

Sept. 5 at Nebraska

N The training wheels come off for the Owls as they travel to Lincoln, Neb., to take on the Cornhuskers in the season opener. The Owls will face a team that returns seven starters on defense, which was one of the better units in the country under second-year head coach Bo Pelini. If FAU is to have any chance of winning this game, they will have to limit the mistakes they make on both sides of the football to avoid another big defeat like the 52-10 loss to Texas in last season's opener. A win would be an enormous upset in favor of the Owls.

Sept. 19 at South Carolina

C The Owls hit the road again to face another BCS Conference school. South Carolina has legendary head coach Steve Spurrier at the helm, but the Gamecocks are coming off a disappointing 2008 season, finishing just 7-6. Spurrier is known as an innovative offensive coach, but that area is the Gamecocks' weakness, with many questions surrounding the offensive line and the backfield. The inexperienced Owls defense has to put pressure on the Gamecocks' offense if FAU wants to win this game.

Sept. 26 vs. Louisiana-Monroe

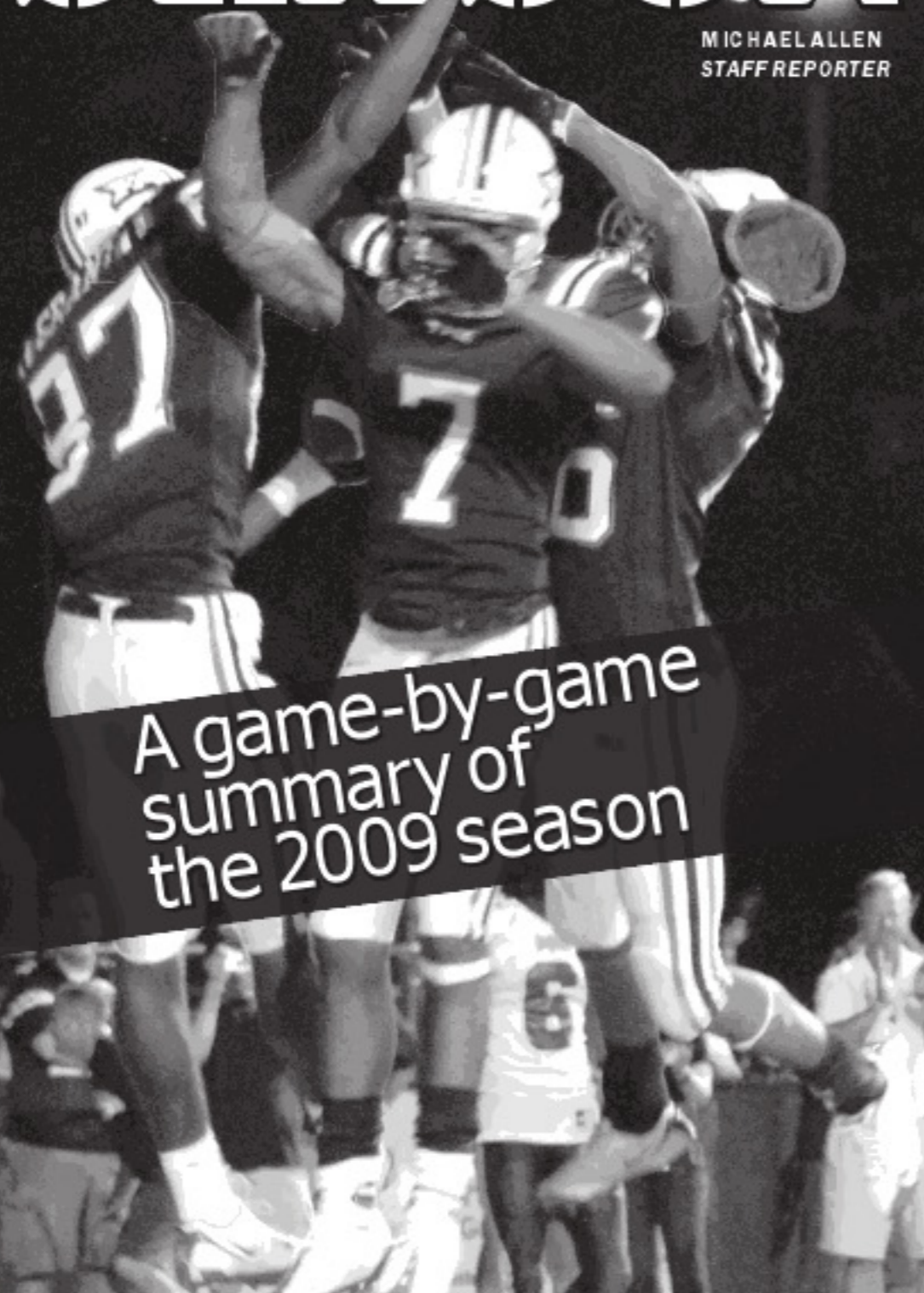
ULM In the home opener, FAU battles Louisiana-Monroe. The Warhawks were one of the bottom-feeders of the Sun Belt Conference last season and they do not appear to be better this year. Rusty Smith could have a field day against ULM's defense.

Oct. 3 vs. Wyoming

The Cowboys will pay a visit to FAU with first-year head coach Dave Christensen, who was the offensive coordinator for Missouri last season. Wyoming finished with a dismal 4-8 record last season, and they will probably not be much better this season as they continue rebuilding their program. This game could serve as another opportunity for the Owls to put up some big offensive numbers.

SEASON

MICHAEL ALLEN
STAFF REPORTER



A game-by-game summary of the 2009 season

PHOTO BY STEPHANIE COLAIANNI

Jamarl Grant, #87, Chris Bonner, #7, and Cortez Gent, #16, celebrate the first touchdown of the game, made by Grant, during the FAU vs. Troy game in October of 2008.

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OUTLOOK

Oct. 17 at North Texas

North Texas was the doormat of the Sun Belt last season, finishing a lowly 1-11 and 0-7 in conference play. The Mean Green's defense was terrible in 2008, finishing near the bottom of most defensive categories. This conference match should be a walk in the park for the Owls.



Nov. 7 at University of Alabama at Birmingham



When the Owls met the Blazers last season, the final score was 49-34; however, most of the points scored by UAB were scored

in garbage time against FAU's reserves, as the Owls had already built a comfortable lead. The Owls are on the road this time and need to be wary of quarterback Joe Webb, a playmaker who led his team in passing and rushing yards in 2008 and could cause problems for the Owls.

Nov. 28 vs. Western Kentucky

This is Western Kentucky's first official season as a Football Bowl Subdivision member (formerly known as Division I), and despite going 2-10 last season, they gave FAU a run for their money in last year's match. The Owls managed to sneak away with a 24-20 victory, avoiding what would have been a huge upset. This season, the Hilltoppers are expected to finish at the bottom of the Sun Belt standings, but they are capable of stealing a win or two in the conference.



Oct. 24 at Louisiana-Lafayette

Lafayette was the best offensive team in the conference in 2008 while having one of the worst defenses. In 2009, the tables have turned: The defense is more experienced, and the offense has lost a number of key playmakers. The Owls offense against the Ragin' Cajuns defense will be the key matchup.



Nov. 14 vs. Arkansas State

The Owls will host another tough conference opponent in ASU. Last season, the Red Wolves got the better of FAU, winning 28-14. This time around, they will return with all their playmakers on offense — as well as the Sun Belt Defensive Player of the Year, defensive end Alex Carrington. The Owls' defense could not stop ASU's running game, giving up over 200 yards at their last meeting, so expect that to be the key matchup once again.



Dec. 5 at Florida International University

Last year's game was one for the ages between the two rivals. In a classic shootout, the Owls outlasted the Golden Panthers in overtime, winning 57-50. That game saw FIU up by as many as 14 points twice in the fourth quarter, only for FAU to come back and steal the win in OT. To make the win even sweeter for FAU, it prevented their archrival from earning a bowl game bid last season. This season, however, FIU should be a better team and eager for payback against the Owls. Wide receiver T. Y. Hilton is a big-time playmaker for FIU, so expect his matchups with FAU cornerbacks to play a major role in the game's outcome.



Oct. 31 vs. Middle Tennessee State



FAU's players should have this game circled on their calendars after last year's heartbreaker.

The Owls held a 13-7 lead with 1:15 left in the fourth quarter, only to lose the game at the last second, thanks to a desperate 32-yard Hail Mary from quarterback Joe Craddock that somehow wound up in the hands of Malcolm Beyah to give the Blue Raiders a miraculous 14-13 victory. This game should be just as exciting down at Lockhart Stadium, with both teams boasting very good offenses. There will be added pressure on FAU's defense in this game since MTSU sports a ton of playmaking receivers, including Beyah.

Nov. 21 at Troy



Nebraska aside, this may be the Owls' toughest opponent this season. Troy is the reigning Sun Belt Conference champion, and they got the better of FAU, 30-17, in their game that aired on ESPN last season. Troy will be the favorite in this game, as the team is solid on both sides of the ball. Their defense is one of the better units in the nation, and their offense is one of the best in the Sun Belt. The Owls probably won't score many points against Troy's defense, which is expected to have 10 seniors starting, including star defensive end Brandon Lang. The Owls will probably have to beat Troy if they want to capture the Sun Belt Conference crown.