OKLAHOMA SOONERS

Big 12 Conference

OKLAHOMA BIO

National Championships - **7**

1950 1955
1956 1974
1975 1985
2000

x7 **xO**

Big 12 Championships: **47**
(Last: **2020**)

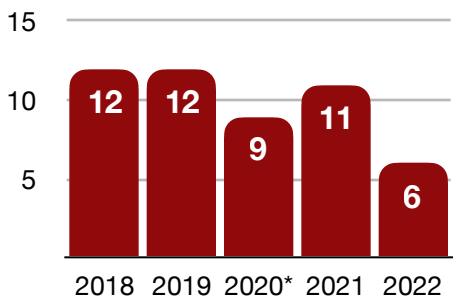
Location: **Norman, OK**

All-Time Record: **881-318-47**

2022 Results: **6-7**
Lost in Cheez-It Bowl

Head Coach: **Brent Venables**
2nd Year (6-7)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



Oklahoma Memorial Stadium (83,489)

2022 was a Fluke, Right?

For a program with as rich a football history as Oklahoma, last season's 6-7 finish was a shock to the system. After seven straight seasons of exactly two losses in each respective campaign, the Sooners' scuffled in year one under head coach Brent Venables. Venables is on the short list of elite defensive coordinators and was a staple at Clemson winning two national titles as DC. He inherited only 10 starters last season but expectations were still high. The assumption was that Venables would immediately fix the defense, an area that had plagued Oklahoma over the years and had ultimately prevented them from reaching the Playoff in some years and prevented them from winning a game in the CFP if they did make it. Unfortunately for those in Norman, that "quick fix" didn't happen and the defense was actually worse in 2022 than it was in 2021.

Venables only has six returning starters on defense but there should be an adjustment to his system in year two and improvement seems imminent. The Sooners lose one 100+ tackler from last season to the transfer portal (David Ugwoegbu to Houston) but retain the leading tackler **Danny Stutsman**. The junior linebacker had 126 tackles including 10.5 tackles for loss. He'll lead the linebacker group and play next to two transfers in **Dasan McCullough** (Indiana) and **Konnor Near** (Ferris State). Opposing run games cut through the defensive front with ease last season so this linebacker group along with the defensive line will need to step up. There's arguably better talent and depth up front than at this time last year. **Ethan Downs** and **Reggie Grimes** each had 4.5 sacks and the portal brings in additional talent. **Jacob Lacey** spent the last four years at Notre Dame and **Rondell Bothroyd** spent five seasons at Wake Forest. **Woodi Washington** has one cornerback spot nailed down but the other is up for grabs and the Sooners badly need someone to emerge. The secondary was "feast or famine" last season and had 17 interceptions despite being one of the worst overall pass defenses in the country.

The offense took a step back last season statistically but was still dangerous when quarterback **Dillon Gabriel** was healthy. A savvy veteran with well over 10,000 career passing yards between last season and in previous years at UCF, Gabriel figures to be one of the best quarterbacks in the conference. It's critical that he stays healthy and that Oklahoma can find some depth behind him in case he can't. Last year's Red River rivalry game against Texas was a complete disaster on all fronts but specifically because there wasn't a solid backup option when Gabriel went down. This year highly touted freshman **Jackson Arnold** should fill the backup role and could he the quarterback of the future.

Eric Gray had a masterful season at running back totaling 1,366 yards and an average of 6.4 yards per carry. The bad news for Oklahoma is that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to replace that kind of production. The good news is that the Sooners have several young candidates who could be the next star running back. **Jovantae Barnes** saw action last year as a true freshman and contributed 519 yards and 5 touchdowns. **Gavin Sawchuk** had a breakout performance in the Cheez-It Bowl loss and **Daylan Smothers** is another highly regarded recruit whose debut will be highly anticipated.

Gabriel loses his two favorite targets from last season including the ever-dangerous Marvin Mims. **Jalil Farooq** and **Drake Stoops** are now the primary options and Venables brought in additional options through the portal although those players are largely untested and unproven. If the offensive line that allowed 31 sacks last season can give Gabriel more time in the pocket it will go a long way in connecting with the new options in the passing game.

The Bottom Line: Oklahoma and Venables are ready to get back to business and finish out their time in the Big 12 with a bang. However, if the defense flounders again and the offense struggles to replace key losses the Venables' seat will get very warm very fast. I expect a much better year and avoiding both Kansas State and Texas Tech helps Oklahoma to have one of the more manageable schedules in the conference.

Projection: 9-3 (3rd in Big 12)

2022 Statistics

Points Scored	Rush Yards	Pass Yards	Turnover Margin
32.8	219.4	210.5	+6
32nd in FBS	15th in FBS	10th in FBS	T-30th in FBS

Points Allowed	Rush YDS Allowed	Pass YDS Allowed
30.0	187.5	273.5
99th in FBS	106th in FBS	119th in FBS

2023 Oklahoma Schedule

Week	Date	Team
1	Sat, Sept 2	vs. Arkansas State
2	Sat, Sept 9	vs. SMU
3	Sat, Sept 16	@ Tulsa
4	Sat, Sept 23	**@ Cincinnati**
5	Sat, Sept 30	**vs. Iowa State**
6	Sat, Oct 7	**vs. Texas**
7	Bye Week	
8	Sat, Oct 21	**vs. UCF**
9	Sat, Oct 28	**@ Kansas**
10	Sat, Nov 4	**@ Oklahoma St.**
11	Sat, Nov 11	**vs. West Virginia**
12	Sat, Nov 18	**@ BYU**
13	Fri, Nov 24	**vs. TCU**

Conference Games in Bold

KEY GAMES

Sat, Oct 7: vs. Texas - An argument could be made that last year's 49-0 defeat to Texas was the worst loss in program history. The Sooners will be desperate to erase those memories and could very well be 5-0 heading to the Cotton Bowl.

Sat, Nov 4: @ Oklahoma State - A tragic loss that occurred due to conference realignment is the loss of "Bedlam" following this season. Oklahoma has dominated the series, will they close the rivalry out with another victory?

Fri, Nov 24: vs. TCU - Two teams picked towards the top of the conference will battle it out on Black Friday. Will this game have Big 12 title game or even College Football Playoff implications?

KEY PLAYERS

Dillon Gabriel - QB

Gabriel stepped into the starting lineup and shined right from the beginning. He opened the season by throwing 11 straight touchdowns without an interception until and injury knocked him out for a week and a half. He possesses great arm talent and he's dangerous with legs. He accounted for 31 total touchdowns and could add more in 2023 if he can stay on the field. Gabriel's presence gives the Sooners a chance in every game they play.

Danny Stutsman - LB

Stutsman is the quarterback of the defense and led the way for the Sooners with 124 total tackles in 2022. He added an interception against both Iowa State and West Virginia and sacked the quarterback three times including one in the Cheez-It Bowl. He dominated in the month of November, compiling 51 tackles in just four weeks and his play will be pivotal in the Sooner's success on defense.

2022 RESULTS (6-7)

UTEP (W 45-13)
Kent State (W 33-3)
@ Nebraska (W 49-14)
Kansas State (L 34-41)
@ TCU (L 24-55)
Texas (L 0-49)
Kansas (W 52-42)
@ Iowa State (W 27-13)
Baylor (L 35-38)
@ West Virginia (L 20-23)
Oklahoma State (W 28-13)
@ Texas Tech (L 48-51)
Florida State (L 32-35)

OKLAHOMA

RECRUITING

2023 Class Ranking

4th

(Via 24/7 Sports)