

Excitement over Arkansas State vs. Arkansas game announcement

Arkansas State will play Arkansas in football at War Memorial Stadium in 2025

REBECCA ROBINSON
SPORTS EDITOR

A huge announcement was made Feb. 3 regarding Arkansas State and the University of Arkansas football teams, two of the largest football programs in the state. The Red Wolves and Razorbacks will play against each other for the first time at War Memorial Stadium in Little Rock, a neutral site for both teams. Athletic directors from both schools discussed the possibility of playing each other in a game for over two years. Terry Mohajir, former A-State Vice Chancellor for Intercollegiate Athletics signed the agreement on Feb. 1. with Hunter Yuracheck, Arkansas' vice chancellor and director of athletics. The game is set to be played Sept. 6, 2025.

The last time Arkansas State played a game at War Memorial was in 2006. Playing Arkansas will only be the seventh time Arkansas State has played an in state team in a 13 year period. This marks a huge opportunity for both schools. Arkansas State will not only be playing Arkansas on the 2025 schedule they are also set to play Texas A&M and host Iowa State.

"As an athletics director, you're always trying to provide an opportunity for your students and university community to experience an exciting atmosphere. I appreciate Hunter's willingness to provide those experiences for his school

as well," Mohajir said.

For a while fans of both sides have been waiting for the possible match up to happen.

"I hope they enjoy it. I think it will be fun. Me being a former player here and knowing people that played at the University of Arkansas over the years, they were always 100 percent on board. Both schools' former athletes, football players especially, were always 100 percent on board. I've never heard, not saying it doesn't exist, but I've never heard anybody say that played at the University of Arkansas or played at Arkansas State that didn't want to play each other. Players like to play in front of exciting opportunities and especially exciting atmospheres," Mohajir said.

The interest in the games have piqued Arkansas State students who are fans of both A-State and Arkansas Razorbacks. Junior Jake Williamson is a big fan of both teams. Williamson grew up loving the hogs but grew to like Arkansas State sports when he became a student here.

"When I came to school here I thought, 'OK I'm going to switch my loyalty over. My loyalty went to Arkansas State. Here and there I might still cheer on the Razorbacks but A-State is just where my home is,'" Williamson said. "I love the team. When the game comes down to it I'm going to pull for Arkansas State. Being a fan I'm going to try and request off for work just so that I can



Jonathan Adams Jr. celebrates with teammates in an A-State football game during the 2020 football season. Photo by: Hannah Risker | Photo editor

be there to watch it happen. Either way I'm not going to be disappointed who wins and who loses. It's gonna be more of just a fun battle between the two."

The game is a lot to look forward to for fans and students alike. There's some wishful thinking from some fans who hope that this becomes a tradition.

"I always thought they played and I just never paid attention. To hear them playing for the first time in 2025 I'm like, 'this should have happened

way sooner.' I understand the issues behind it but, I hope this tradition just continues down the line," Williamson said.

A fan for both sides, freshman Tyler Guthrie, like Williamson, is excited for the possibilities and outcomes of the game. Guthrie has also been a fan of the Razorbacks since childhood.

"When it came to choosing colleges and where I wanted to go Arkansas State is where I wanted to go because it's where my dad went," Guthrie said. "So

of course when I get here I can't just walk in and where all of my Razorback stuff because its kinda just betrayal so of course I had to get me Arkansas State stuff and I had to get into it and had to support my college team because that's what your supposed to do as a student. I went to all of the home football games and I went to a lot of the basketball games. I support the golf team and all the teams. Red Wolves are definitely in my blood now however Arkansas is still the number one team."

Being a fan of the Razorbacks but a student here puts pressure on some to root for Arkansas State in the game but that's not the case for Guthrie.

"I'm honestly going to root for the Hogs just because that's who I am and call me a fake fan but it's who I am but I would not be mad if A-State won. I would be proud if A-State ended up beating the Hogs. It's just going to be a great experience in general," Guthrie said.

Rugby team starts season without a head coach

REBECCA ROBINSON
SPORTS EDITOR

The Arkansas State rugby team started the new season with their first game on Saturday without a head coach. A-State rugby has had to learn to adapt without a coach and face the coronavirus which has changed the way their season would normally operate. Like other teams have faced, COVID-19 has become a challenge within games and practices. The restrictions have also halted the hiring process for a new coach.

The game Saturday ended in a loss for the Red Wolves

with an ending score of 31-8. A-State went up against the Lindenwood Lions who they played previously in the spring of 2020 which also ended in a loss for the Red Wolves.

A-State rugby player junior Dante Bandoni played in Saturday's game as part of the starting line up. The team leading themselves poses some disadvantages for the Red Wolves but they are working to overcome as a team.

"Right now it's going as good as it can be. We have a good group of seniors that are leading us, a great captain George (Sharpe), he's really doing his best to keep everything going,"

Bandoni said. "While it is hard asking the players to do everything I would say we are doing a good job at doing that."

Focus is key for the rugby players to keep on track as a team. Without a coach involved it is up to the players to be in charge of everything and keep each other accountable. Everything from practices to games is different.

"I think we do a very good job staying motivated. I think it's very easy to get down on yourself and each other without having a coach and with COVID going on not knowing what's gonna happen the next week. I think we do a really

good job in just wanting to push forward and be better," Bandoni said.

The rugby team is tight knit when it comes to team bonding. Like other sports, rugby relies on good communication and trust.

"In rugby you have to know where the guy is next to you all the time and stuff like that. I think it really plays a role in team bonding. Everyone just has to talk to each other, work together and communicate or else your team is not gonna do well. I think that translates when you're all working together directly you just become closer as a team," Bandoni said.



Asa Carter attempts a kick in A-State rugby's win over Clemson in 2020. Photo by: Krishnan Collins | Editor-in-Chief

McKenzie Cornell makes chancellor's list while being an athlete

REBECCA ROBINSON
NEWS WRITER

McKenzie Cornell, a junior student athlete at Arkansas State University, made the Chancellor's List for the fall semester of 2020.

The Chancellor's List includes undergraduate students who earned a grade point average of 4.0 while enrolled with a minimum of 12 credit hours.

Cornell, who was among

others in this list, says that her grades are most important to her and her goal is to always have straight A's.

"I make a schedule at the beginning of each semester, writing down all my assignments and deadlines to make sure I get them done on time to prep and allow me to have a good semester," Cornell said.

Being a student athlete, Cornell understands that she has to manage her work time, athletic schedule and make accommodations to allow

herself to thrive each semester.

"As a student-athlete, I always put academics first, anything else comes second to that. I always make sure I finish any work first before getting into my athletic activities whether it is practice or a meet. I make sure I keep a good balance and stay on top of both my grades and my sport," Cornell said.

For the majority of college students, the unexpected transition to remote or distance learning with COVID-19 had an impact on their ability to

retain information and focus. With students and teachers having to use unfamiliar tools to carry on education some may say it was hard to cope with.

Cornell said the most stressful change due to COVID-19 was the combination of online and in-person courses.

"Some teachers aren't good with technology, so it can be hard to make sure I am learning all the material. It is more difficult to interact with the professors and ask them for help but I am still making it work,"

Cornell said.

It is not an easy thing to do, being an athlete while maintaining a 4.0 grade point average, yet Cornell got it done for the 2020 Fall semester.

"If I had to give any advice to another college student striving for a 4.0 grade point average, I would tell them to make sure you complete all assignments on time and if you are needing any assistance, go talk to your professor. They will always help," Cornell said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS
Junior McKenzie Cornell.