

MEMORIAL STADIUM



Clemson's Memorial Stadium has been held in high esteem for many years. Whether it be players from the 1940s and 1950s, opposing players from the 1970s and 1980s or even professional players in the 1990s, the ambiance of this special setting is what college football is all about.

Clemson has finished in the top 20 in the country in average home attendance for 41 straight seasons. Clemson ranked third in the country and first in the ACC in total attendance in 2020, and led the conference (and finished 13th in the nation) in average attendance in 2021.

The storied edifice added to its legend when the first meeting of father-and-son head coaches (Bowden Bowl

l) took place before a record crowd of 86,092 fans in 1999. The legend was further enhanced in 2021, when the Tigers recorded a perfect 6-0 home record to extend their home winning streak to a school-record and national-best 34 games, the 15th-longest streak in FBS history. Since the advent of the CFP prior to the 2014 season, Clemson is 53-1 at home, the highest home winning percentage in the country.

In 2017, StadiumJourney.com rated Memorial Stadium as having the No. 10 stadium experience in the nation for all sports and No. 1 for college football. The facility's mystique is derived from its many traditions, which date to its opening in the 1942 season, the legendary

games and players and Clemson's corresponding rate of success. Entering 2022, the Tigers have totaled 328 wins in 80 years and have won 75.9 percent of the contests (328-102-7). Visiting defending national champions are 0-3 all-time at Memorial Stadium.

The stadium has definitely been good to the Tigers, but it was constructed against the advice of at least one coach. Before Jess Neely left for Rice after the 1939 season, he gave Clemson a message.

TOP MEMORIAL STADIUM CROWDS

Rk	Attendance	Date	Opponent	W-L	Score
1.	86,092	10-23-99	Florida State	L	14-17
2.	85,872	11-19-94	South Carolina	L	7-33
3.	85,573	11-7-15	Florida State	W	23-13
4.	85,187	11-18-00	South Carolina	W	16-14
5.	85,036	11-3-01	Florida State	L	27-41
6.	85,024	11-29-14	South Carolina	W	35-17
7.	84,892	10-3-15	Notre Dame	W	24-22
8.	84,869	10-20-01	North Carolina	L	3-38
9.	84,867	11-19-88	South Carolina	W	29-10
10.	84,576	9-17-88	Florida State	L	21-24

"Don't ever let them talk you into building a big stadium," he said. "Put about 10,000 seats behind the YMCA. That's all you'll ever need."

Instead of following Neely's advice, Clemson officials decided to build the new stadium in a valley on the western part of campus. The place took some clearing, as there were many trees, but luckily there were no hedges.

The crews went to work, clearing, cutting, pouring and forming. On Sept. 19, 1942, Memorial Stadium opened with Clemson defeating Presbyterian College 32-13. Those 20,000 seats installed for the opener would soon grow.

When the original part of the stadium was built in the early 1940s, much of the work was done by scholarship athletes, including football players. The first staking out of the stadium was done by two members of the football team, A.N. Cameron and Hugh Webb. Webb returned to Clemson years later to be an architecture professor and Cameron went on to become a civil engineer in Louisiana.

The construction of the stadium did not proceed without problems. One afternoon during the clearing of the land, a young player proudly announced that he was not allergic to poison oak. He then proceeded to attack the poison oak with a swing blade, throwing the plants to and fro. The next day, the boy was swollen twice his size and was hospitalized.



MEMORIAL STADIUM

HIGHEST HOME WIN % SINCE 2014

Rk	School	W-L	Win %
1.	Clemson	53-1	.982
2.	Alabama	52-2	.963
3.	Ohio State	48-4	.923
4.	Georgia	43-6	.878
	Oklahoma	43-6	.878

There are many other stories about the stadium, including one that Frank Howard put a chew of tobacco in each corner as the concrete was poured.

Howard said that the seeding of the grass caused a few problems.

“About 40 people and I laid sod on the field,” he said. “After three weeks on July 15, we had only gotten about half-way through.

“I told them that it had taken us three weeks to get that far and I would give them three more weeks’ pay for however long it took to finish. I also told them we would have 50 gallons of ice cream when we got through.

“After that, it took them three days to do the rest of the field. Then we sat down in the middle of the field and ate up that whole 50 gallons.”

Howard said on the day of the first game in the stadium, “The gates were hung at 1 p.m., and we played at 2 p.m.” But that would be all of the construction for a while.

Then in 1958, 18,000 sideline seats were added, and in 1960, 5,658 west endzone seats were added in response to increasing attendance. With the large east endzone (“Green Grass” section), this expansion increased capacity to 53,000.

Later, upper decks were added to each side of the stadium as crowds



swelled, the first in 1978 and the second in 1983. It increased capacity to over 80,000, which makes it one of the largest on-campus stadiums in the country. In 2006, the WestZone was added, an area that contains locker rooms, offices, a student-athlete enrichment center and luxury club level that holds over 1,000 seats.

The effect that inflation has had can be dramatically seen in the differences in stadium construction. The original part of Memorial Stadium was built at a cost of only \$125,000, or \$6.25 per seat. Memorial Stadium’s newest upper

deck was finished in 1983 at a cost of \$13.5 million, or \$866 per seat.

In 2019, the Clemson University Board of Trustees approved stadium plans to improve campus connectivity, enhance fan experience and add new premium seating opportunities. The proposal included a new videoboard measuring 126 feet wide by 57 feet tall (7,166 sq. ft.), or nearly five times the current board’s surface area, as well as a new sound system and LED stadium lighting (renderings included below). Phase I of those renovations were completed in the summer of 2022.

Through the years, Memorial Stadium has become known as “Death Valley” across the country. It was tagged by Presbyterian College Head Coach Lonnie McMillian during the late 1940s. After bringing his teams to Clemson for many years and getting whipped, he said the place was like “Death Valley.” A few years later, the name stuck.

In 1974, the playing surface was named Frank Howard Field for the legendary coach because of his long service and dedication to Clemson University.

Luckily, it wasn’t built behind the YMCA.



RUNNING DOWN THE HILL

What has been described by television commentator Brent Musburger as “the most exciting 25 seconds in college football” from a color and pageantry standpoint actually started out as a matter-of-fact entrance, mainly because of necessity.

The first 20,000 seats in Memorial Stadium were built and ready for use before the 1942 season, less than a year after Pearl Harbor was bombed and the U.S. was drawn into World War II.

The shortest entry into Memorial Stadium was a short walk down Williamson Road from Fike Fieldhouse’s dressing rooms to a gate at the top of the Hill, located behind the east endzone. There were no dressing facilities inside the west endzone...there was only a giant clock, where the hands turned, and a scoreboard that was operated by hand.

Players would dress in Fike Fieldhouse, walk down Williamson Road, enter at the gate underneath where the scoreboard now stands and jog down the Hill for their warmup exercises. There was little fanfare, no cannon shot fired, no Tiger Paw flag and no “Tiger Rag” played...just the team making its entrance and lining up to do the side-straddle hop. That is the way things went for the next 25 years.

In 1964 or 1965, Sam Jones (Clemson class of 1919) made a trip to California. He stopped at a spot in Death Valley, Calif. and picked up a white flint rock. He presented the rock to Head Coach Frank Howard as being from Death Valley, California to Death Valley, South Carolina.

The rock laid on Howard’s office floor in Fike Fieldhouse for months. One day, he was cleaning up his office and told Gene Willimon (IPTAY executive secretary) to “take this rock and throw it over the fence or out in the ditch...do something with it, but get it out of my office!”



Willimon did not think that was the way a rock should be treated. After all, it had been brought over 1,900 miles by a very sincere Tiger fan.

By the mid 1960s, Memorial Stadium was living up to its moniker (“Death Valley”) because of the number of Tiger wins that had been recorded there. Actually, the name was first used by Lonnie McMillan, head coach at Presbyterian during the 1940s.

McMillan and the other Blue Hose coaches before him opened each season by playing at Clemson. Seldom scoring (24 shutouts in 39 games) and with only three wins and four ties, his teams were getting “killed” by the Tigers regularly.

In 1948, McMillan made the remark to the press that he was taking his team to play Clemson in “Death Valley.” An occasional reference to Memorial Stadium by that name could be heard for the next

four years, but when Howard started calling it “Death Valley” in the 1950s, the name took off like wildfire. Clemson celebrated its 80th year in the “Valley” in 2021 with a 6-0 home record and its fifth straight undefeated home campaign.

But getting back to Howard’s Rock. It was mounted on a pedestal at the top of the Hill on the east side of the stadium. It was unveiled Sept. 24, 1966, when Clemson played Virginia. The Tigers trailed by 18 points with 17 minutes left and came back to win 40-35 on a 75-yard pass from Jimmy Addison to Jacky Jackson in the fourth quarter. That was quite a debut for Howard’s Rock.

The team members started rubbing Howard’s Rock prior to running down the Hill on Sept. 23, 1967, a day when Clemson defeated Wake Forest 23-6.

Prior to running down the Hill, Howard told his players, “If you’re going to give

110 percent, you can rub that Rock. If you’re not, keep your filthy hands off it!”

Howard told of the incident the following day on his television show, and the story became legend.

When Hootie Ingram succeeded Howard as head coach in 1970, he made the logical decision that the team would make its final entrance out of the new dressing room in the west endzone.

In all home games in 1970 and 1971 and the first four games of 1972 when the Tigers did not run down the Hill, their combined record was 6-9.

The seniors, led by Ben Anderson, decided to come down the Hill prior to the South Carolina game, the 1972 finale. The result, in a cold, freezing rain, was a 7-6 victory when Jimmy Williamson knocked down a two-point conversion attempt, which preserved the narrow win.

Clemson has made the entrance before every home game since 1942, except for the years mentioned and the first game of 1973 (421 times entering 2022).

After final warmups, the team gathers back in its dressing room under the west endzone stands for its final pregame instructions. Ten minutes prior to kickoff, the team boards three buses, rides around behind the north stands to the east endzone and disembarks to the top of the Hill behind Howard’s Rock.

At the appointed time, the cannon booms, and led by a giant Tiger Paw flag carried by cheerleaders and Rally Cats, the band forms two lines for the team to run between and strikes up “Tiger Rag.” The frenzy starts in all sincerity and usually lasts three hours.

It is a tradition that has inspired Clemson players for many years. USA Today agreed, as it rated it the best entrance in the nation in 2017.

YEAR-BY-YEAR ATTENDANCE

Year	Overall Games	Overall Attendance	Avg. Overall Attendance	Home Games	Home Attendance	Avg. Home Attendance	National Ranking
1960	10	247,780	24,778	5	141,080	28,286	---
1961	10	310,000	31,000	5	132,000	26,400	---
1962	10	291,640	29,164	5	158,000	31,600	---
1963	10	318,587	31,859	4	103,496	25,874	---
1964	10	260,725	26,073	4	112,000	28,000	---
1965	10	333,736	33,374	4	113,000	28,250	---
1966	10	355,286	35,529	4	146,237	36,559	---
1967	10	389,618	38,962	5	206,275	41,255	---
1968	10	386,432	38,643	4	147,434	36,859	---
1969	10	339,936	33,994	4	136,252	34,063	---
1970	11	367,347	33,395	6	205,376	34,229	---
1971	11	398,222	36,200	5	154,741	30,948	---
1972	11	398,732	36,248	5	192,456	38,491	---
1973	11	411,477	37,407	6	188,500	31,417	---
1974	11	440,384	40,034	6	251,424	41,904	---
1975	11	487,436	44,312	5	195,873	39,174	---
1976	11	459,845	41,804	5	221,486	44,297	---
1977	12	580,067	48,339	5	235,152	47,030	---
1978	12	599,793	49,983	6	321,763	53,627	---
1979	12	641,109	53,426	6	353,576	58,929	---
1980	11	567,436	51,585	6	369,770	61,628	---
1981	12	683,871	56,989	6	371,152	61,859	20
1982	11	592,902	53,900	6	380,679	63,446	18
1983	11	701,937	63,812	7	521,898	74,557	10
1984	11	750,847	68,259	6	467,670	77,945	8
1985	12	749,282	62,440	6	460,413	76,736	6
1986	12	765,771	63,814	5	393,500	78,700	6
1987	12	825,836	68,820	8	602,526	75,316	10
1988	12	758,727	63,227	6	490,502	81,750	5
1989	12	759,468	63,289	6	473,566	78,927	7
1990	12	717,293	59,774	6	475,174	79,196	7
1991	12	839,423	69,952	7	534,597	76,371	10
1992	11	805,150	73,195	6	460,732	76,789	7
1993	12	749,349	62,446	7	467,914	66,845	15
1994	11	698,782	63,526	6	422,633	70,439	14
1995	12	701,512	58,459	6	427,782	71,297	15
1996	12	690,889	57,574	6	403,393	67,232	18
1997	12	718,786	59,899	6	409,918	68,320	19
1998	11	687,782	62,526	7	478,192	68,313	20
1999	12	750,332	62,528	5	391,510	78,302	13
2000	12	832,469	69,373	7	548,647	78,378	15
2001	12	736,364	61,364	6	480,911	80,152	15
2002	13	842,318	64,794	7	542,675	77,525	17
2003	13	885,840	68,142	7	532,551	76,079	19
2004	11	769,814	69,983	6	472,939	78,823	17
2005	12	779,519	64,960	6	469,391	78,232	18
2006	13	898,975	69,152	7	570,542	81,506	14
2007	13	909,108	69,931	7	569,342	81,335	16
2008	13	896,367	68,951	7	554,145	79,164	18
2009	14	925,267	66,091	7	530,553	75,793	17
2010	13	872,001	67,077	7	542,280	77,469	18
2011	14	997,796	71,271	7	545,713	77,959	17
2012	13	899,651	69,204	7	569,988	81,427	15
2013	13	932,224	71,710	7	574,333	82,048	15
2014	13	907,657	69,820	7	572,262	81,752	15
2015	15	1,082,512	72,167	7	588,266	84,038	14
2016	15	1,058,626	70,575	7	566,787	80,970	14
2017	14	1,016,347	72,596	7	565,412	80,773	14
2018	15	1,077,480	71,832	7	562,799	80,400	14
2019	15	1,071,328	71,422	7	566,074	80,868	14
2020	12	142,936	11,911	6	112,367	18,728	7
2021	13	796,085	61,237	6	476,935	79,489	13