



The Chronology of Flames Football

1971

Lynchburg Baptist College was founded by Dr. Jerry Falwell, pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church, and Dr. A. Pierre Guillermin.

1972

Lynchburg Baptist gained affiliation with the National Christian Collegiate Athletic Association.

Aug. 1973

Lynchburg Baptist fielded its first football team. Lee "Rock" Royer was named the program's first-ever head coach. The team practiced on Treasure Island and played its games at Lynchburg's City Stadium.

Sept. 27, 1973

The Flames faced their first opponent, Massanutten Military Academy, losing the game, 42-32.

Oct. 25, 1973

Lynchburg Baptist picked up the first win in program history when the Flames downed Ferrum College, 29-7. The victory started a string of three straight wins to close out the program's first year with a 3-3 record.

Nov. 20, 1973

Lee "Rock" Royer died tragically in a plane crash. John Cartwright, an assistant coach on Coach Royer's staff, was named Lynchburg Baptist's second head football coach.

Nov. 1974

John Cartwright finished his first season with a 5-4 record. This was LBC's first winning season, with a schedule made up of primarily junior varsity teams.

1975

Lynchburg Baptist College was renamed Liberty Baptist College. Liberty Baptist changed its school colors from green and gold to red, white and blue. The Flames also joined the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics as an associate member. Liberty Baptist played its first full varsity schedule and finished with a 4-5 record.

Nov. 1976

John Cartwright's squad completed the first winning season at the varsity level, 5-4-1.

1977

Tom Dowling was named LBC's third head football coach. John Cartwright concluded his career with a 14-13-1 record. The first full-time assistant coach, Lee Kaltenbach, was hired as the offensive coordinator. Kim Raynor and Scott Goetz were selected to the Churchmen's All-America team, LBC's first football All-Americans.

Dec. 1978

Dave Hertzler, Ed Landis, Rupert Wright, Rod Gladfelter, Steve Kearns and Kim Raynor were all named Churchmen's All-Americans.

Nov. 1979

Liberty Baptist completed its first-ever nine-win season with a 9-1-1 mark. Steve Kearns, a tight end, was drafted by the British Columbia Lions of the Canadian Football League and became the first Flame to play at the professional level.

1980

Liberty Baptist joined the National Collegiate Athletic Association at the Division II level as an associate member. An eagle was chosen as the school's official mascot. Glenn Inverso signed a free agent contract with the New York Jets to become the first Flame in the National Football League.

Oct. 11, 1980

Liberty Baptist played its first NCAA I-AA opponent, James Madison, falling to the Dukes, 30-14.

Nov. 8, 1980

Liberty Baptist won its first NCAA Division I-AA game against Morehead State, 23-20.

1981

Liberty Baptist joined the NCAA Division II ranks and became eligible for NAIA postseason competition. The Flames Sports Network began, with Jerry Edwards handling the play-by-play duties as the "Voice of the Flames."

Nov. 1982

Liberty Baptist finished the 1982 season with a 7-4 mark and was ranked 19th in the NAIA Division I Poll. Mitchell Clark earned first-team NAIA All-America honors, and John Sanders was named the first Kodak All-American at LBC in the college division. Mike Forslund and Jeff Brown were the first Flames drafted by the United States Football League, signing with the Washington Federals.

Aug. 29, 1983

Liberty Baptist was ranked 17th in the NAIA preseason poll, marking the first time the Flames earned a preseason ranking.

Sept. 1, 1983

Liberty Baptist was accepted as a member of the East Coast Athletic Conference.

1983

Liberty Baptist dropped its NAIA membership and became eligible for NCAA Division II postseason action. Tom Dowling finished his coaching career with a 33-38-2 record.

May 30, 1984

Morgan Hout became the fourth head football coach in the school's history.

1985

Liberty Baptist College was renamed Liberty University.

May 1, 1985

Fred Banks, a wide receiver, became the first player in program history to be selected in the NFL Draft, as he was selected by the Cleveland Browns in the eighth round. Banks also became the first player in program history to make an NFL roster, also doing so with the Cleveland Browns.

Sept. 21, 1985

Liberty defeated James Madison, 9-3, to post its first win over an NCAA Division I-AA team from the state of Virginia.

Nov. 6, 1985

Treasure Island, the Flames' practice facility, was washed away in a flood, causing the team to cancel the remainder of the season.

Dec. 25, 1985

Kelvin Edwards, wide receiver, played in the Blue-Gray All-Star Game, becoming the first Flame to play in a college all-star game.

April 30, 1986

Kelvin Edwards was selected in the fourth round of the NFL Draft by the New Orleans Saints.

Dec. 1986

Wayne Haddix was named Liberty's first All-American by the National Strength Coaches of America. He also played in the Blue-Gray Game and the Senior Bowl, becoming the first Flame to ever play in the Senior Bowl.

Dec. 7, 1986

Mark Mathis was named to the American Football Coaches Association's Division II All-America team. He became the first Flame to receive this honor.

Dec. 1987

Mickey Paige was named a first-team All-American at the Division II level by Football News Gazette.

Sept. 1, 1988

Liberty became an official member at the NCAA I-AA level.

November 1988

Liberty finished with an 8-3 record during its first year at the NCAA Division I-AA level. The Flames were ranked 20th in the final national poll by the Football News Gazette.

Dec. 18, 1988

Sam Rutigliano was named Liberty's fifth head football coach. Morgan Hout finished his coaching career with a 20-29-1 record.

May 8, 1989

Groundbreaking for a new stadium took place on the site of Liberty's old practice fields.

Oct. 14, 1989

Liberty defeated Eastern Michigan, 25-24, in Ypsilanti, Mich., to post the program's first win over a NCAA FBS opponent (formerly Division I-A).

Oct. 21, 1989

Liberty University Stadium was opened in front of a crowd of 12,750. The Flames defeated Towson State, 37-18.

November 1989

The Flames were ranked in the NCAA Division I-AA Top 20 for four straight weeks, including a ranking as high as No. 9.

January 1990

Eric Green was selected to play in the Hula and Senior Bowls, and Donald Smith was selected to play in the Martin Luther King All-American Classic. Sam Rutigliano was also selected to coach in the Martin Luther King All-American Classic.

April 22, 1990

Eric Green was drafted by the Pittsburgh Steelers in the first round and was the 21st pick overall in the NFL draft. Green was Liberty's first player ever chosen in the first round.

April 23, 1990

Donald Smith was drafted by the Minnesota Vikings in the 10th round of the NFL Draft, marking the first time in program history two Liberty players were drafted by NFL programs in the same year.

December 1990

Eric Green was selected as AFC Rookie of the Year, and Wayne Haddix was chosen to play in the Pro Bowl.

Nov. 1992

Liberty finished the 1992 season with a 7-4 mark. The Flames were ranked No. 19 in the nation at the NCAA I-AA level by the NCAA Poll.

March 1993

George Nimako was drafted in the fourth round by Toronto of the Canadian Football League.

Oct. 29, 1994

Liberty University Stadium was renamed Williams Stadium in honor of Art and Angela Williams because of their continued faithful support Liberty University and Flames Athletics.

November 1995

Liberty finished the 1995 season with an 8-3 mark. The Flames finished the season ranked No. 19 in the nation at the I-AA level by the Football Gazette and No. 27 by The Sports Network.

1997

Liberty led the nation by forcing 40 turnovers, and was second in turnover margin.

December 1997

Jarrod Everson was named CoSIDA/GTE Academic All-America second team, the first Flames football player since 1982 to do so and Liberty's first at the NCAA Division I level.

January 1998

Dwayne Carswell, captain of the special teams for the Denver Broncos, became the first Liberty football player to play in and win a NFL Super Bowl game.

Nov. 1998

Jesse Riley became Liberty's first Associated Press first-team All-American and was also selected a third-team All-American by the Football Gazette. Jarrod Everson became Liberty's first football player to be named a first team CoSIDA/GTE Academic All-American and its first two-time selection at the Division I level. He was also named to the inaugural NACDA Academic All-Star team.

Jan. 13, 2000

Sam Rutigliano, the winningest coach in the football program's history, announced his retirement. Rutigliano posted a 67-53 record during his 11-year tenure at the helm of the Flames' football program.

Feb. 18, 2000

Ken Karcher was announced as the sixth head coach in the history of the football program.

May 23, 2001

Liberty announced the football program would be joining the Big South Conference with competition set to begin during the 2002 season.

Oct. 5, 2002

Liberty and Gardner-Webb played the first-ever Big South Conference football game in Lynchburg, Va., with Gardner-Webb walking away with a 31-21 victory.

Oct. 19, 2002

Liberty won its first-ever Big South Conference game with a 31-17 victory over Charleston Southern in Lynchburg, Va.

Dec. 16, 2002

Liberty placed four players on the first-ever Big South Conference first-team all-conference roster and one on the second-team all-conference squad.

Oct. 29, 2003

Aaron DeBerry was selected to participate in the 2004 I-AA All-Star Classic, hosted by The Football Network.

Nov. 15, 2003

Liberty defeated Coastal Carolina, 38-21, and posted its first-ever winning record in Big South Conference play, as the Flames finished second in the league with a 3-1 record.

Dec. 9, 2003

Dre Barnes became the first player in school history to be named Big South Offensive Player of the Year.

Oct. 30, 2004

An official groundbreaking ceremony for the Williams Football Operations Center was held prior to kickoff against Charleston Southern.

Nov. 30, 2005

Zach Terrell became the first player in school history to be named Big South Freshman of the Year, and Terrell was joined by six other players on the Big South all-conference team.

Dec. 2, 2005

Danny Rocco was announced as the seventh head coach in the history of the football program.

Aug. 31, 2006

The football program officially moved into its new home, the Williams Football Operations Center, a 48,000-square-foot, football-only facility located in the north end zone at Williams Stadium.

Nov. 4, 2006

Among the 8,286 fans who saw the Flames record their third shutout of the season in a 21-0 victory over Western Carolina was the 1,000,000th fan to attend a Liberty home football game since the program's inception.

Nov. 18, 2006

Liberty closed out the season on a three-game winning streak to finish the first year under head coach Danny Rocco with a 6-5 record, tying for the nation's best turnaround in 2006 (five-win improvement).

Nov. 21, 2006

Head coach Danny Rocco was named Big South Coach of the Year, becoming the first head coach in program history to garner the honor.

May 15, 2007

Liberty University Founder and Chancellor Dr. Jerry Falwell went home to be with the Lord as he passed away at the age of 73. Seven days later, a funeral service was held at Thomas Road Baptist Church with 10 Liberty University student-athletes serving as honorable pallbearers, reflecting on Dr. Falwell's love for athletics.

Nov. 10, 2007

Liberty defeated VMI in Lynchburg, 73-34, finishing the year undefeated at Williams Stadium with a perfect 6-0 record. The mark set a new record for home victories in a year and was the program's second-ever undefeated season at Williams Stadium (first was a 5-0 record in 1992).

Nov. 17, 2007

Liberty shut out Gardner-Webb, 31-0, in Boiling Springs, N.C., completing an unblemished 4-0 record in Big South play to capture the program's first-ever Big South Conference title.

Nov. 20, 2007

For the second straight year, Danny Rocco was named Big South Coach of the Year to become the league's second-ever consecutive head coaching honoree. Liberty placed 22 players on the two all-conference squads, setting a new standard for the conference.

Nov. 15, 2008

Liberty defeated Gardner-Webb, 30-10, to wrap up the team's second straight Big South championship and its second consecutive unbeaten run in league play.

Nov. 22, 2008

Liberty capped off its first 10-win season in program history with a dominating 26-3 victory over No. 12 Elon, which also marked the highest-ranked FCS opponent the Flames had defeated in the history of football program at that time.

Nov. 25, 2008

For the third-straight season, head coach Danny Rocco was named Big South Coach of the Year, while Rashad Jennings repeated as Big South Offensive Player of the Year.

Dec. 2, 2008

Rashad Jennings finished eighth in the voting for the Walter Payton Award, as announced by the Sports Network. Jennings became the first player in program history to be a top 10 finalist for the nation's premium honor given to an FCS player.

Dec. 12, 2008

Rashad Jennings garnered consensus first-team All-America honors, as he was named to the Associated Press, College Sporting News, Sports Network and Walter Camp Foundations' first-team squads.

Dec. 22, 2008

Liberty finished the year ranked No. 14 in both the Sports Network and FCS Coaches polls, marking the team's highest final end of the year ranking in program history. Liberty was ranked in the national polls a program-record 10 straight weeks during the 2008 season.

Jan. 26, 2009

Rashad Jennings led all running backs in rushing yards and his South squad to victory at the Under Armour Senior Bowl, becoming the third player in program history to participate in the prestigious annual senior event.

April 26, 2009

Rashad Jennings was selected by the Jacksonville Jaguars in the seventh round of the 2009 NFL Draft, becoming the sixth player in program history to be drafted by an NFL team.

May 5, 2009

Liberty University announced the building of a new high-definition video/scoreboard in the north end zone of Williams Stadium. Spotighting the new addition to the stadium was a 20' x 36' video board with HD 16 mm technology, giving Liberty one of the largest video/scoreboards in FCS football at the time.

May 6, 2009

Matt Lambros was selected by the Toronto Argonauts in the second round of the 2009 CFL Draft, becoming the third player in program history to be selected in the annual CFL amateur draft.

Aug. 28, 2009

During a convocation service, Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr., announced a five-year expansion plan for Williams Stadium. The plan called for a five-story press and suite tower, including 16 individual suites, plus expanding the seating capacity at Williams Stadium from 12,000 to 30,000. The first stage of the expansion plan, which includes the five-story press and suite tower and 7,700 additional seats, was scheduled to be finished prior to the start of the 2010 season.

Nov. 21, 2009

Liberty capped off its third straight Big South Conference championship season with an 8-3 record and a 5-1 mark in Big South play. The Flames shared the conference title with Stony Brook, who defeated Liberty, 36-33, in both squads' season finale.

Nov. 24, 2009

Mike Brown was named the Big South Offensive Player of the Year, becoming the first sophomore in Big South history to capture the league's top offensive honor.

Sept. 4, 2010

Liberty returned to its roots when it hosted St. Francis, Pa., at Lynchburg City Stadium, while renovations on Williams Stadiums were wrapping up. The contest was the first time Liberty had played at Lynchburg City Stadium since Oct. 7, 1989, when the Flames upended No. 19 Eastern Illinois, 9-7.

Sept. 11, 2010

A late defensive stop halted a last-second rally by Ball State, allowing Liberty to secure a 27-23 victory in Muncie, Ind. The victory marked Liberty's second win in program history over a FBS program and the first since 1989.

Oct. 2, 2010

Playing in front of a then stadium-record 19,314 fans, Liberty defeated Savannah State, 52-14, in the first game played inside of the expanded Williams Stadium. An eight-month expansion project moved the stadium's seating capacity from 12,000 to 19,200 and completed a five-story facility with a press and suite tower.

Nov. 20, 2010

Liberty completed its drive for a fourth straight Big South Conference title, as the Flames secured a three-way share of the title with Coastal Carolina and Stony Brook with a 54-28 victory over Stony Brook inside of Williams Stadium.

Oct. 1, 2011

Liberty defeated Kentucky Wesleyan, 57-0, giving the program its 200th victory.

Dec. 14, 2011

Turner Gill was announced as the eighth head coach in the history of the football program.

Dec. 15, 2011

During Liberty's introductory press conference of head coach Turner Gill, Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr., announced Liberty's intention to conduct an FBS Feasibility Study to evaluate the position of its athletics program within the landscape of NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics.

May 12, 2012

Before a record crowd at Williams Stadium for its 39th Commencement ceremony, Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr., announced Liberty's intention to seek NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) conference affiliation for its 20-team athletics program.

Nov. 10, 2012

Liberty closed out the home portion of its 2012 schedule with a 28-14 victory over No. 6 Stony Brook, marking the first time in program history the Flames defeated a Top 10 ranked opponent.

Nov. 17, 2012

Winners of six of their last seven games of the year, the Flames defeated VMI, 33-14, in Lexington, Va., to wrap up the program's fifth Big South Conference title. Liberty shared the conference title with Coastal Carolina and Stony Brook, with each of the teams finishing the year with 5-1 conference records.

Dec. 18, 2012

Redshirt freshman Josh Woodrum finished No. 13 in the final voting for the Sports Network's Jerry Rice Award, becoming Liberty's first-ever finalist for the top FCS freshman in the country award.

March 27, 2013

Pat Kelly was named one of two recipients of the KP Sports Division I Football Championship Subdivision Athletics Directors Association (FCS ADA) Scholar-Athlete of the Year award. Kelly received a \$5,000 postgraduate scholarship along with this honor.

May 6, 2013

Hunter Steward was selected by the BC Lions in the first round of the 2013 CFL Draft, becoming the fourth player in program history to be selected in the annual CFL amateur draft.

May 7, 2013

Pat Kelly (football) and Lauren Stell (women's soccer) were given the Big South's George A. Christenberry Award for Academic Excellence. The Christenberry Award is given annually to the male and female student-athlete who attain the highest GPA during their college careers. Kelly became the first football player in program history.

Sept. 7, 2013

As part of the university's "40 Years of Football" celebration, members of Liberty's 1973 football team were honored during a special ceremony during Liberty's home opener against Monmouth. The group, which included 20 former players, plus coaches and administrators, were also the honored guests of President Jerry Falwell, in the newly opened 71 Club.

Nov. 16, 2013

Liberty closed out its 25th season of competition at Williams Stadium, surpassing the 100,000 mark in total home attendance for the first time in program history. Liberty finished the year with 105,215 in total home attendance.

Nov. 23, 2013

Liberty defeated No. 16 Charleston Southern, 56-14, in Charleston, S.C. The win gave Liberty a share of the Big South Conference title with Coastal Carolina, the program's sixth title in seven years.

May 10, 2014

Walt Aikens was selected by the Miami Dolphins in the fourth round of the 2014 NFL Draft, becoming the seventh player in program history to be drafted by an NFL team.

Aug. 30, 2014

Liberty opened the 2014 season in Chapel Hill, N.C., facing off against No. 23 North Carolina, marking the first time Liberty had faced a ranked FBS opponent in program history.

Oct. 4, 2014

Liberty played its annual Homecoming football game against No. 20 Richmond in front of 20,838 fans, Liberty's first home football game played in front of more than 20,000 fans.

Oct. 11, 2014

Jacob Hagen intercepted a pass in the end zone in overtime, allowing Liberty to complete a 55-48 victory over Appalachian State. The win marked Liberty's third victory over a FBS opponent in program history.

Nov. 22, 2014

Chima Uzowihe blocked a potential game-winning 24-yard field goal, securing a 15-14 victory over No. 1 Coastal Carolina. The win was Liberty's first over the No. 1 team in the country and secured the program's seventh Big South title in eight years. The victory also gave Liberty the Big South's automatic bid to the NCAA FCS Playoffs, securing Liberty its first-ever postseason appearance.

Nov. 29, 2014

Liberty pieced together a 17-play, 85-yard scoring drive during the fourth quarter to score the go-ahead touchdown in its 26-21 win over No. 15 James Madison in the first round of the NCAA FCS Playoffs. The road victory in Harrisonburg, Va., was the first postseason win in program history.

Dec. 6, 2014

Liberty made its first-ever appearance in the second round of the NCAA FCS Playoffs, falling to No. 5 Villanova, 29-22, in Villanova, Va.

Dec. 15, 2014

Jacob Hagen finished seventh in the voting for the Buck Buchanan award, as announced by the Sports Network. Hagen became the first player in program history to be a top 10 finalist for the nation's premium defensive player honor.

Jan. 13, 2015

Head Coach Turner Gill was named the VaSID Coach of the Year, as announced by the Virginia Sports Information Directors. Gill became the first coach in program history to be named the top head coach in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Sept. 19, 2015

Liberty knocked off No. 7 Montana, 31-21, before a Williams Stadium record crowd of 22,551 fans.

Oct. 3, 2015

Liberty picked up its second win over a FBS opponent in two years and the fourth in program history when the Flames defeated Georgia State, 41-33, at the Georgia Dome.

Nov. 19, 2015

Liberty played before a national television audience for the first time in program history, defeating No. 4 Coastal Carolina, 24-21, in Liberty's 2015 season finale at Williams Stadium. The game was televised on ESPNEWS. During the nationally televised game, Liberty announced plans to build a new indoor practice facility for football and all its 20 NCAA Division I athletics program.

Nov. 24, 2015

Chima Uzowihe was named the 2015 Big South Defensive Player of the Year, becoming the first player in program history to garner the league's top defensive honor.

Feb. 11, 2016

Quarterback Josh Woodrum and kicker John Lunsford both received invitations to participate in the 2016 NFL Scouting Combine. The pair were the first Liberty players to be invited to the Combine since 2009 and marked the first time in program history two Liberty players were invited a combine in the same year.

Nov. 5, 2016

The Flames secured a share of their eighth Big South Conference title with a 16-0 road victory at Presbyterian. Liberty fell the following week to No. 14/14 Charleston Southern, 48-26, resulting in a shared conference crown between the Buccaneers and the Flames.

Feb. 16, 2017

Liberty University received notification that the NCAA has approved its request to enter into the Football Bowl Subdivision reclassification process. Liberty University submitted the waiver with the NCAA in January, requesting relief to enter into the two-year FBS reclassification process without an invitation to join a FBS conference.

May 13, 2017

During his commencement address to Liberty's 2017 graduating class at Williams Stadium, President Donald J. Trump commented on Liberty's move to the Football Bowl Subdivision, including the announcement of Liberty's full 2018 schedule and several future matchups on Liberty's football schedules.

Sept. 2, 2017

Liberty started its final season at the FCS level with a bang, knocking off Baylor, 48-45, in an offensive shootout in Waco, Texas. The win was the program's fifth over a FBS opponent and first-ever over a Power 5 school. ESPN.com ranked the win the seventh-biggest upset in college football in the previous 25 years.

Nov. 18, 2017

Liberty played its final FCS football game in program history, falling to Big South Conference foe Charleston Southern at Buccaneer Field in Charleston, S.C. The contest ended the Flames' 30 years of competition at the FCS level. In three decades of play, Liberty posted a 184-152 record at the FCS level, recording a winning record in 21 out of 30 seasons.

Sept. 1, 2018

Liberty kicked off its FBS era with a resounding 52-10 win over Old Dominion before 20,425 at a newly renovated Williams Stadium.

Dec. 1, 2018

In Turner Gill's final game as head coach, Liberty closed out a 6-6 season with a 52-17 home win over Norfolk State. The Flames became the ninth team in NCAA history to win six or more games during their first season competing at the FBS level.

Dec. 7, 2018

Former Ole Miss head coach Hugh Freeze was named the ninth head coach in Liberty football program history.

Aug. 31, 2019

No. 22 Syracuse topped Liberty 24-0 in the season opener at Williams Stadium in a game of firsts. It marked the first time a Power 5 team and the first time a Top 25 team had visited Lynchburg. Hugh Freeze's first game as head coach saw him confined to a hospital bed in the coaching booth due to a recent surgery.

Dec. 21, 2019

Liberty played its first-ever bowl game, squaring off with Georgia Southern in the FBC Mortgage Cure Bowl at Exploria Stadium in Orlando, Fla. The Flames recorded a 23-16 victory, becoming the third team ever to win a bowl game in their first year of bowl eligibility and finishing off an 8-5 campaign.

April 25, 2020

Wide receiver Antonio Gandy-Golden became the eighth player in program history to be selected in the NFL Draft when he was taken by Washington in the fourth round.

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