



BOWL GAMES ARE BETTER IN THE BAHAMAS™

2017 REVIEW - 2018 PREVIEW

After four very successful bowl games that have served as a springboard to success for those who have participated, the fifth-annual Bahamas Bowl will kick off at 12:30 pm on Friday, Dec. 21, 2018 at Nassau's Thomas A. Robinson National Stadium.

Proving the slogan "**Bowl Games are Better in the Bahamas,**" bowl week in Nassau always lives up to that with a mix of sun, sand and football in one of the world's most beautiful tourist destinations.

The Bahamas Bowl was enhanced after ESPN Events added the game to an impressive stable of events in May 2015. And, with ESPN on board, the bowl week always provides student-athletes, conference partners, alumni, fans and sponsors a first-class international bowl experience.

A large part of the Bahamas Bowl's success is the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism. Using the local slogan "Football, Family and Fun", Bahamians of all ages come out to Robinson National Stadium to experience gameday the way it happens in U.S. college stadiums each week during the season.

The Atlantis Bahamas is another important element to the bowl experience, as it houses both teams for four nights at its world-class resort and water park on Paradise Island.

The gameday action takes place at Robinson National Stadium, where fans have watched some of the most-exciting contests among the bowls each year. The stadium received a major upgrade in November 2016 as the National Stadium Authority-Bahamas installed a Celebration Bermudagrass field. The facility also has gone through other upgrades each year.

There has been plenty of success on the field for all of the participating teams. Both of the first two winners of the bowl -- WKU in 2014 and Western Michigan in 2015 -- went on to win their respective conference titles the following season, and Western Michigan participated in a New Year's Six bowl after an undefeated season in 2016.

A total of 18 alumni who have participated in the bowl have heard their names called by teams during the 2015-18 NFL Drafts, led by Western Michigan wide receiver **Corey Davis**, who was selected No. 5 overall by the Tennessee Titans in the 2017 draft. Four former student-athletes who played in the Bahamas Bowl were selected in the 2018 NFL Draft, while a bowl-record total of seven student-athletes were taken in 2016. In addition, eight former Bahamas Bowl alumni played in at least one NFL game in 2017.

The bowl has had one conference coach of the year and three freshman of the year award winners participate in the game.

The 2017 game featured UAB of Conference USA and Ohio of the Mid-American Conference in the only current international bowl game. The combined 16 victories between UAB and Ohio coming into the game tied for the most in the history of the bowl.

A crowd of 13,585 in Robinson National Stadium and those watching on ESPN on TV and online saw Ohio beat UAB 41-6 as Ohio running back **Dorian Brown** tied a bowl record with four touchdown runs for Offensive Player of the Game honors.

The Bobcats (9-4) posted their first bowl game win since 2012 and the third bowl game win in the history of the Ohio program. Bobcats quarterback **Nathan Rourke** finished the day 12-of-18 passing for 185 yards and two touchdowns, and he ran three times for 30 yards to finish with 215 yards of total offense.

Quarterback **A.J. Erdely** completed 24-of-45 passes for 254 yards for UAB (8-5), which had its football program reinstated in 2017 after a two-year hiatus.

Ohio safety **Javon Hagan** was named the Defensive Player of the Game after posting a game-high nine tackles (six solo) and a forced fumble to lead the stout Bobcat defense.

Ohio head coach **Frank Solich** raised the Prime Minister's Trophy after the game as the Bahamas Bowl champions.

Fans at the game were treated to a pregame Tailgate Extravaganza outside Robinson National Stadium, a pregame performance by the famed Bahamas All-Stars band, a Junkanoo joint performance from the Valley Boys and the Saxons during the game and a halftime performance from the Royal Bahamas Police Force Band.

The game was broadcast on television on ESPN for the fourth-consecutive year as **Steve Levy** and 1991 Heisman Trophy winner **Desmond Howard** described the action, and the bowl action was heard in the U.S. on the Bahamas Bowl Radio Network.

The 2017 Bahamas Bowl broadcast led all bowl games in percentage of Out-of-Home Lift, defined as those people watching on the ESPN App, their connected devices and at social locations (restaurants, watch parties, etc.). The 2017 bowl had a 15 percent lift in Total Live Audience

from out-of-home viewers.

The game capped off a tremendous bowl week for everyone involved, who all enjoyed the famous hospitality that the Bahamas offers to visitors.

A welcome party at the Atlantis after the teams' arrivals gave the student-athletes, team travel parties and VIPs a taste of the Bahamas. The student-athletes attended a beach bash the next night at Atlantis and had a chance to enjoy food, fun and fellowship on the beach with spectacular views of the Caribbean and the striking Atlantis resort.

One of the highlights of bowl week was when the student-athletes from UAB and Ohio helped fulfill the mission statement of the bowl as they gave back to the youth of the Bahamas by way of a visit to the Ranfurly Homes for Children in Nassau and a Youth Football Clinic conducted by USA Football, the Commonwealth of American Football League (CAFL) and the bowl. The large contingent of student-athletes from both schools brought smiles to the Bahamian youth at both events.

"In my history of coaching I've been to an awful lot of bowls, and I think the Bahamas Bowl does a great job here," said Solich. "It's second-to-none in terms of hospitality. I think you've got the right amount of activities for the players, and yet still allow opportunity for free time. If you have free time, where would you rather have it than at the Atlantis?"

"Just to see the hard work everyone has put in between the Bahamas Bowl staff, the Atlantis Bahamas and the Bahamas government is incredible," said UAB head coach **Bill Clark**. "I have been here before and really knew how special it was. For these guys to experience something like this is special. We have discussed the percentage of these guys that will have the opportunity to come back. I have had guys that have been at bowl games at other places, but I don't think they have been to one that compares to what we have seen so far. This trip has been above and beyond anything we could have asked for."

The economic impact of the Bahamas Bowl has been significant over the previous four years, as the bowl, ESPN Events, participating institutions and sponsors have spent **\$23.8 million** in traveling to and during their stays in the Bahamas as **9,200** visitors made their way to be a part of bowl week and spent over **\$5 million** at local hotels and resorts in Nassau.

Money was spent in travel, shipping, hotels, food, supplies, advertising, entertainment and local transportation. Several local Nassau businesses worked with the bowl and supplied product, supplies, equipment and services. The bowl will continue to visit the Ranfurly Homes, conduct the Youth Football Clinic and engage the Bahamas All-Stars band and Junkanoo groups.

Valued support for the Bahamas Bowl comes from a diverse group of sponsors, especially the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism and Atlantis. Local Bahamian sponsors Caribbean Bottling Company Bahamas (Coca-Cola), Burns House (Kalik), Tribune Media, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut and BahamasLocal.com join numerous Nassau businesses in making the bowl a success.

The support of the Bahamas Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture and the National Sports Authority-Bahamas and their staffs are crucial to the bowl's efforts. Transportation partners Bahamas Experience, Leisure Travel and Tours and Majestic Travel along with the Lynden Pindling International Airport, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and Nassau Airport Development Company (NAD) staffs make sure the teams, staffs, VIPs and fans get into, around New Providence Island and back home during bowl week with ease. And fans used TeamIP to get their bowl and team merchandise at the Atlantis, on gameday and online.

For the 2018 game as with the previous four, the Bahamas Bowl has Conference USA and the Mid-American Conference as participating conferences in the Nassau stadium named for the late Bahamian Olympic track star on December 21.

The fifth-annual game in 2018 promises to be another chapter in a rich history of Bahamas Bowl contests that have captured the imagination of Bahamian and visiting college football fans who have made their way to Robinson National Stadium, and those watching on ESPN, to see why "Bowl Games are Better in The Bahamas".



Ohio head coach Frank Solich accepts the Prime Minister's Trophy after the Bobcats won the 2017 Bahamas Bowl. Bahamas Minister of Tourism & Aviation Dionisio D'Aguilar and Minister of Youth, Sports & Culture Michael Pintard congratulate Ohio while ESPN sideline reporter Laura Rutledge conducts the postgame ceremony at the Thomas A. Robinson National Stadium. (Photo: Kemuel Stubbs)