

## MAC Faces Big-Time Opposition in Week One

Written by {ga=mikeperry}

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### **MID-AMERICAN CONFERENCE**

The 2011 Mid-American Conference Football Season will kick off Thursday with four games, followed by a full slate of action Saturday. It's early-season non-conference time...and that means the annual bloodbaths that are known as "paycheck games."

Here is how it works: MAC team agrees to travel to one of the power teams in the country. MAC team gets annihilated. MAC team gets large paycheck that finances much of the year's football budget, as well as financing other athletic programs at the school.

Four of these games take place Saturday...with the MAC team actually having a chance to win one of these. Can you guess which team has a decent shot to start the season with a win? Here are the games – Akron at Ohio State, Kent State at Alabama, Buffalo at Pittsburgh and Western Michigan at Michigan.

Well, the Zips aren't going to be able to handle an angry Ohio State team that has been waiting for months to get back between the lines and leave a nightmare offseason behind it. Kent State has no chance to knock off an Alabama team that many see as the best in the country. Buffalo will not compete against Pittsburgh at Heinz Field.

However, Western Michigan has a fighter's chance. First of all, Michigan is not a very good

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football team. Yes, Wolverines quarterback Denard Robinson is one of the most exciting players in college football and, yes, the Wolverines will be opening a newly-renovated stadium...the Big House is bigger than ever.

Michigan will also be kicking off the Brady Hoke Era.

Bill Cubit's Broncos feature one of the top passing combinations in the MAC – Alex Carder (3,300+ yards and 33 touchdowns last season) to sixth-year senior Jordan White. Defensively the Broncos return all four starting defensive linemen and a decent amount of experience in the secondary. If the front four can get penetration and make life difficult for Robinson, things could get interesting.

Here is the Week One slate of games:

Thursday, September 1 - New Hampshire at Toledo, 7:00 pm ET (BCSN/ESPN3); Villanova at Temple, 7:00 pm ET (ESPN3); South Carolina State at Central Michigan, 7:00 pm ET; Bowling Green at Idaho, 9:00 pm ET (Altitude Sports).

Saturday, September 3 - Akron at Ohio State, Noon ET (ESPN HD); Miami at Missouri, Noon ET (Fox Sports Net); Kent State at Alabama, 12:20 pm ET (SEC Network); Western Michigan at Michigan, 3:30 pm ET (ABC/ESPN2); Buffalo at Pittsburgh, 6:00 pm ET (ESPN3); Howard at Eastern Michigan, 7:00 pm ET; Indiana at Ball State (at Lucas Oil Stadium, Indianapolis, Ind.), 7:00 pm ET (ESPN3); Army at Northern Illinois, 7:00 pm ET (ESPN3); Ohio at New Mexico State, 8:00 pm ET.

MAC Storylines: MAC football continues its 65th season of competition and will hold its 15th championship game in 2011. This year's Marathon MAC Football Championship tilt will be Friday, Dec. 2 at Ford Field in Detroit. Miami is the defending MAC Champion as the RedHawks defeated Northern Illinois, 26-21, last season. ... This season will bring the transition of five new head coaches into the conference. For four of the five this will be the first head coaching opportunity in their career. Ball State's Pete Lembo (Elon, Lehigh) is the only one of the group with previous collegiate head coaching experience. Kent State named Darrell Hazell as head coach as an assistant from Ohio State, while Miami introduced Don Treadwell to head the RedHawks program from Michigan State. Northern Illinois named Dave Doeren to lead the

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Huskies after being an assistant at Wisconsin, while Temple introduced Steve Addazio to lead the Owls after his time as an assistant at Florida. ... The MAC will start the season against eight schools from BCS Conferences. Ball State's home game against Indiana will be a neutral site game at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis and Northern Illinois will host Army at home. Road games include visits to Alabama (SEC), Michigan and Ohio State (Big Ten), Missouri (Big 12), Pittsburgh (Big East) and Idaho and New Mexico State (WAC).

**MAC VS. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS TOP 25** - The MAC opens the 2011 football season with a slate of contests against the top teams in college football. In the preseason AP Top 25 football poll, the MAC will face eight of the ranked programs this season. No. 1 ranked Oklahoma will host Ball State on Saturday, Oct. 1 and No. 2 Alabama will host Kent State this Saturday, Sept. 3. MAC schools will host No. 5 Boise State at Toledo on Friday, Sept. 16 on ESPN or ESPN2 at the Glass Bowl and No. 11 Wisconsin will travel to face Northern Illinois in a neutral site contest on Saturday, Sept. 17 at Chicago's Soldier Field. No. 17 Michigan State will host Central Michigan on Saturday, Sept. 24, while No. 18 Ohio State will host two MAC programs in consecutive weeks with Akron traveling to Columbus for the opener on Saturday, Sept. 3 and Toledo at Ohio State on Saturday, Sept. 10. No. 21 Missouri will host Miami in the opener on Saturday, Sept. 3, while No. 24 West Virginia will host Bowling Green on Saturday, Oct. 1.

**MAC PROGRAMS IN BOWL GAMES** - In the last three years, ten of the MAC's 13 football programs have received a bowl invitation. Northern Illinois leads the pack with invites in each of the last three years, while Central Michigan (2008, 2009) and Ohio (2009, 2010) have each received two invites over the last three years. Ball State (2008), Buffalo (2008), Bowling Green (2009), Miami (2010), Temple (2009), Toledo (2010) and Western Michigan (2008) have each received one invite in that span.

**MIAMI MOST IMPROVED PROGRAM IN THE NATION** - Miami capped a dramatic turnaround season by winning the 2010 Marathon MAC Football Championship and the 2011 GoDaddy.com Bowl. Miami finished the season 10-4, 7-1 in conference play, and became the first program in college football FBS history to go from double digit losses (1-11 in 2009) to double digit wins (10-4 in 2010) in consecutive years and become the most improved program in the country. The RedHawks defeated Northern Illinois, 26-21, in the Marathon MAC Championship Game with a touchdown with 33 seconds left in regulation in front of a national television audience on ESPN2. Miami then defeated Middle Tennessee State, 35-21, in the GoDaddy.com Bowl on ESPN.

**MAC TO HOST AQ CONFERENCE FOES AT HOME AND NEUTRAL SITES** - MAC programs continue to increase the number of home or neutral site games against FBS Automatic

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Qualifying Conference opponents. Ball State will host Indiana in a neutral site game at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Sept. 3, while Northern Illinois will host Wisconsin in a neutral site game at Soldier Field in Chicago on Sept. 17. Also, Temple will host Penn State (Sept. 17), Buffalo will host Connecticut (Sept. 24) and Miami will host Cincinnati (Oct. 1). In addition, Toledo will host Boise State (Sept. 17) and independent Army will visit four MAC programs—at Northern Illinois (Sept. 3), at Ball State (Sept. 24), at Miami (Oct. 8) and at Temple (Nov. 19).

2011 NON-CONFERENCE REGULAR SEASON SCHEDULE - MAC programs will face a formidable non-conference slate of opponents from the following Football Bowl Subdivision (formerly I-A) conferences – ACC, Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, and SEC. In addition, the conference will also face independent Army, as well as Boise State from the Mountain West Conference. A total of 11 of the schools' non-conference games will feature an opponent from the Big Ten (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan (2), Michigan State, Minnesota, Ohio State (2), Penn State (2) and Wisconsin). The MAC will match up with a foe from the SEC (3—Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee), Big 12 (4—Kansas, Kansas State, Missouri, Oklahoma), ACC (2—Maryland, North Carolina State), Big East (9—Cincinnati (2), Connecticut (2), Pittsburgh, Rutgers, South Florida, Syracuse, West Virginia), Mountain West (2—Boise State, Wyoming), WAC (2—Idaho, New Mexico State), Sun Belt (2—Florida International, Louisiana-Lafayette) and Conference USA (1—Marshall).

MAC HEAD COACHES IN HIGH DEMAND - Football programs from the Automatic Qualifying conferences are taking notice of MAC head coaches. In the last two seasons alone, five MAC head coaches were hired directly to head coaching positions at AQ programs. In fact, former MAC head coaches are spread out across the Midwest—Notre Dame's Brian Kelley (Central Michigan to Cincinnati to Notre Dame), Michigan's Brady Hoke (Ball State to San Diego State to Michigan), Cincinnati's Butch Jones (Central Michigan to Cincinnati), Minnesota's Jerry Kill (Northern Illinois to Minnesota), Missouri's Gary Pinkel (Toledo to Missouri) and Kansas' Turner Gill (Buffalo to Kansas). Former MAC Head Coaches With Head Coaching Positions at AQ FBS programs)2010-Al Golden (Temple) to Miami of Florida (ACC)2010-Jerry Kill (Northern Illinois) to Minnesota (Big Ten)2010-Mike Haywood (Miami) to Pittsburgh (Big East)2009-Butch Jones (Central Michigan) to Cincinnati (Big East)2009-Turner Gill (Buffalo) to Kansas (Big 12)2006-Brian Kelley (Central Michigan) to Cincinnati (Big East)2004-Terry Hoepfner (Miami) to Indiana (Big Ten)2000-Gary Pinkel (Toledo) to Missouri (Big 12)2000- Jim Grobe (Ohio) to Wake Forest (ACC)1998-Randy Walker (Miami) to Northwestern (Big Ten)1982-Tom Reed (Miami) to North Carolina State (ACC)1984-Bill Mallory (Northern Illinois) to Indiana (Big Ten)1977-Dick Crum (Miami) to North Carolina (ACC)1974-Bill Mallory (Miami) to Colorado (Big Eight)1968-Bo Schembechler (Miami) to Michigan (Big Ten)1956-Ara Parseghian (Miami) to Northwestern (Big Ten)1950-Woody Hayes (Miami) to Ohio State (Big Ten)

MAC BOASTS FIVE TEAMS WITH EIGHT OR MORE WINS IN 2010 - Last year's East and

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West Division titles went down to the wire as many programs fought for their respective titles. The MAC finished the regular season with five teams with eight or more regular season wins (Northern Illinois-10; Miami-8, Toledo-8, Ohio-8 and Temple-8). This marked the first time for the conference to have five teams with eight or more regular season wins since 2003.

**WESTERN MICHIGAN WR JORDAN WHITE GRANTED SIXTH YEAR OF ELIGIBILITY -** Western Michigan's record-setting wide receiver Jordan White was granted a sixth year of eligibility from the NCAA, making the 2011 campaign his final season of college football. White, who earned First Team All-MAC in 2010, broke the school's single-season record for receiving yards (1,378) and 100-yard games (7) last year. He also received honorable mention for Sports Illustrated All-America. Last year, White finished the year with a career-best 94 receptions, which ranked second in the MAC, and 114.8 yards per game, best in the conference, and a career-high 10 touchdowns. The Cleveland, Ohio, native lost two full seasons to injury. He missed the entire 2006 season, his freshman year, after injuring his knee four days into fall camp. White sat out the entire 2008 season with a knee injury as well. White enters the 2011 season ranked among many Western Michigan career leaders, including: fifth in career receptions (166), sixth in career receiving yards (2,276), ninth in touchdown receptions (15) and fourth in 100-yard receiving games (11).

**KENT STATE DT ROOSEVELT NIX HAS FRESHMAN YEAR TO REMEMBER -** Kent State defensive tackle Roosevelt Nix became the first true freshman to ever be named MAC Defensive Player of the Year and joined Pro Football Hall of Famer Jack Lambert (1972) as the only Golden Flashes to receive the honor. The first-team All-MAC defensive tackle led the conference in tackles for loss (20.0) and sacks (10.0), ranking tied for fourth and 11th, respectfully, in the country. He also tied for fifth in the nation with four forced fumbles. The MAC Freshman of the Year was also named a freshman All-America by the Football Writers Association of America (FWAA), Sporting News, Rivals.com, Phil Steele and CollegeFootballNews.com.

**15 FORMER MAC ATHLETES IN SUPER BOWL XLV -** The MAC was well represented in Super Bowl XLV last February in Dallas between the Green Bay Packers and Pittsburgh Steelers. Fifteen (15) former MAC players participated in the Super Bowl, and among FBS conferences, the MAC is tied with the Big Ten for second with 15 players, trailing only the SEC which has 18 players. The Green Bay Packers had nine former MAC players on their active 53-man roster, while the Pittsburgh Steelers had six former MAC players. In Green Bay alone, the MAC has the second most players on the Packers roster from any conference (9) besides the SEC—which had 11.

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Green Bay – 9 former MAC Players: WR Greg Jennings (Western Michigan), RB James Starks (Buffalo), DT Cullen Jenkins (Central Michigan), TE Tom Crabtree (Miami), DB Josh Gordy (Central Michigan), OL T.J. Lang (Eastern Michigan), LB Frank Zombo (Central Michigan), S Atari Bigby (Central Florida), Diyral Briggs (Bowling Green).

Pittsburgh – 6 former MAC Players: QB Ben Roethlisberger (Miami), LB James Harrison (Kent State), QB Charlie Batch (Eastern Michigan), WR Antonio Brown (Central Michigan), K Shaun Suisham (Bowling Green) , QB Byron Leftwich (Marshall).