



ABILENE CHRISTIAN **WILDCATS**

Western Athletic Conference (WAC)

2020: 1-5

Anthony Field at Wildcat Stadium

Wildcats Breakdown

Location.....Abilene, Texas
Head Coach.....Adam Dorrel
Record at ACU.....14-26
Career Record.....90-34
Offensive Coordinator...Josh Lamberson
Defensive Coordinator...Clint Brown

Last League Title: 2010 (DII – Lone Star)
Last FCS Playoff: N/A

Players to Watch: QB Peyton Mansell, RB Jermiah Dobbins, WR Kobe Clark, DT Quent Titre, LB Chike Nwankwo, DB Ryan Stapp

Team Record Last 5 Years:

2016: 2-9, 2-7 (Southland) Coach Collums
2017: 2-9, 2-7 (Southland) Coach Dorrel
2018: 6-5, 5-4 (Southland) Coach Dorrel
Key Wins: Nicholls St, Southeastern Louisiana, Sam Houston
2019: 5-7, 4-5 (Southland) Coach Dorrel
Key Wins: McNeese, Nicholls St
2020: 1-5, 0-0 (Fall Only) Coach Dorrel



WR Kobe Clark Courtesy ACU Athletics

COACH/ PROGRAM

The Abilene Christian Wildcats first season of football was 1919, and they have two NAIA National Championships for their mantle (1973 & 1977). The Wildcats have been looking for the recipe for success since Chris Thomsen left the program with a 61-21 record over 6 years (2005-2011). Adam Dorrel was hired in 2017 and currently has an 14-26 record at ACU, but he is a very well-respected head coach and has a 90-34 overall record as a head coach. Dorrel is an offensive-minded coach and was an All-American offensive lineman at Northwest Missouri State (NCAA DII). His success mainly came from his tenure at Northwest Missouri State, where he won

three DII National Championships (2013, 2015, 2016). Dorrel's Bearcats went undefeated in the three seasons they won the national championship and went 77-8 under Dorrel's leadership. He earned the AFCA National DII Coach of the Year award three times while in Missouri. He left the Bearcats, his alma mater, for the head coaching position at ACU. So far, his best season was the 2018 season when the 'Cats went 6-5 overall and finished 4th in the Southland Conference. Dorrel is looking for a fresh start as the Wildcats move

into the Western Athletic Conference in 2021/. The Wildcats will try to make the playoffs for the first time since making the move to the FCS in 2013. The Wildcats were rocked by the off-field injury to their QB and team captain #4 Sema'j Davis (6'1" 191lbs) who suffered serious injuries after a car accident. A lot of prayers were answered as Davis appears out of the woods and has made appearances on campus, including the ACU scrimmage in April 2021.

OFFENSE

Quarterback:

ACU's offense scored just 20.7 PPG in the 2020 COVID season, which they played exclusively a Fall schedule. **#2 Peyton Mansell** (6'2" 210lbs/ Iowa) spent his freshman season at Iowa, seeing action in five games. He was the Wildcat's starting QB in 2020 with a 129.59 QB Rating and completing 62.3 percent of his passes. Mansell threw for five touchdowns and four interceptions and averaged 206.2 yards per game. Mansell is the expected starter and got the majority of snaps during the ACU Spring game. Dorrel said, "Completion improvement is probably his biggest improvement that I am most proud of with him. His leadership has always been impeccable. So is his work ethic and toughness. He's physically and mentally tough. He's a great teammate. He brings his teammates along with him. I've always been super proud of him for that. The ability for him to get that completion percentage up, whether it's in the pocket or three-step or movement stuff, that's been the biggest growth I've seen from him. We try to be really balanced, so when you do call passes, if it's not there, understanding when it's okay to tuck it up, not to take a sack, get sacks down a little bit, and 'Hey, there's times I gotta throw the ball away.'" **#16 Stone Earle** (6'0" 190lbs) saw action in two games in 2020, completing 21/33 passes and one touchdown. He is a solid backup to Mansell but has limited experience. The Wildcats list six QBs on their roster, five freshmen, and Mansell, a senior. Coach Dorrel likes Mansell's leadership but has issues with experience at the backup position.

Running Back:

The Wildcats rely on the success of the run to fuel their offense. Their base offense is an I-formation style but can spread the field. The leading rusher for ACU will return in **#21 Jermiah Dobbins** (5'9" 185lbs) from Lubbock, Texas. Dobbins, an All-



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Conference selection, rushed for 237 yards over six games, averaging 5.4 yards per carry, and rushing for five touchdowns. **#24 Tyrese White** (5'9" 197lbs) is an explosive and shifty senior rusher who carried the ball 52 times in 2020 and averaged 3.3 yards per carry. Texas State transfer **Anthony Smith** (5'10" 200lbs/ Texas State) will bring his talents to the Wildcats after the Bobcats wanted to move Smith to Linebacker. A three-star recruit out of high school has good size for running back but has not seen the field since 2017. "Anthony has excellent instincts along with tremendous balance and good speed. These assets merged with his strong frame provide him with the potential to be productive both in and out of the tackle box," said Running Backs Coach Bryce Baccarini. Freshman RB **Jar'quae Walton** will join the Wildcats after becoming his HS's all-time leading rusher. He was a three-sport athlete (basketball, football, track) and was a part of the La Vega High School 2018 State Championship team. "Quae can find the slightest hole and make a defense pay with the combination of elite vision, sudden acceleration, and allusive change of direction. He is the definition of versatile," said Coach Baccarini.

Offensive Line:

The ACU offensive line could be a mess in 2021, as they lost four starters from last year, including their center, Nico Russolillo. However, they have done a decent job of adding depth with transfers. Returning to the trenches are **#76 Zach Terry** (6'6" 289lbs/ Coffyville CC), **#67 Wyatt Tate** (6'5" 290lbs), and **#61 Mitchell Melrose** (6'6" 281lbs). Terry appeared in five games in 2020 and brings good size and experience. Tate is a stud-athlete who lettered in football and basketball. He appeared in all six games for the Wildcats in 2020 and will likely get the nod on opening day. Melrose is another lineman that got the call to start for ACU. He, like Terry, brings good size but is not quite experienced. **#56 Truett Knox** (6'2" 290lbs/ Oklahoma State) also returns to help ACU. Knox, a junior, played in five games in 2020 but was not an everyday starter. **#73 Tanner Parker** (6'4" 296lbs/Snow College) also saw limited action in 2020 after transferring from Snow College, where he earned All-Conference honors. Coach Dorrel brought in **Reese Moore** (6'6" 278lbs/Texas) and **Kaleb Chester** (6'0" 270lbs/ Lenoir-Ryne) to provide depth. Moore has literally one game of collegiate experience. He made his debut versus Colorado in the Valera Alamo Bowl. He was an all-state/ all-district player from Seminole High School in Texas and was well-recruited. Chester is from Grayson, GA, which tends to be loaded with talent. He played football and lacrosse in high school. He saw the field in three games with the Bears as a true freshman.

Wide Receiver/ Tight End:

The Wildcats WR corps may be the most talented group on offense. Returning starter **#88 Kobe Clark** (5'10" 173lbs), led the team with four TD receptions and 362 yards over four games. In 2019, Clark led ACU with 87 catches and averaged more than 65 yards per game. He is a talented athlete, and he will be a senior leader for the ACU offense. Junior **#80 Darius Lewis** (5'8" 152lbs) made 18 catches in 2020 for 147 yards and one TD. Coaches say Lewis has lightning speed and is explosive as well as quick. Transfer **#13 Jordan Brooks-Wess** (5'10" 175lbs/ FAU) has played at SMU and Florida Atlantic and played for ACU in 2020 and reeling six catches. **#19 Dax Neece** (6'3" 200lbs) brings good size to the WR and is a legacy on the ACU roster. His father, Doug, and mother, Kim, were ACU student-athletes. Neece caught six passes in the fall of 2020. Tight End **#86 Remington Lutz** (6'6" 240lbs) played high school ball with Mansell at Belton HS and was a favorite TE target in 2020. Lutz is joined by a host of big targets, including **Grant Miles** (6'5" 230lbs), who did not see action in 2020.

2021 ACU Schedule

Sept 4 @ SMU

Sept 11 vs Louisiana College

Sept 18 vs UT Permian Basin

Sept 25 @ Lamar (non-conf)

Oct 2 vs Central Arkansas (ASUN)

Oct 9 @ Eastern Kentucky (ASUN)

Oct 16 vs Lamar (WAC)

Oct 30 @ Stephen F. Austin (WAC)

Nov 6 @ Jacksonville State (ASUN)

Nov 13 vs Tarleton (WAC)

Nov 20 vs Sam Houston (WAC)



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DEFENSE

Defensive Line:

The Wildcats defense plays a 4-3 base and allowed 224.8 (88th nationally) yards per game in the fall of 2020 and allowed 16 rushing TDs. All-Southland DT **#92 Quent Titre** (6'1" 270lbs) is the lone upperclassman at the D-Tackle position. This will be his fourth season as a starter for ACU, as he started all six games in fall 2020. He finished the season with 27 tackles, two tackles for loss. Titre is joined by returning starter **#59 Jacob Thielen** (6'3" 249lbs) and big hitter **#90 Kadron Johnson** (6'1" 245lbs), who played in five games. **#45 Jordan Paup** (6'3" 245lbs/ Nebraska) returns to the Defensive End position for his senior season. Paup had eight tackles versus Army and ended the year with 27 tackles, two sacks, and four tackles for loss last season. **#97 William Morgan** (6'2" 255lbs) and **#91 Garviea Freeny** (6'2" 235lbs/ San Bernardino College) both got starts in the fall of 2020 and bring experience to the defense. Morgan had a big game in the fall vs. Angelo State with four solo tackles. **#99 Osaretin Obadeyi** (6'3" 227lbs) is another junior who played in 2020 and is a big body at the defensive end position. There is talent on the D-line for ACU, but stopping the run is a must and an area to improve in the fall 2021. Defensive Line Coach Britz and Coach Scribner added **Tyrin Bradley** (6'4" 245lbs), who Coach Scribner seems to like. He said, "We are extremely excited to have Tyrin Bradley joining the Wildcat family. During his time at Monterey-Lubbock, Tyrin showcased not only his athletic ability but also his selflessness playing multiple positions on the offensive and defensive side of the ball. His combination of size, length and quickness make him perfectly suited for the defensive end position."

Linebackers:

ACU returns two of three starting LB from 2020, losing leading tackler Jack Gibbens to the University of Minnesota. **#30 Tory Hargrove** (5'9" 195lbs/ Cisco College) and **#42 Hunter Kier** (5'10" 214lbs/ Butler CC) return to the center of the Wildcat-D. Hargrove and Kier had 24 and 22 tackles, respectively, and both are a bit undersized. **#9 Chike Nwankwo** (6'1" 230lbs/ Rutgers) saw action for ACU, and he shined with 26 tackles (14 solo) and looks to be a leader in 2021. **#38 Greg Green** (5'8" 213lbs) played in three games in 2020 after appearing in all 12 games from 2019. Green also got playing time as a freshman. Transfer **John Brannon** (6'1" 240lbs/ Texas State) appeared in 21 games for Texas State between 2017-19, racking up 20 tackles, 2.0 tackles for loss, and a sack. "We're excited about John becoming a Wildcat. He brings playing experience ... he's athletic and runs well," said Coach Clint Brown. "He'll be an immediate impact for us at the Mike or Will position. He has the athleticism to play Will and the physicality to be a Mike for us. He's a hard worker and very coachable." Another transfer, **Trey Adams** (5'10" 190/ N. Colorado), comes in as a graduate transfer who hasn't seen the field since 2018, but helps with depth, as does Sophomore **#45 Abe Schwinn** (6'0" 213lbs/ Arizona State) from St. Paul, Minnesota who walked on at ASU.

Cornerbacks/Safeties:

The Wildcat secondary only had one interception in 2020 and held opponents to under 200 yards of passing offense. They return five defensive backs, including **#22 Koy Richardson** (5'10" 174lbs), who had 20 tackles (12 solo) and had two pass breakups. **#26 Brian Bullock** (5'11" 196lbs) led all DBs in tackles with 34 (20 solo) and two tackles for loss. **#3 Ryan Stapp** (5'10" 171lbs) returns as HERO Sports Freshman All-America Honorable Mention had a blocked FG return for a touchdown versus Stephen F. Austin for 85-yards. In 2020, Stapp had 16 tackles and one pass breakup. Transfer **#12 Triston Anderson** (6'1" 195lbs/ Arkansas State) did not see the field in 2020, but played in three games as a true freshman at Arkansas State.



#3 Ryan Stapp Courtesy ACU Athletics



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#1 Shelby Washington (6'1" 187lbs/ NW Oklahoma A&M) played in all six games in 2020 recording 14 tackles (8 solo) and one tackle-for-loss. Coach Dorrel said, "[Washington] can play hash to hash and sideline to hash. He is good in the run fit and good out in space."

SPECIAL TEAMS

Place Kicker:

#37 Blair Zepeda hit 6-of-8 FGs in 2020, but his only misses were kicks greater than 45 yards. He was 5-for-5 from inside of 41 yards. He nailed the game-winning kick, a 43 yard FG, against Mercer for the team's only win in 2020. In 2019, Zepeda scored 76 points on 40 PATs and hit 12-of-19 FGs. Burke will also handle the kickoffs for the Wildcats.

Punter:

#27 Logan Burke returns as the ACU punter. Burke averaged 38.54 yards per punt and had a long of 51 yards in 2020.

Kick Returner/ Punt Returner:

Jordan Brooks-Wess returned punts for the Wildcats in 2020 and did a decent job. He averaged 7.5 yards per punt return and had a 27-yard return to boot. He also handed the majority of kick returns and averaged 16.87 yards per return. **Davion Johnson** also fielded kickoffs and had five returns averaging 19 yards.

Big Question:

The big question for Coach Dorrel is how his team comes together and competes. He has pieces that any head coach would like, but does he have enough? Peyton Mansell has the talent needed to lead his team, but the QB depth position is problematic. The running game for the Wildcats in 2020 was below average, with only 105.5 yards per game. The offensive line will have to come together and help the run game and returning RB Jeremiah Dobbins. A run game could be a winning solution to a very difficult 2021 schedule. Limiting penalties is also an area that has to be addressed, but a young, undisciplined team can be a killer in close games.

Grades

Offense

Peyton Mansell leading the way is a big positive for ACU, but they lack depth and experience at the QB position. The O-line lost a lot of experience, and unproven transfers and freshmen will have to be relied on as the season progresses.

Grade C (5)

Defense

Returning players on all three levels of the defense should bolster ACU's play against the run, which allowed 224.8 yards per game on the ground. Stopping the run will be their #1 challenge. Stars on defense like DT Quent Titre, LB Chike Nwankwo, CD Koy Richardson, should make the coaching staff breathe a little easier.

Grade C+ (6)

Special Teams

Blair Zepeda is a solid place kicker, but there is room for improvement. His range of 51 yards will help keep ACU in games. The return game for ACU isn't bad either. Jordan Brooks-Wess isn't going to take one to the house, but he has the ability to improve field position. Punter Logan Burke falls in the middle of the pack among FCS punters. Again, there is room for improvement on his punt average of 38.5 yards.

Grade C (5)

Intangibles



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As a new member of the WAC and playing in the new ASUN-WAC Challenge for 2021, ACU has a very difficult schedule. ACU played a Fall-only schedule in 2020 and had a strong showing against FBS-opponent UTEP and Army. Bad losses to Stephen F. Austin (in OT) and Angelo State make you wonder what kind of team the Wildcats are. An early NAIA and D-II matchup may give ACU some momentum heading into their first WAC game vs. Lamar (Sept 25), but it will not count against the conference standings because they play Lamar again on Oct 16. The back half of the ACU schedule features road games against Jacksonville State (Nov 6) and a finale at home against FCS National Champion Sam Houston (Nov 20).

The fans at ACU have supported the team well, averaging 7,882 fans at Anthony Field at Wildcat Stadium. The home of ACU was built in 2017 for \$50 million and seats 12,000 fans, and includes a berm for casual seating. The fairly new facilities feature an attractive press box and suite seating. Although it is not nearly the largest facility in Texas, it is a really nice venue and provides a great college football experience.

The @ACUFootball has 23.1K followers and does some pretty cool things. The Koy Richardson media blitz was entertaining. They also feature wallpapers and a lot of content.

The history of ACU football was great to explore. The Wildcats hold the record for the longest field goal in college football history. On October 16, 1976, Swedish-born Ove Johansson used a 17-MPH wind with a 12-MPH tailwind to kick a 69-yard field goal vs. East Texas State. It earned Johansson national attention, and he not only became the first Swede to be drafted in the NFL, but the oldest player drafted at 28 years, 281 days old when selected in the 12th round by the Philadelphia Eagles.

Grade C+ (6)