Craig Lassig/AP

Miami-Ohio quarterback Brett Gabbert drops back to throw during a game against Minnesota in September in Minneapolis. Gabbert has thrown for 2,418 yards and 24 touchdowns this season for the RedHawks, who will take on North Texas in the Frisco Football Classic.

Veterans spark Miami's rise

By Brett Vito
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Miami (Ohio) coach Chuck Martin remembers where the RedHawks were as a program when wide receiver Jack Sorenson and a host of other talented players were in the formative stages of their careers six years ago.

The RedHawks had hit one of the low points in program history after compiling a 4-26 record in Martin's first 30 games in Mid-American Conference play after he arrived in 2014.

Jack Sorenson

"We got blown out by anyone who could walk and chew gum," Martin recalled recently. "That was not much fun to be a part of. That was when they joined us. I have an appreciation for their belief in us and Miami. Back then you were jumping on the Titanic."

A whole lot has changed since for the RedHawks, who will take on North Texas on Thursday in the Frisco Football Classic at Toyota Stadium.

Miami went on a run that included four wins in a five-game span late in the season to earn its third bowl berth since those five sixth-year seniors arrived before the 2016 season. Miami won the MAC title in 2019 and has a 30-12 record in its last 42 conference games.

Miami will be looking for its first bowl win in those seniors' careers when they take on UNT, another team that went on a late-season run to earn a bowl berth.

The Mean Green won five straight games to land a spot in a bowl game that pits teams that are 6-6 on the year.

"It will be a bittersweet ending to a really awesome six years here," Sorenson said. "This will be an opportunity to create memories with a lot of guys who I have been here so long with. I'm excited. Any time you get to go on a trip and play a good team, there are memories made along the way."

Miami enters its showdown with UNT motivated to bounce back from a tough loss to Kent State. The RedHawks needed a win in their regular season finale to capture in the MAC's East Division title and earn a spot in the conference championship game.

Miami rallied from a 10-point deficit in the fourth quarter to force overtime before falling 48-47. The RedHawks elected to go for two after both teams scored on their possessions in overtime and came up short when Brett Gabbert's pass was batted down.

"We didn't want our last game to be Kent," Sorenson said. "This gives us another opportunity to show what we have spent six years building."

That growth process wasn't always easy. Miami finished 5-7 in 2017 and was passed over for a bowl berth in 2018, despite finishing 6-6.

The RedHawks won the MAC title in 2019 but lost to Louisiana in the Lending Tree Bowl. Last season was cut to just three games by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It wasn't like we snapped our fingers, and everything changed," Martin said. "These guys have been through a lot.

"They got us back to the point where we are competing for conference championships year in and year out. We are a team that everyone respects as one of the top teams in the league. That is their legacy."

Miami's sixth-year seniors will look to add to that legacy by adding a bowl win to their resumes. Playing in Frisco will be a unique opportunity for several of them.

Senior defensive back Sterling Weatherford is among several Miami players who have never been to Texas.

"To have another opportunity with these guys who have become so close is pretty awesome," Weatherford said. "Being able to get a bowl game is great. It's about the experience. It's a way for us to realize what we have accomplished and all the hard work that went into it."

Martin credits Miami's success largely to the way his players have responded to adversity though the years.

"Every time these kids have gotten knocked down, they have responded and gotten better," Martin said. "They have taken losses with accountability and thought about what they need to do to improve."

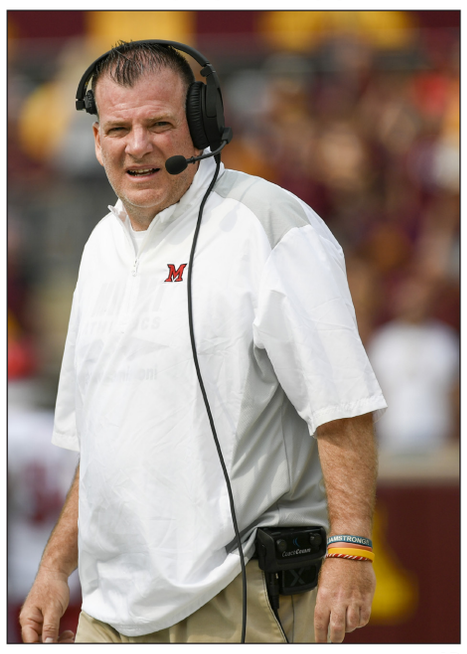
Miami is in a bowl game as a result. They'll look to a small group of sixth-year seniors to guide the way against the Mean Green, just as they have throughout the season.

The challenge is one Sorenson is looking forward to.

"I came in as a freshman wanting to set a legacy and be a part of a team that is remembered," Sorenson said. "This is my last chance to go out with a bowl win, which is something we haven't done. It's a chance to write an awesome conclusion to an awesome story."

BRETT VITO can be reached at 940-566-6870 and via Twitter at @brettvito.

A DRAMATIC TURNAROUND



AP

Miami went 4-26 in coach Chuck Martin's first 30 Mid-American Conference games after he took over the program in 2013. The Redhawks enter the Frisco Football Classic having gone 30-12 in their last 42 conference games. The following is a look at Miami's run.

3

Bowl berths since 2016 for Miami. The RedHawks are set to play in the Frisco Football Classic, the 2019 Lending Tree Bowl and the 2016 St. Petersburg Bowl.

1

MAC championships Miami has won over the last six years. The RedHawks beat Central Michigan in the conference title game 26-21 in 2019.

MIAMI (OHIO) ROSTER

No.	Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
0	Ivan Pace Jr.	LB	6-0	242	So.
1	Jaylon Bester	RB	5-8	172	Sr.
1	Jaymar Mundy	DB	6-1	167	Fr.
2	Cecil Singleton	DB	6-2	196	So.
2	Aveon Smith	QB	6-1	206	Fr.
3	Mike Brown	DB	6-1	222	Sr.
4	Camden Rogers	LB	6-0	215	Fr.
4	Ben Tarpey	QB	6-2	203	Rfr.
5	Brett Gabbert	QB	6-0	209	So.
5	John Saunders Jr.	DB	6-2	202	Fr.
6	Austin Robinson	WR	6-1	187	So.
6	Jacquez Warren	DB	6-0	181	Fr.
8	Luke Bolden	LB	6-2	237	So.
8	Mac Hippenhammer	WR	5-11	182	Jr.
9	Daylan Long	LB	5-11	186	Fr.
9	Tyre Shelton	RB	5-11	184	So.
10	Trevon Booker	DB	6-0	190	Rfr.
10	AJ Mayer	QB	6-3	231	So.
11	David Afari	RB	5-11	195	Fr.
11	Dominique Robinson	DL	6-4	256	Sr.
12	Henry Hesson	QB	6-2	200	Fr.
12	Corban Hondru	LB	6-1	215	Fr.
13	Brett Coleman	DB	6-3	184	Fr.
13	Jack Sorenson	WR	6-0	195	Sr.
14	Jalen Walker	WR	5-8	186	Jr.
15	Matthew Salopek	DB	6-1	215	Rfr.
15	Kamell Smith	QB	6-4	194	Fr.
16	Eli Blakey	DB	6-2	195	Fr.
16	Orin Edwards	QB	6-1	185	Fr.
17	Alec Bornhorst	QB	6-4	227	So.
17	TJ Rush	DB	5-11	167	Fr.
18	Jeremiah Batiste	WR	5-11	182	Fr.
18	Cedric Boswell	DB	5-11	193	Sr.
19	James Burns	WR	5-9	161	So.
19	Ambe' Caldwell	DB	6-1	205	Fr.
20	Mehki Miller	DB	6-1	205	Rfr.
21	Harrison Truitt	WR	6-5	201	Fr.
21	Sterling Weatherford	DB	6-4	215	Sr.
22	Ja'Von Kimpson	DB	5-11	211	Rfr.
22	Jace Williams	WR	6-4	195	Fr.
23	Oscar McWood	LB	6-1	203	Fr.
24	Ja'don Rucker-Furlow	DB	6-2	192	Jr.
24	Darez Snider	RB	5-8	168	Fr.
25	Devon Dorsey	WR	6-2	200	Fr.
26	Kevin Davis	RB	5-9	164	Fr.
26	Jackson Schott	LB	6-3	191	Fr.
27	Dee Pierce	DB	6-0	205	Fr.
28	Keyon Mozee	RB	5-7	182	Fr.
28	Caleb Tubbs	DB	6-1	167	Fr.
29	Ryan Kahn	DB	5-9	160	Fr.
30	Josh Maize	DL	6-3	285	Jr.
31	Dom Dzioban	K/P	6-1	200	Fr.
31	Cam Kirk	DB	5-10	195	Fr.
32	Ed Warinner	LB	6-0	224	Fr.
33	Dominic Nardone	LB	5-11	225	Fr.
33	Kenny Tracy	RB	5-10	212	Fr.
34	Chris Cavalaris	WR	5-10	166	So.
34	CJ Ware IV	DL	6-5	244	Fr.
35	Alec Bevelhimer	K/P	6-3	222	Fr.
35	Ryan McWood	LB	6-2	222	Sr.
36	Jackson Izzard	WR	6-3	195	Fr.
36	Silas Walters	DB	6-0	194	Fr.
37	Scotty Nieman	TE	6-6	213	Fr.
37	Dalton Norris	DL	6-4	250	Fr.
38	Henry Beckett	K	6-0	189	Rfr.
39	Carson Daniels	LB	6-0	220	Rfr.
43	Haakon Van Beynen	TE	6-2	240	Fr.
44	Rhett Williams	TE	6-6	227	Rfr.
45	Nick Walker	DS	6-3	248	Fr.
46	Andrew Homer	TE	6-6	243	Sr.
47	Lonnie Phelps	DL	6-3	244	So.
48	Ryan Newton	DL	6-2	225	Jr.
49	Jacob Snell	DL	6-4	264	Fr.
50	Sam Vaughan	OL	6-7	298	Rfr.
51	Nasir Washington	DL	6-4	256	Fr.
53	Caleb Shaffer	OL	6-5	333	So.
54	Blaine Riley	LB	6-0	224	Fr.
55	Andrew Todd	OL	6-4	295	So.
56	Reid Holskey	OL	6-6	301	Fr.
57	Bennett Clark	OL	6-6	309	So.
58	Jackson Boras	LB	6-0	205	Fr.
59	Kolby Borders	OL	6-6	329	Fr.
60	Rusty Feth	OL	6-5	324	So.
61	Ryan O'Hair	OL	6-8	284	Fr.
63	Evan Azzara	OL	6-6	284	Fr.
64	David Redding	OL	6-4	314	Jr.
65	Pete Nank	OL	6-5	324	Jr.
66	Luke Kirin	OL	6-4	290	Fr.
69	Brody Carper	OL	6-3	303	So.
70	Will Jados	OL	6-8	302	Fr.
72	Ben Jackson	OL	6-7	315	Rfr.
77	Charlie Nank	OL	6-4	311	Fr.
78	Dominic Collado	OL	6-3	322	Fr.
79	Caleb Siech	OL	6-6	322	Fr.
80	Jack DeJarld	TE	6-3	230	Fr.
81	James Besett	WR	6-2	209	Rfr.
82	Kameron Butler	DL	6-3	250	Jr.
83	Angelo Butts	WR	6-0	180	Fr.
84	Derek Paulson	TE	6-4	254	Sr.
85	Matthew Reardon	WR	6-1	190	Fr.
86	Brian Shane	TE	6-3	294	Fr.
87	Ryan Orput	TE	6-4	222	Fr.
88	Nate Muersch	TE	6-5	228	Fr.
89	Jack Coldiron	TE	6-5	238	Rfr.
90	Caiden Woullard	DL	6-5	232	Fr.
91	Marlon Dawson Jr.	DL	6-4	211	Fr.
92	Austin Ertl	DL	6-2	287	So.
93	Kyle Bryant	DL	6-3	261	Rfr.
94	Terran Hearn	DL	6-3	236	Fr.
95	Ben Kimpler	DL	6-6	269	Sr.
96	Kobe Hilton	DL	6-3	297	Rfr.
97	Brendan Beattie	DS	6-0	212	Rfr.
98	Graham Nicholson	K	6-0	176	Fr.
99	Anthony Collier	DL	6-3	276	Rfr.

Coaches/staff

Chuck Martin	Head coach
Eric Koehler	Co-offensive coordinator, QBs
Spence Nowinsky	Co-defensive coordinator, linebackers
John Hauser	Co-DC, cornerbacks
James Patton	Off. line, run game coordinator
Doug Shearer	Special teams coordinator
Bill Brechin	Safeties
Lamar Conard	Running backs
Pat Welsh	Tight ends, recruiting coordinator
E.J. Whitlow	Defensive line
Israel Woolfork	Wide receivers
Israel Woolfork	Wide receiver
Matt Yoches	Director of football operations
Logan Meyer	Director of player personnel

MIAMI (OHIO) TEAM STATISTICS & LEADERS

Team stats

	Miami	Opponents
Points per game	29.1	28.3
First downs	253	241
Rushing		
Rushing yards	1,716	1,808
Rushing touchdowns	14	16
Avg. per game	143.0	150.7
Passing		
Passing yards	3,391	2,665
C-A-I	225-396-8	220-351-7
Touchdowns	30	21
Av. per game	282.6	222.1
Total offense	5,107	4,473
Yards per game	425.6	372.8

Returns

Kickoffs	15.9	20.3
Punts	10.8	8.0
Penalties	38.4	52.7
Time of possession	29:01	30:52
3rd down conv.	61-160	62-165
4th down conv.	9-21	10-19
Fumbles-lost	7-4	14-8
Sacks-yards lost	37-250	17-96

Individual stats

Rushing

Player	Att.	Yards	Avg.	TDs
Keyon Mozee	113	479	4.2	4
Kevin Davis	52	309	5.9	3
Tyre Shelton	54	245	4.5	2
Kenny Tracy	41	213	5.2	2
David Afari	31	151	4.9	0
Brett Gabbert	47	149	3.2	1
AJ Mayer	26	89	3.4	1
Jaylon Bester	13	44	3.4	1

Passing

Player	C-A-I	Yards	TDs
Brett Gabbert	156-286-6	2,418	24
AJ Mayer	68-125-2	946	6

Receiving

Player	Rec.	Yards	Avg.	TDs
Jack Sorenson	69	1,290	18.7	10
Mac Hippenhammer	48	786	16.4	5
Jalen Walker	27	362	13.4	4
Jack Coldiron	16	293	18.3	1
Kevin Davis	18	184	10.2	1
Kenny Tracy	17	155	9.1	1
Andrew Homer	12	151	12.6	5
Nate Muersch	4	70	17.5	3

Tackles

Player	Solo	Assist	Total
Ivan Pace Jr.	57	59	116
Matthew Salopek	69	43	112
Sterling Weatherford	40	27	67
Mike Brown	34	29	63
Cedric Boswell	45	11	56
Kameron Butler	29	20	49
Ben Kimpler	12	18	39
Jacquez Warren	23	15	38
Austin Ertl	11	24	35
Cecil Singleton	19	16	35