FOR THE AGES

One of the premier non-conference matchups between non-autonomy conference foes will take place in Week 1 when South Alabama makes the 150-mile trek to No. 24/23 Tulane at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 2, on ESPNU. Both teams were among the eight 10-win programs to hail from a non-autonomy conference a year ago. The teams have met on two prior occasions, with the road team winning both by a margin of three-or-fewer points. The Jaguars, whose 10-3 record in 2022 was a program best at the FBS level, will aim to keep that road winning streak alive. Fellow Sun Belt foe Southern Miss handed the eventual Cotton Bowl champion Green Wave one of their two regular-season losses a year ago—27-24 on Sept. 24.



CREAM OF THE CROP

The Sun Belt Preseason Offensive and Defensive Players of the Year—Coastal Carolina redshirt senior quarterback Grayson McCall and Old Dominion junior linebacker Jason Henderson—will attempt to kickstart the Sun Belt season with a victory over an autonomy five foe in Week 1 play. Each has been a part of a Week 1 win over an autonomy five opponent during his career—McCall led Coastal Carolina to a 38-23 season-opening win at Kansas in 2020 and Henderson aided Old Dominion to a 20-17 win over Virginia Tech in 2022. The Monarchs will visit in-state foe Virginia Tech at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 2, on ACC Network, while the Chanticleers will travel to UCLA at 9:30 p.m. on ESPN for their first game under first-year head coach Tim Beck in Week 1.

AP TOP 25 POLL

PRESEASON

1	Georgia (60)	1,572	0-0
2	Michigan (2)	1,490	0-0
3	Ohio State (1)	1,400	0-0
4	Alabama	1,398	0-0
5	LSU	1,276	0-0
6	USC	1,245	0-0
7	Penn State	1,177	0-0
8	Florida State	1,147	0-0
9	Clemson	1,032	0-0
10	Washington	977	0-0
11	Texas	882	0-0
12	Tennessee	868	0-0
13	Notre Dame	863	0-0
14	Utah	811	0-0
15	Oregon	732	0-0
16	Kansas State	501	0-0
17	TCU	416	0-0
18	Oregon State	406	0-0
19	Wisconsin	386	0-0
20	Oklahoma	296	0-0
21	North Carolina	292	0-0
22	Ole Miss	281	0-0
23	Texas A&M	227	0-0
24	Tulane	224	0-0
25	Iowa	131	0-0

Receiving Votes: Texas Tech 101, South Carolina 73, UCLA 66, UTSA 64, Arkansas 22, Boise State 17, Pittsburgh 16, Kentucky 14, Louisville 10, **Troy 10**, Kansas 10, Auburn 7, Minnesota 6, Toledo 4, Duke 4, Mississippi State 4, Florida 4, Illinois 3, Baylor 3, **Coastal Carolina 3**, **South Alabama 1**, NC State 1, **James Madison 1**, Liberty 1.

COACHES POLL

PRESEASON

1	Georgia (61)	1,643	0-0
2	Michigan	1,510	0-0
3	Alabama (4)	1,489	0-0
4	Ohio State (1)	1,485	0-0
5	LSU	1,294	0-0
6	USC	1,228	0-0
7	Penn State	1,181	0-0
8	Florida State	1,145	0-0
9	Clemson	1,078	0-0
10	Tennessee	991	0-0
11	Washington	941	0-0
12	Texas	848	0-0
13	Notre Dame	841	0-0
14	Utah	839	0-0
15	Oregon	820	0-0
16	TCU	655	0-0
17	Kansas State	440	0-0
18	Oregon State	365	0-0
19	Oklahoma	320	0-0
20	North Carolina	315	0-0
21	Wisconsin	309	0-0
22	Ole Miss	303	0-0
23	Tulane	225	0-0
24	Texas Tech	200	0-0
25	Texas A&M	196	0-0

Receiving Votes: Iowa 169, South Carolina 89, Florida 63, UTSA 59, Pittsburgh 52, UCLA 42, Kentucky 34, Baylor 28, **Troy 25**, Arkansas 20, NC State 19, Fresno State 19, Boise State 18, Auburn 18, Minnesota 16, Miami 16, Mississippi State 13, Oklahoma State 12, Missouri 11, Maryland 10, SMU 8, **South Alabama 8**, Illinois 7, Wake Forest 6, Air Force 6, Toledo 5, Washington State 4, Houston 3, Duke 2, BYU 2, Arizona 2, Memphis 1, Kansas 1, **James Madison 1**.

WEEKLY AWARDS

OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE WEEK

Sept. 4
 Sept. 11
 Sept. 18
 Sept. 25
 Oct. 2
 Oct. 9
 Oct. 16
 Oct. 23
 Oct. 30
 Nov. 6
 Nov. 13
 Nov. 20
 Nov. 27

DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE WEEK

Sept. 4
 Sept. 11
 Sept. 18
 Sept. 25
 Oct. 2
 Oct. 9
 Oct. 16
 Oct. 23
 Oct. 30
 Nov. 6
 Nov. 13
 Nov. 20
 Nov. 27

SPECIAL TEAMS PLAYER OF THE WEEK

Sept. 4
 Sept. 11
 Sept. 18
 Sept. 25
 Oct. 2
 Oct. 9
 Oct. 16
 Oct. 23
 Oct. 30
 Nov. 6
 Nov. 13
 Nov. 20
 Nov. 27

MEDIA AVAILABILITY

The Sun Belt will conduct its weekly football coaches media availability via Zoom on Mondays throughout the regular season, beginning at 10:30 a.m. CT. Members of the media should email sam@sunbeltsports.org for the Zoom link.

10:30 a.m. CT - Shawn Clark, App State
 10:37 a.m. CT - Tim Beck, Coastal Carolina
 10:44 a.m. CT - Curt Cignetti, James Madison
 10:51 a.m. CT - GJ Kinne, Texas State
 10:58 a.m. CT - Clay Helton, Georgia Southern
 11:05 a.m. CT - Terry Bowden, ULM
 11:12 a.m. CT - Jon Sumrall, Troy
 11:19 a.m. CT - Michael Desormeaux, Louisiana
 11:26 a.m. CT - Will Hall, Southern Miss
 11:33 a.m. CT - Shawn Elliott, Georgia State
 11:40 a.m. CT - Butch Jones, Arkansas State
 11:47 a.m. CT - Ricky Rahne, Old Dominion
 11:54 a.m. CT - Charles Huff, Marshall
 12:01 p.m. CT - Kane Wommack, South Alabama



PRESEASON ALL-CONFERENCE

Preseason Offensive Player of the Year

Grayson McCall, Coastal Carolina (RS Sr., QB - Indian Trail, N.C.)

Preseason Defensive Player of the Year

Jason Henderson, Old Dominion (Jr., LB - Dingmans Ferry, Pa.)

Preseason All-Sun Belt First Team Offense

QB - Grayson McCall, Coastal Carolina (RS Sr., QB - Indian Trail, N.C.)
 RB - La'Damian Webb, South Alabama (Sr., RB - Opelika, Ala.)
 RB - Frank Gore Jr., Southern Miss (Jr., RB - Miami, Fla.)
 OL - Isaiah Helms, App State (Sr., OL - Hudson, N.C.)
 OL - Khalil Crowder, Georgia Southern (6th Yr., OL - Carrollton, Ga.)
 OL - Travis Glover, Georgia State (RS Sr., OL - Vienna, Ga.)
 OL - Nick Kidwell, James Madison (RS Sr., OL - Knoxville, Md.)
 OL - Logan Osburn, Marshall (RS Jr., OL - Ona, WVa.)
 TE - Neal Johnson, Louisiana (Sr., TE - Mesquite, Texas)
 WR - Jared Brown, Coastal Carolina (RS So., WR - Lilburn, Ga.)
 WR - Sam Pinckney, Coastal Carolina (Super Sr., WR - Greenwood, S.C.)
 WR - Khaleb Hood, Georgia Southern (5th Yr., WR - McDonough, Ga.)

Preseason All-Sun Belt First Team Defense

DL - James Carpenter, James Madison (RS Jr., DL - Roanoke, Va.)
 DL - Owen Porter, Marshall (RS Sr., DL - Huntington, WVa.)
 DL - TJ Jackson, Troy (Jr., DL - Millbrook, Ala.)
 DL - Richard Jibunor, Troy (Sr., DL - Delta State, Nigeria)
 LB - JT Killen, Coastal Carolina (RS Sr., LB - Lake Wylie, S.C.)
 LB - Marques Watson-Trent, Georgia Southern (RS Jr., LB - Beaver Falls, Pa.)
 LB - Eli Neal, Marshall (Sr., LB - Memphis, Tenn.)
 LB - Jason Henderson, Old Dominion (Jr., LB - Dingmans Ferry, Pa.)
 DB - Micah Abraham, Marshall (RS Sr., DB - Tampa, Fla.)
 DB - Yam Banks, South Alabama (Jr., DB - Ridgeland, Miss.)
 DB - Jay Stanley, Southern Miss (Sr., DB - Greenwood, Miss.)
 DB - Reddy Steward, Troy (Sr., DB - Decatur, Ala.)

Preseason All-Sun Belt First Team Special Teams

K - Dominic Zvada, Arkansas State (So., K - Chandler, Ariz.)
 P - Ryan Hanson, James Madison (RS Jr., P - Elgin, Texas)
 RS - Milan Tucker, App State (RS Jr., RS - Lehigh Acres, Fla.)
 AP - Frank Gore Jr., Southern Miss (Jr., AP - Miami, Fla.)

Preseason All-Sun Belt Second Team Offense

QB - Carter Bradley, South Alabama (Sr., QB - Jacksonville, Fla.)
 RB - Rasheen Ali, Marshall (RS So., RB - Cleveland, Ohio)
 RB - Kimani Vidal, Troy (Jr., RB - Marietta, Ga.)
 OL - Damion Daley, App State (RS Sr., OL - Columbia, S.C.)
 OL - Will McDonald, Coastal Carolina (RS Sr., OL - Matthews, N.C.)
 OL - AJ Gillie, Louisiana (RS Jr., OL - Natchitoches, La.)
 OL - Ethan Driskell, Marshall (RS Jr., OL - Louisville, Ky.)
 OL - Daniel King, Troy (Jr., OL - Cairo, Ga.)
 TE - Jjay McAfee, Georgia Southern (6th Yr., TE - Charleston, S.C.)
 WR - Tyrone Howell, ULM (6th Yr., WR - Idabel, Okla.)
 WR - Caullin Lacy, South Alabama (Jr., WR - Mobile, Ala.)
 WR - Devin Voisin, South Alabama (Sr., WR - Crestview, Fla.)

Preseason All-Sun Belt Second Team Defense

DL - Javon Denis, Georgia State (RS Sr., DL - Deerfield Beach, Fla.)
 DL - Wy'Kevious Thomas, South Alabama (RS Jr., DL - Riverdale, Ga.)
 DL - Jalen Williams, Southern Miss (Sr., DL - Tylertown, Miss.)
 DL - Jordan Revels, Texas State (Sr., DL - Houston, Texas)
 DL - Javon Solomon, Troy (Jr., DL - Tallahassee, Fla.)
 LB - Jontrey Hunter, Georgia State (RS Sr., LB - Tampa, Fla.)
 LB - Jordan Veneziale, Georgia State (Sr., LB - Dallas, Ga.)
 LB - Taurus Jones, James Madison (RS Jr., LB - Portsmouth, Va.)
 DB - Bryquice Brown, Georgia State (RS Sr., DB - Dorchester, Mass.)
 DB - Keith Gallmon Jr., South Alabama (RS Sr., DB - Mobile, Ala.)
 DB - Jaden Voisin, South Alabama (RS Jr., DB - Crestview, Fla.)
 DB - Dell Pettus, Troy (Sr., DB - Harvest, Ala.)

Preseason All-Sun Belt Second Team Special Teams

K - Diego Guajardo, South Alabama (Sr., K - Spanish Fort, Ala.)
 P - Ethan Duane, Old Dominion (Jr., P - Melbourne, Australia)
 RS - Matthew McDoom, Coastal Carolina (So., RS - Winter Garden, Fla.)
 AP - Kimani Vidal, Troy (Jr., AP - Marietta, Ga.)

2023 NFL DRAFT

Following a banner 2022 campaign in which it defeated four autonomy five programs, hosted ESPN's College GameDay for the second time in conference history and produced a conference-record seven Bowl Season participants—tied for the most among non-autonomy conferences and trailing only the SEC, ACC, Big Ten and Big 12—the Sun Belt had a conference-record nine alumni selected in the 2023 NFL Draft, surpassing the prior high-water mark of seven set in 2010 & 2020.

The conference has produced multiple NFL Draft selections in 20-of-22 drafts since it began sponsoring football in 2001, including this year. Three of the Sun Belt's five highest NFL Draft totals have come over the past four seasons with seven selections in 2020, six picks in 2022 and a conference-record nine draftees in 2023.

The Sun Belt has produced six-or-more draft picks on five occasions all-time (2010, 2012, 2020, 2022 & 2023). The conference's four-year total of 26 NFL Draft selections from 2020-23 is the largest four-year tally in conference history, surpassing the prior record of 22 from 2010-13.



NINE SELECTIONS ARE THE MOST DRAFT PICKS IN SUN BELT CONFERENCE HISTORY

NICK SALDIVERI - OL, OLD DOMINION

Old Dominion offensive lineman Nick Saldiveri was selected by the New Orleans Saints in the fourth round with the 103rd overall pick. Saldiveri was an All-Sun Belt Second Team honoree in 2022 and was the third-ever Monarch—and first of the Sun Belt era—to hear his name called in the NFL Draft.

JAKE ANDREWS - OL, TROY

Troy offensive lineman Jake Andrews was taken by the New England Patriots in the fourth round with the 107th overall pick. Andrews was an All-Sun Belt First Team selection in 2022 and was the Trojans first NFL Draft pick since 2017.

DARRELL LUTER JR. - DB, SOUTH ALABAMA

South Alabama defensive back Darrell Luter Jr., was selected by the San Francisco 49ers in the fifth round with the 155th overall pick. Luter Jr. was an All-Sun Belt Third Team honoree in 2022 and made it three-straight drafts with a Jaguars selection.

NICK HAMPTON - EDGE, APP STATE

App State edge Nick Hampton was taken by the Los Angeles Rams in the fifth round with the 161st overall pick. Hampton was an All-Sun Belt First Team selection in 2022 and made it four-straight drafts with a Mountaineer selection.

ERIC SCOTT JR. - DB, SOUTHERN MISS

Southern Miss defensive back Eric Scott Jr., was selected by the Dallas Cowboys in the sixth round with the 178th overall pick. Scott Jr. was the first draft pick of the Sun Belt era for Southern Miss.

TRE HAWKINS III - DB, OLD DOMINION

Old Dominion defensive back Tre Hawkins III was taken by the New York Giants in the sixth round with the 209th overall pick. Hawkins gave the Monarchs multiple NFL Draft selections for the second time in program history (2019).

ZACK KUNTZ - TE, OLD DOMINION

Old Dominion tight end Zack Kuntz was selected by the New York Jets in the seventh round with the 220th overall pick. Kuntz made 2023 the first three-man draft class in Monarch program history. More Monarchs were selected in the 2023 NFL Draft (3) than all prior NFL Drafts combined (2).

COOPER HODGES - OL, APP STATE

App State offensive lineman Cooper Hodges was taken by the Jacksonville Jaguars in the seventh round with the 226th overall pick. Hodges—an All-Sun Belt First Team honoree in 2022—gave the Mountaineers multiple NFL Draft selections for the second time over the past four seasons.

ANDRE JONES - EDGE, LOUISIANA

Louisiana edge Andre Jones was selected by the Washington Commanders in the seventh round with the 233rd overall pick. Jones, an All-Sun Belt Second Team performer in 2022, made it four-straight drafts with a Ragin' Cajuns selection.

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