

Miami (OH) RedHawks

A data-backed season preview using the official 2026 schedule/roster, CFBD 2025 team quality, local play-by-play tendency work, and a simple SP-based schedule projection.

2025 RECORD

7-7

6-2 MAC · +1.8 PPG

SP+ BASELINE

#82

-3.4 overall · #54 defense

PROJECTION

7.0

Expected wins, SP proxy

MOST LIKELY

7-5

6-6 to 8-4 main band

Executive read

This is a MAC contender if the offense stops wasting the defense. The RedHawks had a real defensive backbone in 2025 — top-35 nationally in defensive EPA/play and top-25 in havoc — but the offense sat near the bottom third nationally in EPA, success rate, and points per scoring chance. The schedule says 7-5 is the clean forecast. The upside case is 8-4/9-3 if Thomas Gotkowski or the transfer-heavy skill group gives them even average quarterback play.

What Miami Was in 2025

SCORING

23.5

PPG - 21.7 allowed

OFF EPA/PLAY

#105

0.102 raw PPA

DEF EPA/PLAY

#34

0.088 allowed

DEF HAVOC

#25

17.8% havoc rate

IDENTITY

DEFENSE TRAVELS

Miami's best unit was real: #34 defensive EPA/play, #44 defensive success rate, #39 explosiveness allowed, #25 defensive havoc.

OFFENSE CAPS CEILING

The offense was #105 in EPA/play, #109 in success rate, #107 in points per opportunity, #100 in pass EPA/play. That is why a 6-2 MAC team still finished 7-7.

SPECIAL TEAMS HELP

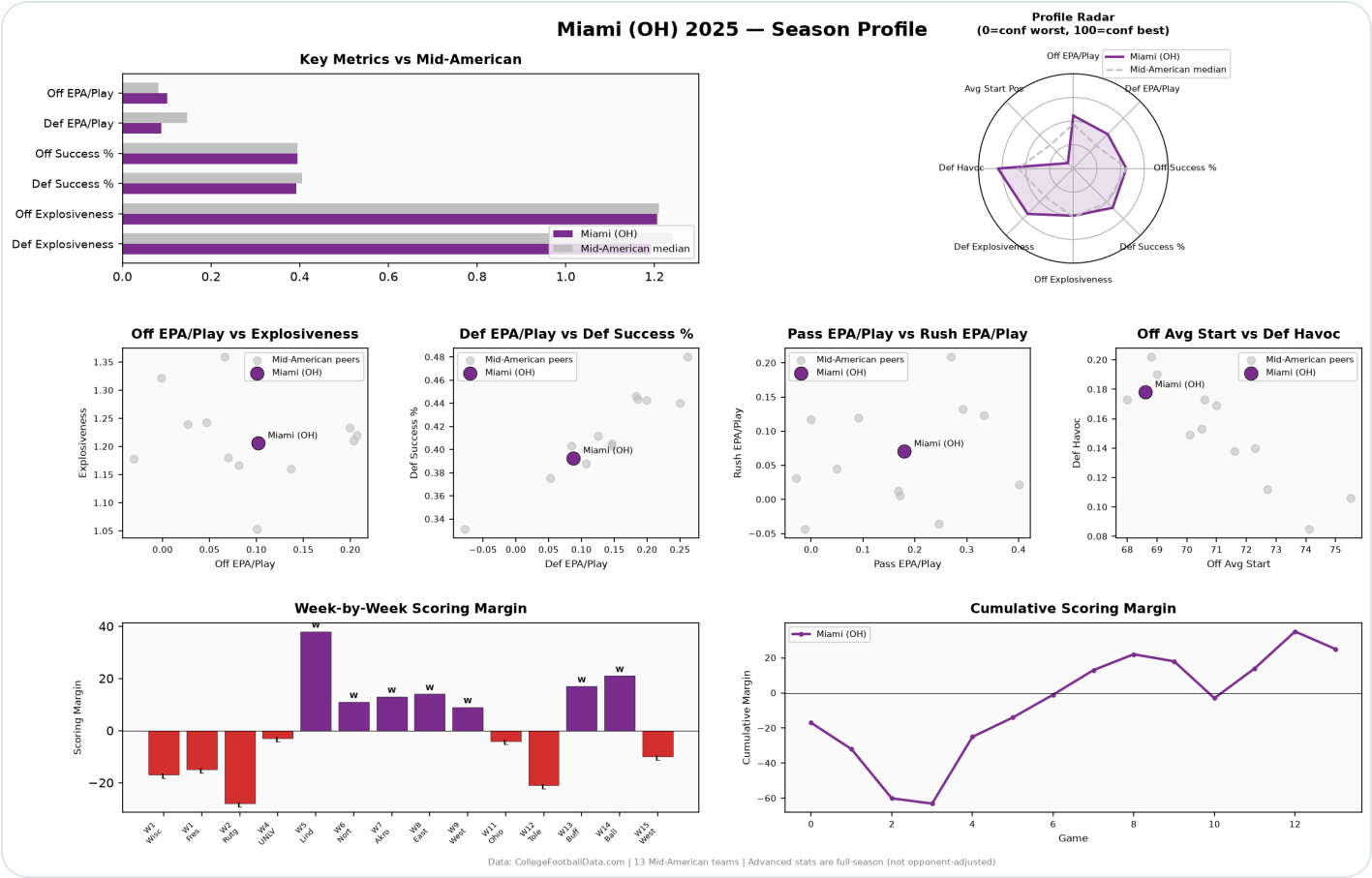
SP credited Miami with +1.5 special teams value; not enough to carry the offense, but useful in close MAC games.

2025 PATH

Miami opened 0-4 against Wisconsin, Fresno State, Rutgers, and UNLV, then stabilized once MAC play started.

The RedHawks went 6-2 in the league, beat Western Michigan in the regular season, then lost the MAC title rematch to WMU, 23-13.

The lesson is blunt: against peer teams, the defense gives them a shot. Against physical nonconference opponents, the offense has to do more than survive.



How They Actually Play

4TH-DOWN GO RATE

15.8%

FBS avg 26.1%

AGGRESSION RESIDUAL

-8.6%

Actual vs situation expected

2025 RUSH RATE

54.3%

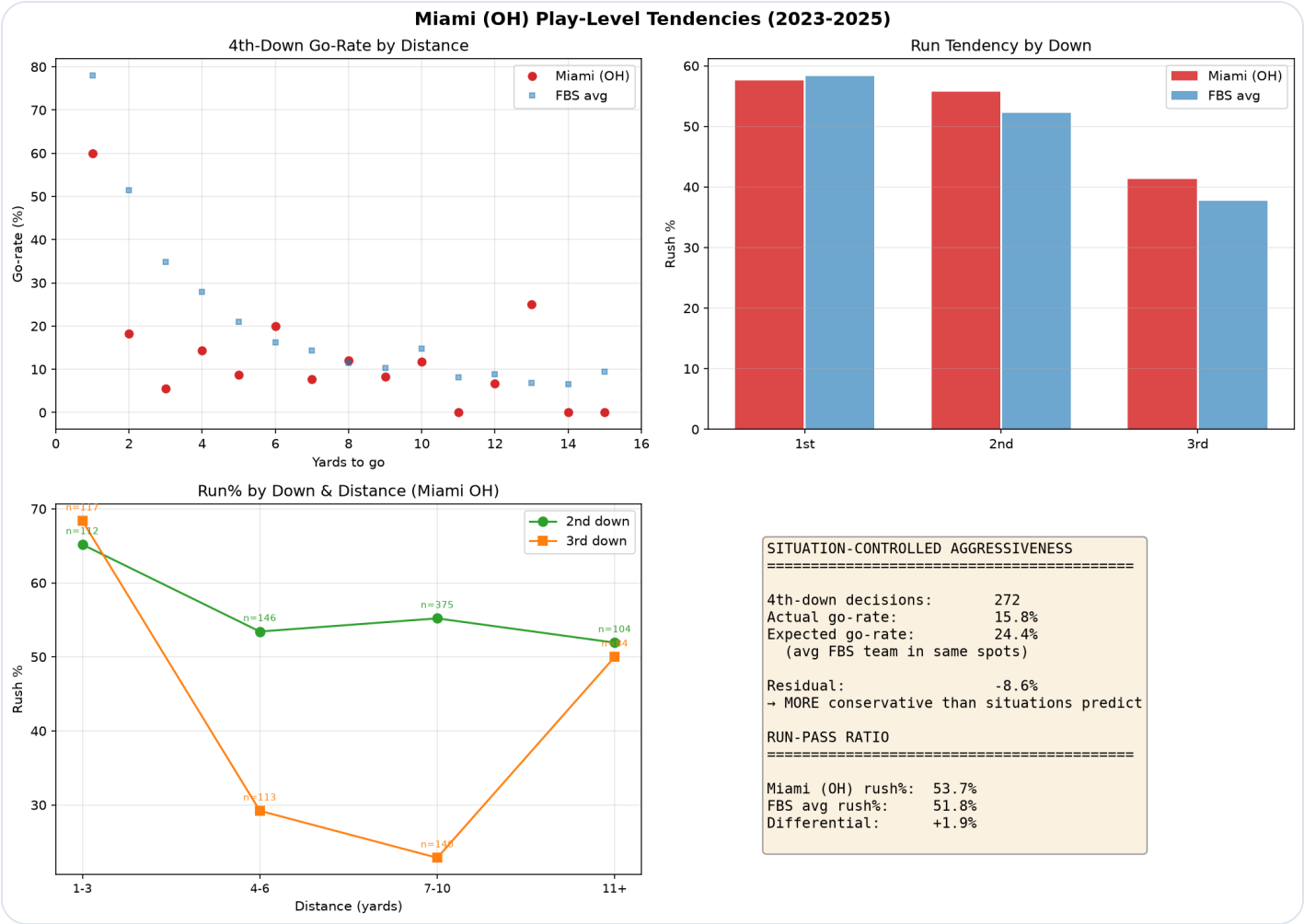
Scrimmage plays

3RD SHORT RUN

68.4%

3rd-and-1 to 3

The model read: Miami is conservative by design, not by accident. It punted/kicked far more often than the average FBS team in similar fourth-down situations. That style works when the defense controls field position; it becomes fragile when the offense falls behind schedule.



STRENGTH

They can shorten games, protect a limited offense, and make weaker MAC offenses drive the long field. That is a good regular-season formula.

RISK

If the defense regresses or the offense takes negative plays, conservative fourth-down behavior leaves fewer comeback levers. This team needs first-half control.

Tendencies come from 794,416 local play-by-play rows, 2023-2025, excluding Miami from the FBS comparison sample.

2026 Roster Questions

Official roster data is better than CFBD here. CFBD's 2026 roster endpoint returned 0 players, so the preview uses Miami's official 2026 roster page. I parsed 121 players. The headline: the defense still has pieces, but the 2025 production leaders are heavily churned.

UNIT	2025 PRODUCTION	LISTED ON 2026 ROSTER?	PREVIEW READ
QB	Dequan Finn: 1,451 pass yds, 9 TD, 6 INT; Henry Hesson: 596 yds; Thomas Gotkowski: 575 yds, 4 TD, 1 INT	Gotkowski yes; Finn/Hesson no	Gotkowski is the verified returning QB with real 2025 snaps. Caleb Heavner and David McComb are roster options, but CFBD has no 2026 stats to price them.
RB	Jordan Brunson 767 yds; Finn 395; D'Shawntae Jones 277 and 7 TD	Jones yes; Brunson/Finn no	Jones gives short-yardage continuity. Wisconsin transfer Cade Yacamelli and Monmouth transfer Rodney Nelson make this a rebuilt room, not a carbon copy.
WR/TE	Kamryn Perry 976 yds; Cole Weaver 642; Keith Reynolds 352; Braylon Isom 141	Reynolds/Isom yes; Perry/Weaver no	The explosive pass game has to be re-created. Reynolds, Devin Hyatt, Damarion Witten, Maleek Huggins, and Carl Jenkins are the roster names to watch.
Defense	Top tacklers: Eli Blakey 118, Jackson Kuwatch 101, Corban Hondru 84, Silas Walters 71, Malcolm McCain 66	McCain and Mychal Yharbrough yes; top four no	Defensive scheme/standard is the program strength, but the tackle-sheet turnover is not small. McCain matters.

QB ROOM

Thomas Gotkowski is the clean continuity bet: R-So., on roster, and protected the ball better than the other 2025 passers by INT rate.

TRANSFER TALENT

The official roster includes transfers from Washington, Indiana/NIU, Arizona, Ohio State, Wisconsin, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Kansas, Texas A&M, and Ohio State. That is real roster churn.

DEFENSIVE BACKBONE

Bill Brechin is listed as defensive coordinator/linebackers; Miami's defensive results give him benefit of the doubt, but 2025 production must be replaced.

Season hinge: If Gotkowski/Heavner/McComb gives Miami a merely average MAC passing game, the team can win the league. If QB play stays bottom-third nationally, every swing game turns into a knife fight.

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The 2026 Schedule

NONCONFERENCE EV

1.82

Pitt, Holy Cross, Cincinnati, UConn

MAC RUN EV

2.89

BGSU through CMU

MACTION EV

2.32

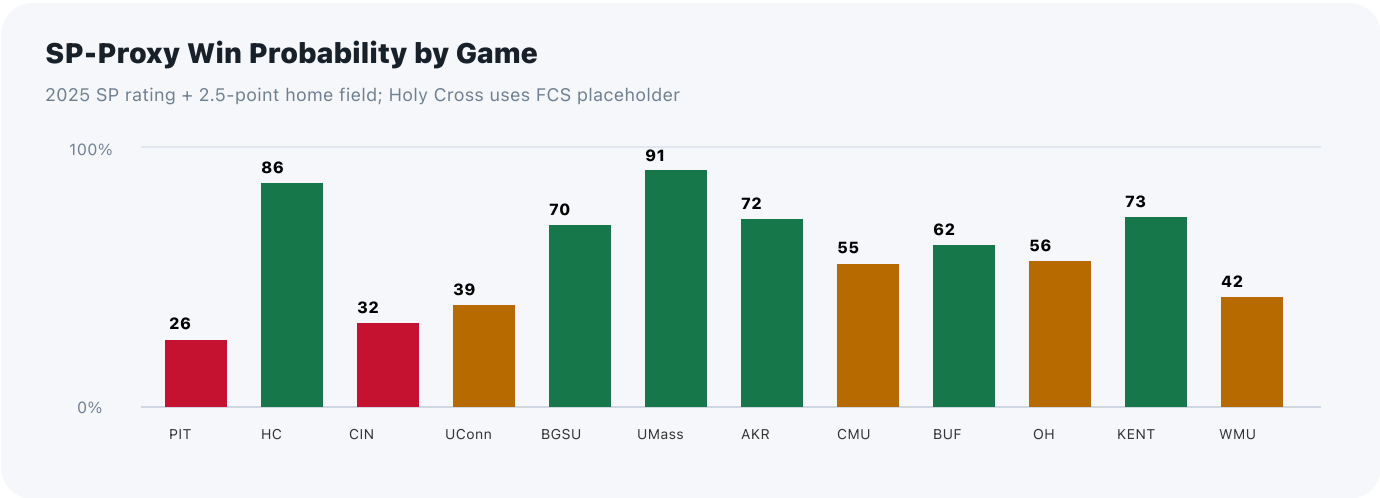
Buffalo through WMU

TOTAL EV

7.03

SP proxy, not betting model

RANGE	PROBABILITY	MEANING
5 wins or fewer	16.1%	Offense fails to reset, UConn/CMU/Ohio/WMU swing games break wrong.
6-6	20.1%	Bowl bubble; defense good, offense still too limited.
7-5	25.2%	The modal outcome. Beat the weaker MAC teams, split the coin flips, lose most higher-SP games.
8-4	21.4%	Contender profile. Requires beating at least two of UConn, CMU, Ohio, Western Michigan.
9+ wins	17.3%	MAC title path. Needs a real QB jump and one nonconference upset.



Projection is intentionally simple: 2025 SP rating differential plus home field transformed with a 13.5-point logistic scale. It is not the repo's StackedEnsemble live forecast.

Regular-Season Forecast

DATE	GAME	2025 OPP	OPP SP	MIAMI %	READ
Sep 5	@ Pittsburgh	8-5, +8.9 PPG	#36 / +8.4	26%	Upset needed. Pitt is the toughest rating spot on the schedule and it is on the road.
Sep 12	Holy Cross	3-9, -4.2 PPG	FCS	86%	Must win. Anything other than a clean get-right game is a red flag.
Sep 19	@ Cincinnati	7-6, +4.7 PPG	#56 / +4.5	32%	Hard road rivalry spot. Miami needs turnover help or a QB jump.
Sep 26	Connecticut	9-4, +8.3 PPG	#53 / +5.1	39%	Swing-upset chance. Home field keeps it live, but UConn's 2025 offense was far better.
Oct 3	Bowling Green	4-8, -3.8 PPG	#113 / -12.6	70%	MAC opener they should own. Bowling Green brings almost no 2025 returning-production signal.
Oct 10	@ Massachusetts	0-12, -27.5 PPG	#136 / -36.6	91%	No excuses. Road game, but Miami is materially better by every team-quality metric.
Oct 17	Akron	5-7, -5.2 PPG	#117 / -13.9	72%	Win with defense. Akron's offense ranked #117 in EPA/play.
Oct 24	@ Central Michigan	7-6, -1.0 PPG	#100 / -8.8	55%	Trap road game. This is where conservative teams get dragged into one-score nonsense.
Nov 3	Buffalo	5-7, +0.5 PPG	#95 / -7.5	62%	Lean win. Home Tuesday night; Buffalo is good enough to punish sloppy offense.
Nov 10	Ohio	9-4, +5.8 PPG	#84 / -4.0	56%	The pivot game. Rivalry plus MAC standings. Win this and Detroit becomes realistic.
Nov 17	@ Kent State	5-7, -12.3 PPG	#130 / -19.3	73%	Should win. Road MACtion weirdness is the only reason this is not higher.
Nov 24	@ Western Michigan	10-4, +7.5 PPG	#78 / -1.4	42%	Likely division/title gate. WMU had the best 2025 resume among MAC opponents and beat Miami for the MAC title.

Projected regular season: 7-5 overall, roughly 5-3 in MAC play. The clean upside path is 8-4/6-2 MAC if Miami beats Ohio and splits UConn/Central/Western. The failure path is 6-6 if the offense is still bottom-third nationally and loses the UConn/CMU/Ohio cluster.

CEILING: 9-3 / MAC TITLE GAME

The quarterback room settles early, the transfer receivers add explosives, and the defense remains top-third nationally. Miami beats UConn or Cincinnati, then wins the Ohio/Western Michigan split.

FLOOR: 5-7 / NO BOWL

The offense loses the 2025 skill production without replacing it, the defense slips from good to average, and the conservative game model turns coin flips into coin flips they lose.

ONE STRONG RECOMMENDATION

Call it 7-5, with real 8-4 upside. Miami is not a fake contender: the defense was too good, the MAC schedule is manageable, and the November home games give them a path. But the offense has to clear a low bar first. The whole season is a referendum on whether the new QB/skill mix can turn a defense-first bowl team into a complete MAC title team.

KEY	WHY IT MATTERS	WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE
QB efficiency	2025 passing EPA ranked #100; top two passers are not listed on the 2026 roster.	Reduce dead drives; push pass EPA toward MAC average; keep INTs low.
Receiver rebuild	Top two 2025 receivers are not on the official 2026 roster.	Keith Reynolds, Braylon Isom, Devin Hyatt, Damarion Witten, and the transfer group create enough explosives.
Defensive replacement	Top four 2025 tacklers are not listed; McCain/Yharbrough are the clean returning leaders.	Keep defensive EPA/play in the national top 50 and havoc near top 35.
October sweep	Bowling Green, UMass, Akron, Central Michigan is the schedule's win-bank.	3-1 minimum. 4-0 turns November into a title chase.
Ohio + Western Michigan	Those are the two MAC games most likely to decide Detroit.	Split to contend; sweep to control the race.

Betting note: No season win total or game lines were pulled for this report. The probabilities are schedule-strength forecast math, not a betting edge. Straight bets only when a real market exists.