



# BUFFALO BULLS

2023 Record: 3-9

Mid-American Conference

Buffalo, NY

FBS Ranking

118



## RED MURDOCK – LB

Photo via UB Athletics

A 7-6 campaign in 2022 brought hope that the Bulls could compete for at least a division title. Instead, Buffalo scored nearly eight fewer points per game than the previous season and ended September winless (including a loss to Fordham of the FCS ranks). The Bulls bookended the season with another four-game losing streak and failed to score more than 13 points in any of those contests.

Coach Maurice Linguist resigned after the season to join Alabama's staff and in steps Pete Lembo to take his spot. Lembo is quite familiar with the MAC after spending five years at the helm of Ball State and he's the only head coach with a new team in the MAC this season. He has his work cut out for him, especially on offense.

### OFFENSE

In recent memory, the Bulls have enjoyed the production of several talented running backs. Jaret Patterson finished his Buffalo career just shy of the all-time rushing record in 2020 (3,884 yards) and Dylan McDuffie took the mantle and topped 1,049 yards in 2021. In 2022, Mike Washington and Ron Cook Jr. split carries and both hit the 600-yard mark. They both returned in 2023 giving the Bulls hope that the ground game would once again become a source of major strength. Unfortunately, that plan never materialized Buffalo mustered just 133.6 yards rushing. Both Washington and Cook Jr. depart, leaving **Jacqez Barksdale** as the likely starting candidate.

The good news is that Barksdale led the team with 4.8 yards per carry but the bad news is that there's virtually no experience in the backfield outside of the senior from Topeka. In fact, after Barksdale, the leading returning rusher is quarterback **CJ Ogbonna**. With last year's starting quarterback Cole Snyder gone, Ogbonna will have the chance to compete for the starting role although he'll have to beat out Old Dominion transfer **Jack Shields** to do so.

Finding reliable playmakers could prove to be a conundrum in 2024. **Nik McMillan** brings back 13 catches for 180 yards and a touchdown but the cupboard is otherwise essentially bare of returning production. Boston College transfer **Taji Johnson** could factor into the receiving corps but the position is wide open for the taking.

Luckily for Lembo and the coaching staff, they won't have to start from scratch on the offensive line. That unit allowed only 16 sacks all season and the combo of **Tyler Doty**, **Trevor Brock**, and **Caelan Shepard** bring desperately needed experience and skill to the offense.

### DEFENSE

If Buffalo is able to find success in 2024, it will probably be because they were able to lean on their defense. Joe Bowen takes over at defensive coordinator after spending the last few seasons coaching linebackers at Miami. The RedHawk linebacker play has been top notch in recent years and Bowen inherits a trio of returners in **Red Murdock**, **Shaun Dolac**, and **Solomon Brown**. Murdock is the team's leading returning tackler and he led the way for the Bulls in the tackle for loss category with 9.5. **Shaun Dolac** put up monster numbers in 2022 but was limited to only four games with an injury in 2023.

The Bulls were staunch in pass defense (although opponents had no issues running the ball). Much of the secondary returns and Buffalo has added additional depth through the portal. Safety **Marcus Fuqua** couldn't quite live up to his ridiculous seven-interception campaign of 2022 but he remains an anchor of the secondary and he did recover two fumbles for the second straight season.

Corners **Jayden Oliver**, **Clevester Hines**, and **Charles McCartherens** should see elevated playing time now that first-team All-MAC Devin Grant has departed. Of that trio, McCartherens was the most productive in 2023 with 33 tackles, a forced fumble, and three picks.

Buffalo will need to find a way to slow down the rushing attack of their opponents. The Bulls allowed 200+ rush yards in nearly half of their contests in 2023 (unsurprisingly, none of those games were victories). This effort could be a work in progress due to an inexperienced front, only **CJ Bazile** is the lone returning starter on the line.

New coaching staff shows promise but is rebuild still immanent?

HC: Pete Lembo (1st Year, 0-0)

OC: Dave Patenaude (1st Year)

DC: Joe Bowen (1st Year)

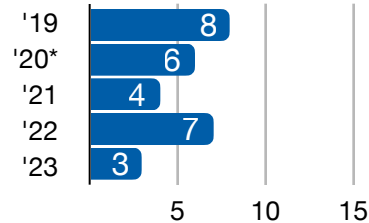
### 2024 Class Rankings

Recruiting 111

Transfer Portal 114

Via 24/7 Sports

### BUFFALO WIN TREND



### 2023 Results (3-9)

- @ Wisconsin (L 17-38)
- Fordham (L 37-40)
- Liberty (L 27-55)
- @ Louisiana (L 38-45)
- @ Akron (W 13-10 OT)
- C. Michigan (W 37-13)
- Bowling Green (L 14-24)
- @ Kent State (W 24-6)
- @ Toledo (L 13-31)
- Ohio (L 10-20)
- @ Miami (OH) (L 10-23)
- E. Michigan (L 11-24)



Wk	2024 Buffalo Schedule	
1	Thu, Aug 29	vs. Lafayette
2	Sat, Sept 7	@ Missouri
3	Sat, Sept 14	vs. UMass
4	Sat, Sept 21	@ No. Illinois
5	Sat, Sept 28	@ UConn
7	Sat, Oct 12	vs. Toledo
8	Sat, Oct 19	vs. W. Michigan
9	Sat, Oct 26	@ Ohio
10	Sat, Nov 2	@ Akron
12	Tue, Nov 12	vs. Ball State
13	Wed, Nov 20	@ E. Michigan
14	Tue, Nov 26	vs. Kent State

Home Away

### Key Games

**vs. Lafayette:** The Bulls have actually lost two straight games to FCS opponents (Holy Cross in 2022 and Fordham in 2023). It's important that Buffalo gets the Pete Lembo era off to a good start with a victory.

**@ UConn:** These two programs met almost every year for two decades but will square off for the first time since 2013 (where Buffalo smashed their way to a 41-12 victory).

**vs. Kent State:** If Buffalo has dramatically outperformed expectations, is it possible that the Bulls could be looking to punch a bowl ticket in the final week of the season? Points have been plentiful in the last few matchups.

# Player Spotlight

Photo via WIVB



## SHAUN DOLAC – LB

Dolac totaled a whopping 148 tackles in 2022 including nearly 100 solo tackles. Unfortunately, a shoulder injury limited him to just four games in 2023. The silver lining is that he didn't use up a year of eligibility. He actually briefly transferred to Utah State this offseason but the Bills are thrilled to have him back in the royal blue and white and he could very well be the best defensive player in the entire conference.

**2023 Stats: 31 TKL, 1 INT**

Photo via UB Athletics



## Jacquez Barksdale – RB

Buffalo has had a rich history of talented running backs, could Barksdale join a list that features Branden Oliver, Jaret Patterson, and James Starks? He was fourth on the team in carries last season but could very well be the primary running back in 2024, especially if he makes the most of his opportunities like he did against Kent State. He toted the rock ten times for 84 yards in a victory over the Golden Flashes.

**2023 Stats: 52 CAR, 248 YDS, 2 TDS**

Photo via UB Athletics



**UB Stadium (30,270)**



**Marcus  
FUQUA**

### SPECIAL TEAMS

Head coach Pete Lembo knows a thing or two about special teams after spending time as the special teams coach at both Memphis and South Carolina. The place kicking game was not a strength for the Bulls. Lembo will look to remedy that situation through Alabama transfer **Upton Bellenfant**. Although he never attempted a kick for the Crimson Tide, making the roster is an accomplishment in itself and Buffalo should be improved in this area.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

It appears that Buffalo is in all-out rebuild mode. A great first step in that rebuild is to take care of business at home. At the height of Buffalo's powers in the Lance Leipold era, the Bulls turned in a 17-4 record at home over the span of four seasons. Last year the lone victory at UB Stadium came against Central Michigan (37-13). The Bulls will host Lafayette, UMass, Ball State, and Kent State. Each of those games is winnable and Buffalo may even be favored in all four contests. The Bulls do draw a road trip to Missouri but they otherwise avoid a non-conference onslaught that so many of their MAC companions must endure.

Issues on offense will likely prevent Buffalo from overachieving this season and it's quite possible the Bulls fail to score 20 points per game this season. Give Lembo and company some time. Ball State has only three 10-win seasons in the program's 50-year FBS history and Lembo owns one of those seasons.

## Appointment Television



vs.



**Saturday, November 2**

Buffalo's 13-10 victory in overtime not only extended their win streak to six in the series but it tilted the all-time series in their favor for the first time ever (Akron leads 12-11). The Bulls leaned on their defense and a clutch blocked field goal in their 2023 win. One of the wrinkles of the new "schedule pod" system in the sans-divisions MAC is that the Bulls will travel to InfoCision Stadium for a second-straight season.

## 2023 Statistics

Offense			Defense		
Statistic	Per Game	FBS Rank	Statistic	Per Game	FBS Rank
<b>Points</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Rushing</b>	<b>133.6</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>Rushing</b>	<b>179.9</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>Passing</b>	<b>185.2</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>Passing</b>	<b>187.2</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>318.8</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>367.1</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Sacks</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>T-27</b>	<b>Sacks</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>T-114</b>

**2024 Projection**

**4-8**

**9th in MAC**

## Trophy Case



**XO**



**XO**



**X1**

**2008**