



AIR FORCE FALCONS

Mountain West

Air Force to Fly to New Heights

AIR FORCE BIO

National Championships - 0



Mountain West Championships: 0

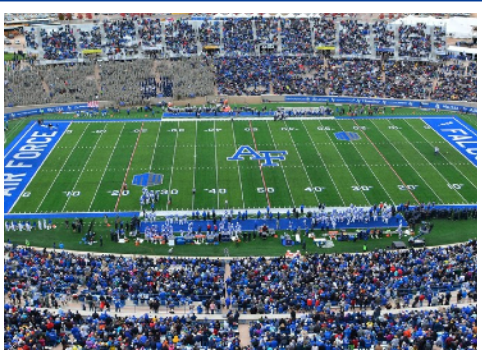
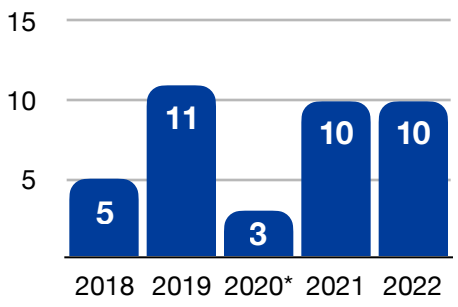
Location: **Colorado Springs, CO**

All-Time Record: **418-336-12**

2022 Results: **10-3**
Won Armed Forces Bowl

Head Coach: **Troy Calhoun**
17th Year (121-78)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



Falcon Stadium (46,692)

Troy Calhoun has done a simply sensational job at Air Force over the past few seasons. The Falcons have had five double-digit win seasons in the last decade and have posted a remarkable 31-8 record in the last three full seasons (excluding 2020). He finally nabbed the elusive Commander-in-Chief Trophy with wins over both Navy and Army for the first time since 2016 and the Falcons capped off the season with a 30-15 victory over Baylor in the Armed Forces Bowl, their fourth consecutive bowl win. The last time Air Force lost by more than a touchdown was a 49-30 loss against #25 Boise State back in 2020. This team has been on the precipice of greatness in the Mountain West, could 2023 be the year where the Falcons not only make the Mountain West championship game but claim their first conference title since 1998?

Air Force ranked first in college football in rushing yards and ranked dead last in passing. That's been the norm for many, many years with the triple option attack run by all three service academies. A rule instituted by the NCAA last year prohibited cut blocks by offensive linemen. That rule significantly impacted Army, Navy, and Air Force as cut blocks are a key strategy in the "wishbone" offense. Both Army and Navy made slight changes to their offense and will throw the ball more in 2023 although the run will still be the primary focus. Air Force and offensive coordinator Mike Thiessen (the longest tenured OC in the country, per Phil Steele) don't seem like they will follow the same strategy, at least for now. After all, Air Force still ran for 326.7 yards per game even with the new rules last year so why fix what's not broken?

The Air Force offense *will* look different, however. Brad Roberts led Air Force in rushing for the last three seasons and finished his illustrious career with 3,545 career rushing yards and barely missed the all-time school record. 1,728 of those yards came last year which was tops in all of college football. Similarly, quarterback Haaziq Daniels is also gone. **Ben Brittain** will likely take the reins as starter. If not Britain at quarterback, then **Jensen Jones** who had 82 yards rushing on 14 carries. Britain has thrown only three passes in his four extremely brief appearances over the last three years but the Air Force quarterback's job is primarily to distribute the ball to the "fullbacks" and "tailbacks". The fullback position was left pretty bare with Roberts as well as Emmanuel Michel and Omar Fattah all departing. **Owen Burk** and **Jet Harris** both played sparingly last year. The tailback position is more proven with the speedy **John Lee Eldridge III** ready to take a greater share of the carries. In just 99 carries Eldridge ripped off 766 yards and 4 touchdowns. Receivers **Dane Kinamon** and **Brandon Engel** will be called to primarily block in this offense but will have to make up for the talented David Cormier who had nearly half of Air Force's receptions and receiving yards last season.

Air Force hangs their hat on defense and last year's unit was simply elite. They were top 10 in several major categories and return eight starters. On the line, tackles **Payton Zdroik** and **Jayden Thiergood** played a huge role in the Falcons' historically good run defense. **Bo Richter** should see even more playing time at defensive end which is only a good thing. Air Force almost always has superb linebacker play and **Alec Mock** and **Johnathan Youngblood** could have breakout seasons. The secondary was also fantastic led by leading tackler and safety **Trey Taylor**.













The Bottom Line: Fans in Colorado Springs are primarily concerned with beating bitter rivals Army and Navy. That's quite understandable, but this Falcons team is capable of bringing home more than just the Commander-in-Chief Trophy in 2023. Yes, the offense will look a little different without the consistent presence of Brad Roberts and Haaziq Daniels but the defense will be as potent as ever and Air Force's schedule is the most favorable of any team in the entire conference. Outside of Army and Navy, the other two non-conference opponents, Robert Morris and Sam Houston, were both in the FCS last season. There's no Fresno State on the schedule and the Falcons get both San Diego State and Wyoming at home. The final week features a monumental showdown against Boise State in a game that will almost certainly have enormous implications in the Mountain West final standings. I expect a rematch the following week in the Mountain West Championship. If Air Force comes out victorious in close games against Mountain West opponents (unlike their 1-3 record last season), could the Falcons also be playing for a New Year's Six bid?

Projection: 11-1 (1st in Mountain West)

2022 Statistics

Points Scored	Rush Yards	Pass Yards	Turnover Margin
27.8	326.7	70.5	+3
69th in FBS	1st in FBS	131st in FBS	T-49th in FBS
Points Allowed	Rush YDS Allowed	Pass YDS Allowed	
13.4	95.3	159.1	
3rd in FBS	6th in FBS	2nd in FBS	

2023 Air Force Schedule

Week	Date	Team
1	Sat, Sept 2	 vs. Robert Morris
2	Sat, Sept 9	 vs. Sam Houston
3	Fri, Sept 15	 vs. Utah State
4	Fri, Sept 22	 @ San Jose State
5	Sat, Sept 30	 vs. San Diego St.
6	Bye Week	
7	Sat, Oct 14	 vs. Wyoming
8	Sat, Oct 21	 @ Navy
9	Sat, Oct 28	 @ Colorado State
10	Sat, Nov 4	 vs. Army*
11	Sat, Nov 11	 @ Hawaii
12	Sat, Nov 18	 vs. UNLV
13	Fri, Nov 24	 @ Boise State

Conference Games in Bold

KEY GAMES

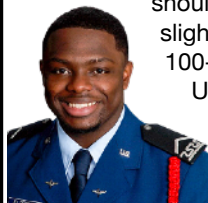
Sat, Oct 21: @ Navy - The Falcons have claimed the last three meetings against the Midshipmen. There's no guarantee of a second-straight Commander-in-Chief trophy without a win in Annapolis first.

Sat, Nov 4: vs. Army* - Buckle the chinstraps just a bit tighter when these two teams get together. Neither team has reached the 20-point threshold in regulation over the last five matchups. The Black Knights had won four of five prior to last season. This game is a "neutral site" game but is still practically in Air Force's backyard (Denver).

Sat, Nov 25: @ Boise State - Will this game decide the Mountain West regular season title? Will there be a rematch in a week? I say yes to both.

KEY PLAYERS

John Lee Eldridge III - RB



With three-year leader Brad Roberts gone, Eldridge should see the ball more even though he plays a slightly different position than Roberts. He had three 100-yard games last season (Wyoming, Nevada, and UNLV) despite seeing just 29 combined carries in those three games! He's an explosive back with breakaway speed. While there's nothing Air Force can do to truly replace Roberts, Eldridge should provide consistency and big plays so that loss is at least a little less painful.

Trey Taylor - S

If you need a player to make plays all over the field, Taylor is as reliable of an option as you will find in college football. He posted a team-best 69 tackles last season after 62 in 2021 and added a pair of interceptions to last year's campaign. He picked off San Diego State in the season finale as the Falcons stifled San Diego State for just three points and 187 total yards.



2022 RESULTS (10-3)

Northern Iowa (W 48-17)

Colorado (W 41-10)

@ Wyoming (L 14-17)

Nevada (W 48-20)

Navy (W 13-10)

@ Utah State (L 27-34)

@ UNLV (W 42-7)

Boise State (L 14-19)

Army (W 13-7)

New Mexico (W 35-3)

Colorado State (W 24-12)

@ San Diego State (W 13-3)

Baylor (W 30-15)

AIR FORCE

RECRUITING

2023 Class Ranking

102nd

(Via 24/7 Sports)