



**UA's 1976 Football Team Finishes National Runner-  
Up**

*Ken MacDonald*

The University of Akron's 1976 football season was positively thrilling. Led by twenty-nine lettermen, including linebacker Steve Cockerham, offensive guard Mark Van Horn, split end Glenn Evans, and defensive tackle Al Hodakievic who would all go on to earn All-America honors, the Zips compiled an outstanding 10–3 record against a schedule that had six NCAA I opponents. The ten wins, which included a 3–0 victory at Ball State, the Mid-American Conference champions, are the most in the University's football history. In the Knute Rockne Bowl, the Zips defeated 1975 national champion Northern Michigan,

29–26, at the Rubber Bowl in the first overtime game in NCAA playoff history. According to Jim Dennison, “It was a thrilling season, but it did end with a disappointment.” He was referring to the Zips’ 24–13 loss to Montana State in the Pioneer Bowl in Wichita Falls, Texas for the NCAA II Championship. “The way I look at it,” explained positive-minded Dennison, “we started the season with a loss (23–13 to Temple) and ended with a loss, and in between we had a fine 10–1 season.”