



NEVADA WOLF PACK

Mountain West

NEVADA BIO

National Championships - 0



Mountain West Championships: 0

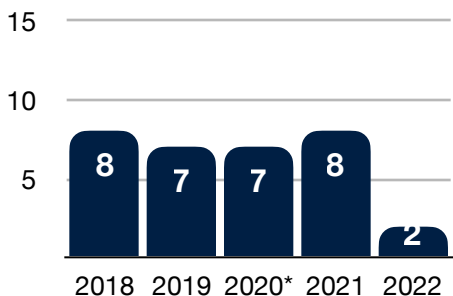
Location: **Reno, NV**

All-Time Record: **230-197**

2022 Results: **2-10**

Head Coach: **Ken Wilson**
2nd Year (2-10)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



Mackay Stadium (29,993)

Resetting the Roster and Expectations

Jay Norvell guided Nevada to four straight bowl games from 2018 to 2021 but suddenly and somewhat surprisingly left for Colorado State prior to the 2022 season. Several players left and followed him to Fort Collins which left the cupboard pretty bare for Ken Wilson. Not only was Wilson trying to pick up the pieces of what was left behind but Nevada also had the unenviable task of replacing star quarterback Carson Strong who threw for 4,186 yards and 36 touchdowns in a brilliant 2021 campaign. The Wolf Pack quickly went from one of the best passing offenses to one of the worst. Although they opened with back-to-back wins against New Mexico State and Texas State, Nevada lost their remaining ten games and had the fewest wins in a season since the Wolf Pack's inaugural WAC season of 2000. Wilson made a big push in the transfer portal and expects to retool both sides of the football but there's an added emphasis on players brought in on offense.

Quarterback play was inconsistent between Nate Cox and **Shane Illingworth** and Nevada scored only seven touchdowns through the air. Cox played the majority of the snaps with Illingworth appearing in half of Nevada's games. Cox was the more elusive of the two quarterbacks and was able to dodge the pressure that found its way into the Wolf Pack backfield far too often. Illingworth wasn't quite as fortunate and was sacked eight times in the loss to San Jose State. Wilson brought in **Brendon Lewis** out of the portal who makes the relatively short journey from Boulder to Reno. Lewis started for Colorado in 2021 with mixed results and was quickly benched in 2022 after the Buffaloes lost the opener to TCU and he became one of dozens of Buffalo transfers. Lewis and Illingworth will both have an opportunity to claim the starting role and it wouldn't be surprising to see them both play in a very challenging opening week road trip to USC. Illingworth was a big name recruit and initially signed and played two seasons with Oklahoma State. He offers a pro-style attack while Lewis is by far the better runner.

The Wolf Pack lose their top receiver BJ Casteel but return **Dalton Campbell** (467 yards), **Jamaal Bell** (271 yards), and **Spencer Curtis** (245 yards). This unit was inconsistent but, given some of the struggles at quarterback, it wasn't completely their fault. Both units, along with the offensive line, need to gel in 2023 and provide a lift to an offense that scored only 18.8 points per game. Tight end **Keleki Latu** joins the team after spending two seasons at California. The run game was only barely better than the passing game. Toa Taua pounded his way to 911 yards and Devonte Lee added 233 yards on the ground. With both players gone the running back position is up for grabs. **Sean Dollars** spent most of the last four seasons on the sidelines with Oregon although 2022 was certainly his most impactful season with 188 yards on the ground and 16 catches for 143 yards. He's a former four-star recruit who chose the Ducks over several notable teams including Florida and USC and brings a very high ceiling to Reno. **Ashton Hayes** transferred in from California after just one carry in his freshman season. The offensive line loses three starters from last year's unit that allowed 34 sacks including six in the 55-41 loss to Incarnate Word out of the FCS. The O-Line will be a concern again in 2023.

With only three starters back on defense it was no surprise that Nevada's points per game allowed jump up from 26.5 to 30.9 although, oddly enough, they allowed nine yards fewer per game. The top three tacklers are gone but eight starters return which will provide a boost to Wilson's defense. While Wilson is only in his second season as a head coach he has a long history of coaching on defense so it's possible this side of the football takes a significant leap forward in year two of his system. He'll need a more physical presence up front and will lean on defensive ends **Henry Ikahihifo** and **Eli'jah Winston** to make a bigger impact. The linebacker duo of **Drue Watts** and **Maki Mateialona** will be joined by Eastern Washington transfer **Tre Weed**.













The Bottom Line: Given the nature of how Norvell departed Reno, some pockets of Nevada fans are eager to win the "race" of finishing the rebuild before Colorado State and reach a bowl game. The schedule favors the Wolf Pack as Nevada avoids both Boise State and Air Force and has several very winnable Mountain West games at home. I predict that Nevada is still a year away from a bowl game as I still have questions about the offense but six wins wouldn't shock me in the slightest.

Projection: 5-7 (9th in Mountain West)

2022 Statistics

Points Scored	Rush Yards	Pass Yards	Turnover Margin
18.8	118.4	185.6	+2
115th in FBS	106th in FBS	113th in FBS	53rd in FBS
Points Allowed	Rush YDS Allowed	Pass YDS Allowed	
30.9	164.6	231.6	
103rd in FBS	85th in FBS	75th in FBS	

2023 Nevada Schedule

Week	Date	Team
1	Sat, Sept 2	 @ USC
2	Sat, Sept 9	 vs. Idaho
3	Sat, Sept 16	 vs. Kansas
4	Sat, Sept 23	 @ Texas State
5	Sat, Sept 30	 @ Fresno State
6	Bye Week	
7	Sat, Oct 14	 vs. UNLV
8	Sat, Oct 21	 @ San Diego St.
9	Sat, Oct 28	 vs. New Mexico
10	Sat, Nov 4	 vs. Hawaii
11	Sat, Nov 11	 @ Utah State
12	Sat, Nov 18	 @ Colorado State
13	Sat, Nov 25	 vs. Wyoming

Conference Games in Bold

KEY GAMES

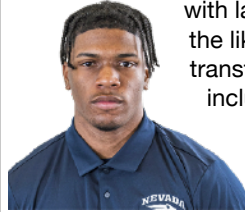
Sat, Sept 23: @ Texas State - Nevada handled the Bobcats 38-14 at Mackay Stadium but now hit the road in 2023. With two tough non-conference games against USC and Kansas, a win against the Bobcats could be the difference between starting the season 2-2 and 1-3.

Sat, Oct 14: vs. UNLV - Both teams have a bye week to prepare for the "Battle for Fremont Cannon". This series has been historically close both in terms of the all-time record (Nevada 28-20) and the point margin of the meetings (UNLV won 27-22 in 2022).

Sat, Nov 18: @ Colorado State - The Wolf Pack lost 17-14 despite only allowing three points on offense last season. Can they get revenge on Norvell in 2023?

KEY PLAYERS

Dalevon Campbell - WR



Nevada badly needs a spark in the passing game and with last year's leading receiver gone, Campbell is the likely candidate for the WR1 role. The Illinois transfer had two strong games to end the season including a 73-yard touchdown against Fresno State. 291 of his 459 yards came in the last four weeks of the season. If that kind of production is a sign of things to come in 2023, Campbell will make a big impact for the Wolf Pack.

Isaiah Essissima - CB

Essissima made a huge impact in the season opener against New Mexico State by picking off the Aggies twice. Considering the final score was just 23-12, Essissima's contributions were a huge part of that victory. He finished the season with 35 tackles and nine total pass breakups. Nevada needs a playmaker on defense and Essissima could fill that role.



2022 RESULTS (2-10)

@ New Mexico St. (W 23-12)
Texas State (W 38-14)
 Incarnate Word (L 41-55)
 @ Iowa (L 0-27)
 @ Air Force (L 20-48)
 Colorado State (L 14-17)
 @ Hawaii (L 16-31)
 San Diego State (L 7-23)
 @ San Jose State (L 28-35)
 Boise State (L 3-41)
 Fresno State (L 14-41)
 @ UNLV (L 22-27)

Pack

RECRUITING

2023 Class Ranking

107th

(Via 24/7 Sports)