



SAM HOUSTON BEARKATS

2024 Record: 10-3 (6-2 C-USA) Conference USA

Huntsville, TX

Bearkats Must Claw for Victories

Sam Houston, we have a problem - one of the most successful coaches in program history (including an FCS national championship season in 2021) has left for his home state to take the Temple job. K.C. Keeler guided this team through the FBS transition in 2023 and the Bearkats posted a remarkable 10-win season last year capped off by the first ever bowl appearance and bowl win in program history. The "price" of that success is massive roster turnover, a handful of players followed Keeler to Temple and even more followed defensive coordinator Skyler Cassity to North Texas.

To make the situation even more tense, 33 players were added to the roster *after* spring ball, so this team will have very little time to work together before an early start to the season in Week 0. Sam Houston made quick work of their FBS transition but now they face another harsh reality of life in the FBS - absorbing significant losses throughout the roster. With a grueling schedule, 2025 appears to be a major rebuilding year unless new head coach Phil Longo and his staff can prove otherwise.

OFFENSE

Longo is part of the very large Mike Leach coaching tree and his offensive scheme follows suit. He tried to implement his air raid offense at Wisconsin, but that transition proved to be too difficult and he was fired from his OC post in November. In fairness to Longo, he had a starting quarterback go down with a season-ending injury in both seasons while he was in Madison. There are mixed reactions among the Bearkats fanbase about Longo, but he was successful here as an OC a decade ago and he'll provide a boost to an offense that only averaged 23.8 points per game last season. Although Zack Patterson joins the staff as the offensive coordinator, Longo will be the one calling the plays this season.

There aren't a lot of returners to this team, but starting quarterback **Hunter Watson** is one of them. He's an effective runner who finished second on the team with 647 yards and his nine touchdowns led the team. He'll be asked to throw the ball a lot more this season which will be a test of his offseason development. Transfer **Mabrey Mettauer** follows Longo over from Wisconsin and is a big 6'5" gunslinger who was recruited to play in this system. It will be interesting to see if he takes the job at some point, especially if there are struggles on offense early - and if the intense September schedule is any indication, there will be.

Three of the top four receivers have either transferred or graduated and they made up 68.3% of the targets last season. **Qua'Vez Humphreys** only caught 20 passes but he did a lot of damage when he did get the ball. The slot receiver will be highlighted in this offense, so whoever fills that position, whether it be **Malik Phillips**, **Lonnie Adkism**, **Michael Phoenix II**, or another wideout should see their production surge. **Elijah Green** is reunited with Longo after a stop in Indiana and should get the most carries at running back. The offensive line is actually in decent shape with four of the five starters seeing significant playing time last year including **James Dawn**.

DEFENSE

The defense starts from scratch. The top 16 tacklers are gone from last year's stifling defense that was Conference USA's best. New defensive coordinator **Freddie Aughtry-Lindsay** arrives from North Carolina State. He'll run a 3-3-5 scheme similar to what has been run here in the past and it's probably best suited for this year's team, specifically, with major depth concerns on both the line and at linebacker.

There's essentially one player at each level of the defense who is a senior bringing starting experience to the table. On the line, it's **Keelan Cox** who joins the team from Texas Southern after a six sack campaign. He'll be familiar with the temporary stadium since that's where he played his home games last season. Linebacker **Antavious Fish** posted over 150 tackles in the last two seasons for Akron. In the secondary, **CJ Brown** will man one of the safety spots after 74 tackles and an interception at Bowling Green.

The secondary might be the strength on defense relative to the other two positions with Texas State transfer **Alonzo Edwards** added at cornerback. Last year's group was one of the G5's best, it'll be very tough to replicate.

Preseason Ranking

TBD

HC: Phil Longo
(1st Year, 0-0)

OC: Zack Patterson
(1st Year)

DC: Freddie Aughtry-Lindsay
(1st Year)

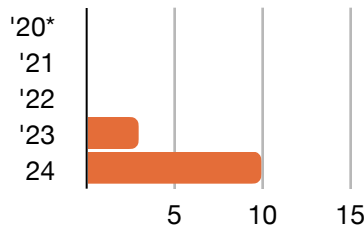
2025 Class Rankings

Recruiting
122

Transfer Portal
114

Via 24/7 Sports

SAM HOUSTON WIN TREND



2024 Results (4-8)

@ Rice (W 34-14)
@ UCF (L 14-45)
Hawaii (W 31-13)
New Mexico St. (W 31-11)
vs. Texas State* (W 40-39)
@ UTEP (W 41-21)
W. Kentucky (L 14-31)
@ FIU (W 10-7)
Louisiana Tech (W 9-3)
@ Kenn St. (W 23-17 OT)
@ Jacksonville St. (L 11-21)
Liberty (W 20-18)
vs. Georgia So. (W 31-26)
New Orleans Bowl

SAM HOUSTON
BEARKATS

5thandGoalSports.com

HUNTER WATSON – QB

Photo via Houston Chronicle

2025 SHSU Schedule

Wk		
0	Sat, Aug 23	@ W. Kentucky
1	Fri, Aug 29	vs. UNLV
2	Sat, Sept 6	@ Hawaii
4	Sat, Sept 20	@ Texas
6	Thu, Oct 2	@ New Mexico St.
7	Thu, Oct 9	vs. Jacksonville St.
8	Wed, Oct 15	vs. UTEP
10	Fri, Oct 31	@ Louisiana Tech
11	Sat, Nov 8	@ Oregon State
12	Sat, Nov 15	vs. Delaware
13	Sat, Nov 22	@ Mid Tennessee
14	Sat, Nov 29	vs. FIU

Home Away Neutral

Key Games

Aug 23 @ Western Kentucky: The Longo era kicks off with an intriguing Week 0 conference matchup against the Hilltoppers. Two air-raid style offenses could post a lot of points as the Bearkats look to avoid an 0-3 mark against WKU.

Oct 15 vs. UTEP: The only two Conference USA schools in Texas face off for a third year as FBS opponents. The road team has won the first two games including Sam Houston's best offensive game of the season in 2024.

Nov 29 vs. FIU: The first two installments of this series have been decided by a total of nine points including a double overtime loss in 2023. Can Sam Houston end the year on a positive note?

Player Spotlight

Photo via @CampbellAward on X



QUA'VEZ HUMPRHEYS – WR

Humphreys wasn't able to get out of the blocks in the 2023 season due to a preseason injury, but he sprinted out to a strong start in the 2024 season. He only caught 20 passes, but his speed and big play ability allowed him to total 385 yards which was second on the team. The key for Humphreys this season will be to sustain his play after just 128 yards in conference play, but the new offense could suit him perfectly.

2024 Stats: 20 REC, 385 YDS, 4 TDS

Photo via @SSN_SHSU on X



ANTAVIOUS FISH – LB

Fish was part of a quality linebacker room at Akron and he'll likely step into a leadership role both from the perspective of his veteran presence and voice in the locker room and his productivity on the field. His 2023 season was where Fish shined the most, nearly accumulating 100 tackles including four for loss and a sack. He is a strong bruiser who will make his presence felt in the middle of the field for the Bearkats.

2024 Stats: 68 TKL, 2 TFL, 1 SACK (Akron)

Photo via City of Houston



Shell Energy Stadium (22,039 - Temporary)

Photo via mphx.2 on Instagram



Michael PHOENIX II

SPECIAL TEAMS

Sam Houston fans held their breath on anything kicking-related last season. **Christian Pavon** returns as place kicker but the position is an open competition with multiple transfers in the mix. **Tate Ryan** can both kick and punt and might do one or both in 2025.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Bearkats will travel 7,981 miles this season - only four teams in college football will log more travel. Trips to Hawaii and Oregon State wrack up the mileage quickly, but due to the \$60 million renovations happening in Huntsville, Sam Houston will play their home games at Shell Energy Stadium, the home of MLS's Houston Dynamo. However, the problem is that their temporary home stadium is nearly two hours away from campus so Sam Houston is essentially playing 12 road games this season. That kind of travel seemed to negatively affect Kansas last season, who was also playing a not-insignificant distance away from Lawrence due to their stadium construction.

Couple the travel with a roster gutted by the portal and graduation, and Sam Houston has a pretty steep rebuild on their hands in year one with a new head coach. Longo should provide a jolt to the offense, but that side of the ball will have to carry the team to victories and win shootouts. The non-conference slate is brutal and even a single win out of four games against UNLV, Hawaii, Texas, and Oregon State would be a major milestone.

Appointment Television



vs.



Wed, Oct 15 - 7:00 PM (CBSSN)

This game may have a more "neutral" feel in Houston than it did two seasons ago, but home field advantage hasn't benefited either the Miners or Bearkats in the past two meetings. This Wednesday night showdown will be the rubber match between the two Texas schools in the conference after the Bearkats waltzed through the UTEP defense last season to the tune of 41 points and 293 yards on the ground, both season bests.

2024 Statistics

Offense			Defense		
Statistic	Per Game	FBS Rank	Statistic	Per Game	FBS Rank
Points	23.8	99	Points	20.4	T-21
Rushing	179.8	41	Rushing	144.5	57
Passing	168.2	122	Passing	177.0	13
Total	347.9	102	Total	321.5	22
Sacks	30	T-86	Sacks	28	T-56

2025 Projection
4-8

7th in Conference USA

Trophy Case



XO

**National
Champions**



XO

**C-USA
Champions**



1 - 0

**Bowl
Record**



0

**Playoff
Appearances**