As college football celebrates its sesquicentennial (150th!) season in 2019, The NATIONAL FOOTBALL FOUNDATION (NFF) & COLLEGE HALL OF FAME have worked to create a jam-packed calendar of activities to pay homage to the sport and its legacy: creating educational opportunities, building leaders and enriching communities. Take a look through some of the organizations that are sharing in the celebration of this historic milestone throughout the season.

HOW ATLANTA BECAME THE CAPITAL OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Atlanta’s reputation as being the capital of college football is well established. But why is it? And how did it happen? Part of the answer is obvious, and part not so obvious.

THE OBVIOUS.

In no other city is college football so integrated into its culture like it is in Atlanta. College football lives here. Its heart beats here. And its hard-core fans live here.

Atlanta is a city of transplants. That’s why the majority of the SEC and ACC teams’ biggest alumni bases live in Atlanta. And it has a lot of Big Ten, Big 12 and other fans too. The metro Atlanta area is host to three FBS teams in Georgia, Georgia Tech and Georgia State and FCS power Kennesaw State. The state of Georgia itself is the fourth most-fertile recruiting ground in the nation in terms of putting football talent on Division One rosters.

From high-caliber matchups to open the season at the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game, to decades of classic Chick-fil-A Peach Bowls, memorable SEC Championship Game showdowns, and the top annual HBCU game of the year, Atlanta hosts some of the sport’s biggest games every year.

Last season alone saw three sold-out top-10 matchups including the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game in September (No. 6 Washington vs. No. 9 Auburn), the SEC Championship Game in December (No. 4 Georgia vs. No. 1 Alabama) and the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl (No. 10 Florida vs. No. 7 Michigan).

“Last year, three of the top six events in Atlanta were college football games. And that’s in the fourth-largest convention city in the country,” said Peach Bowl, Inc. CEO and President Gary Stokan. “As a result, Florida defeated Michigan 41-15 in a battle of top-10 teams in the 2018 Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl.
Atlanta saw an unprecedented economic boost and national exposure from those games."

THE NOT SO OBVIOUS.

Much of the behind-the-scenes heavy lifting that put Atlanta in this position can be traced back to Peach Bowl, Inc. — the organization that runs the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl and Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game.

Aside from the games themselves, Atlanta — as you would expect from the capital of college football — is home to the sport’s national shrine, the College Football Hall of Fame. Few are aware, though, that it was Stokan and Peach Bowl, Inc. behind the Hall’s relocation.

It was another long-term plan, starting some 10 years earlier, to convince the National Football Foundation that Atlanta should be the Hall’s permanent home. Stokan’s premise was simple. If Atlanta was going to become the college football capital, it had to be the home of the College Football Hall of Fame.

His vision became reality in 2014 when the new facility opened. Now, the sport of college football has a gleaming new state-of-the-art attraction — right in the heart of its capital city.

"Bringing the Hall to Atlanta was a big part of our plan, but it couldn’t have happened without the support of our local business community," Stokan said. "That’s another critical part of this equation. The business leaders here just get it. There is major corporate support for college football in Atlanta with companies like Chick-fil-A, Home Depot, Coca-Cola, Aflac, NAPA and Mercedes-Benz."

That strategic vision continued in 2008 when Peach Bowl, Inc created the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game. The idea was simple: create a “bowl game” at the start of the season that matches top-tier teams in week one. The result has been 12 straight years of marquee matchups and a host of other cities copying what Peach Bowl, Inc. did first.

"The model for this game really took off and it works," Stokan said. "In the CFP era, the Selection Committee protocol rewards teams that schedule high quality opponents. It’s a critical point of differentiation for the teams, win or lose, and the fans love these big-time games."

Making Atlanta the capital of college football was a strategic vision. "We had a plan," Stokan said. "It focused on the long term growth plan for the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl that ended with an invitation to join the elite group of New Year’s Six bowls that host the College Football Playoff."

That elevation delivered a rotation for hosting a College Football Playoff Semifinal and created the path to host the National Championship in Atlanta in 2018.

Atlanta’s claim as the capital of college football is well made, but its architect is still at work.

"Getting here was a great challenge, but we’re not done yet. We’ve got to keep challenging and reinventing ourselves. There is still a lot to do," Stokan said. "Starting with next year when we will host three Chick-fil-A Kickoff Games in a week. That’s never been done before in college football history … until we do it."
Learfield IMG College unlocks the value of college sports for brands through an omnichannel platform. The company’s extensive, data-driven content and commerce solutions create unique opportunities for brands to engage with fans.

“As we celebrate 150 years of college football, we’re proud to provide brands a fully integrated platform to reach a large and loyal collegiate sports audience,” said Learfield IMG College President & CEO Greg Brown. “We deliver turnkey marketing solutions for brands of every size, allowing them to customize their message to a single school or across hundreds of iconic athletic programs nationwide.”

Learfield IMG College is a leading content and commerce solutions provider for collegiate athletic departments. The company’s suite of services includes access to licensing and multimedia sponsorship management, publishing, broadcasting, digital and social media; fan engagement, ticketing, ticket sales and professional concessions expertise; branding; campus-wide business and sponsorship development; and venue technology systems.

Learfield IMG College is a strong advocate for intercollegiate athletics and the student-athlete experience. Since 2008, the company has served as title sponsor for the acclaimed Learfield IMG College Directors’ Cup, supporting athletic departments across all divisions year round.

PROUD TO CELEBRATE COLLEGE FOOTBALL AND OUR DESIGN OF THE CFB150 LOGO

Learfield IMG College
SMEO
AMERICAN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE: CELEBRATING HISTORY; CREATING NEW TRADITIONS

In celebrating 150 years of college football, the American Athletic Conference, which was established in 2013, has 12 football-playing schools that have combined for 1,207 seasons. Led by Navy, which has fielded a team for 140 years, the AAC has seven schools that have played for more than 100 years. Its two “rookie” programs hail from Florida, with UCF fielding a team for 40 years and USF for 22.

“We represent something unique in college football, a conference that’s been reinvented from the era of realignment, and has quickly become nationally relevant,” said Mike Aresco, commissioner of the American Athletic Conference.

With a 2019 non-conference record of 33-13, the AAC is ranked fourth among all conferences with a winning percentage of .717, just behind the SEC at .738. The conference also boasts a mark of 27-1 against teams outside the power conferences. At the beginning of November, the AAC had four top 25 teams in the AP, Coaches’ and computer polls – SMU, Cincinnati, Memphis and Navy. UCF also received votes.

“We’re stronger and deeper, top to bottom, than we’ve ever been,” said Aresco. “We have as many as 10 teams that could likely defeat each other on any given day.”

Although classified in the Group of Five, the AAC, through its P6 campaign, has been striving to be one of the power conferences. Its schools regularly compete against the nation’s top programs, including Auburn, Georgia, UCLA, Florida State, Maryland, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Ohio State, Oklahoma, Ole Miss, Stanford, TCU and Wisconsin, among many other Autonomy 5 programs.

“Our conference is built on a foundation of achievement and we want to be even more competitive,” said Aresco. “We’re starting to show that we have the same kind of depth as the other P6 conferences.”

Coinciding with its goal to be recognized as a P6 conference, the AAC is striving to secure a contract bowl slot in the New Year’s Six. “When the CFP deal is renegotiated, we’ll press hard for a contract bowl,” said Aresco. “We’ve been in four New Year’s Six games since 2013 and have won three of those games. We should have a guaranteed slot like the other P6 conferences; we’ve earned it.”

Starting in 2020, the AAC is guaranteed seven bowl appearances in each year of the six-year bowl cycle that runs through 2025. This includes facing ACC opponents in the Military Bowl presented by Northrop Grumman and the new Fenway Bowl. The AAC could face Autonomy 5 conference opponents in alternate years at the Lockheed Martin Armed Forces Bowl and every year in the Jared Bingham Bowl and the Bad Boy Mowers Gasparilla Bowl.

“We want to play as many other P6 teams in bowl games as possible,” said Aresco. “We’re also working with ESPN to be placed in bowls that match our geography.”

While we enthusiastically celebrate the history of college football, the American Athletic Conference is creating new traditions,” said Aresco. “Schools in our conference that once did not have as big a presence or profile have emerged and now have a major impact on the college football landscape. We have more linear television coverage and more opportunities for exposure than ever before.”

Since its founding, the AAC has had a media deal with ESPN. This year, the conference secured a new 12-year deal with ESPN worth more than four times the previous one. With the new deal, which begins with the 2020-21 season, the network will broadcast at least 40 regular season football games per season, with at least 20 on ABC, ESPN or ESPN2. The conference’s championship game will regularly air on either ABC or ESPN.

“We’ve been fortunate with ESPN,” said Aresco. “That outstanding relationship has given us the kind of exposure that wasn’t available 30 or 40 years ago and has expedited our league’s progress. This will be the fifth consecutive year we’ll have had our championship game on ABC.”

Next year, the conference opens the season in August during week 0 with Navy playing Notre Dame in Ireland. ESPN will broadcast “College GameDay” from Ireland, making the first time in the show’s 32-year history it has gone outside the country. This year, “GameDay” was on location in Memphis for the undefeated SMU/Memphis game, and last year, a No. 14 Houston’s resounding 30-24 win over No. 9 Florida State in the 2015 Peach Bowl was a milestone achievement for the Cougars and the conference.

AMERICAN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

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AMERICAN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE
On November 6, 1869, Princeton and Rutgers played the first ever game of college football — in front of 100 spectators. We’re not sure if this was a ticketed event; Ticketmaster wasn’t around quite yet. But 150 years later, if you want to attend a college football game, you need tickets. And with College Football Bowl season fast approaching, we know fans are looking for the best seats at the best prices — as safely and easily as possible.

Ahead of the playoffs, we sat down with Tim Martin, SVP & GM of College Sports, to shed some light on how Ticketmaster is changing the game.

Q: In what areas do you see the biggest opportunity for Ticketmaster to improve the ticketing experience at the college level?

As the official ticketing partner to so many amazing schools and dozens of Bowl games, we ask ourselves this daily. Our ongoing efforts to combat fraud and reinforce ticketing safety speak to our commitment to revolutionize the industry so schools can create the best live experiences possible for their fans.

Our launch of SafeTix, for example, gives event owners control over their tickets by tying a unique, digital ticket to every fan’s phone equipped with a rotating barcode that changes every 15 seconds. With this latest enhancement to our Ticketmaster Presence tech, we’ve been successful at preventing the replication and sale of fake tickets. So, in a nutshell, SafeTix has managed to completely eliminate fraud.

And for fans, SafeTix will let you easily transfer tickets to a friend — by sending it over to them through text or email. Something came up and you can’t make the game? We’ve made it simpler than ever to sell your tickets on the world’s largest marketplace in just quick two taps.

Q: What type of innovation can we expect to see next?

Our Ticketmaster Presence technology that we started rolling out to venues a couple of years ago has such incredible potential to completely change the way we experience live events. Now in nearly 700 venues, we’ve only just beginning to unlock all that’s possible for our clients and fans.

At its most basic level, Ticketmaster Presence is our next generation venue access control and fan engagement platform. It makes the entire ticket buying process easy, convenient, and safe for fans and event owners.

For venue access, we’ve implemented a “top and go” entry system. It speeds everything along, and also gives us insight into not just who buys a ticket, but who’s sitting in the seat. This true fan identity leads to increased event security, solving core problems that have plagued the industry for decades.

For games, each time a ticket is transferred or sold, a new digital ticket is tied to the recipient’s account and phone, giving owners visibility into the chain of custody of every ticket.

And because we always have fans in mind, we’ve built incredibly fan-centric personalization opportunities within the Presence platform that they’ll be able to enjoy at scale. Fans could choose to save their food and drink preferences and have anything they want delivered to their seats at the push of a button. It can also direct fans to quicker entry and exit routes, the nearest bathrooms with the shortest lines, you name it. The possibilities are endless.

Q: How can I buy tickets for Bowl games this season?

Ticketmaster is the official ticketing partner for the majority of Bowl games this year. We’re wholly dedicated to college athletics, and as a part of that, we’re always innovating to continue providing the safest and easiest ticket buying experiences for fans everywhere.

Q: How does Ticketmaster stand out among its competitors in the category?

As the global leader in cutting-edge ticketing technology, we’re leading the way in revolutionizing the industry and the gameday experience. We know that buying tickets can be a hassle — we stand out because of how easy we’ve made it.

For example, take a look at our recent integration with Apple to roll out NFC at scale. We introduced Apple Pay in the iOS version of the Ticketmaster App, which lets you buy tickets with a single touch. You no longer need to fill out your account forms manually. Just a touch, and a ticket is yours, delivered safely using Apple Pay and Touch ID, which you can then save to your digital wallet.

Why do we do all this? Because we’re college football fans too. We understand that getting tickets should be as easy as calling a rideshare. And that’s what we’ve done.

Q: How can fans know the tickets they’re buying are real?

As we gear up for what is sure to be an exciting college football playoffs season, we want to remind fans to buy game tickets only from official sources to guarantee that their tickets are 100% real. With such high stakes games, fans face an even greater risk of purchasing fraudulent tickets from unofficial sources.

Imagine showing up to a bowl game only to be denied entry because you bought fraudulent tickets. We’ve seen this happen to too many fans and we know how much it hurts. Live only happens once — so make sure you’re doing it right.

In 150 years of college football, getting tickets has never been easier or safer. Simply go to Ticketmaster.com or the Ticketmaster mobile app for more info.

Q: So you’re a College Football fan? Who’s your pick to win the College Football Playoff?

That’s like asking me to pick my favorite child (and I’m a new dad)! CFP is always a guaranteed great time and one of the best live game experiences on the planet. I can’t wait to see which two teams make it.
Bring It Home!

We’re proud to be the official marketplace of the College Football Playoff. Congratulations on 150 years of postseason excitement and best of luck to all our partners — and the student athletes who make it happen on the field.
CHICK-FIL-A COLLEGE FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

THE HOME OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL

The College Football Hall of Fame has been celebrating the greatest players and coaches of the game since the first Hall of Fame Class was inducted in 1966. As the sport turns 150, the Chick-fil-A College Football Hall of Fame, a non-profit organization, lives the mission to educate, entertain and inspire by engaging fans to honor the people, traditions and passion of college football.

“The moment fans walk in our building, they can customize their experience around their favorite team.”

DENNIS ADAMOVICH
CEO | Chick-fil-A College Football Hall of Fame

Working with the College Football 150th Anniversary committee, the Hall spent more than a year planning and programming partnerships and unique events for visitors, including broadcast content in partnership with ESPN and Turner Classic Movies and a specialty exhibit showcasing each ESPN and Turner Classic Movies and a broadcast content in partnership with unique events for visitors, including broadcast content in partnership with ESPN and Turner Classic Movies and a specialty exhibit showcasing each ESPN and Turner Classic Movies and a broadcast content in partnership with exclusive interviews with Hall of Famers. In addition to the CFB150 specialty exhibit, the Hall has a limited-time display of General Douglas MacArthur’s Desk, on loan from the Waldorf Astoria in New York City, to celebrate his contributions to the Hall and the game. The Hall team is wearing the same commemorative patches on their uniforms as those worn by the players on the field. To celebrate the actual anniversary on November 6, the Hall partnered with Coca-Cola, the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl and the ESPN College Football Awards Show. Built by The Home Depot, to award four lucky fans tickets to the Awards Show, which airs live from the Hall on December 12, 2019, and one grand prize winner with tickets to the Peach Bowl, a CFP Semifinal Game, on December 28.

“As the home of college football, we have the largest repository of 150 years of college football,” says Chick-fil-A College Football Hall of Fame CEO Dennis Adamovich. “With this milestone anniversary of the game, it’s been a great opportunity to share some of the rare artifacts and exclusive, immersive attractions we have here at the Hall and provide an ideal backdrop for 150 years of amazing stories. We’re also incredibly excited to host The ESPN College Football Awards Show for the 5th time and the ESPN College Football Awards Show, Built by The Home Depot, to award four lucky fans tickets to the College Football Awards Show, which airs live from the Hall on December 12, 2019, and one grand prize winner with tickets to the Peach Bowl, a CFP Semifinal Game, on December 28.

“The moment fans walk in our building, they can customize their experience around their favorite team.”

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CEO | Chick-fil-A College Football Hall of Fame

“The moment fans walk in our building, they can customize their experience around their favorite team.”

DENNIS ADAMOVICH
CEO | Chick-fil-A College Football Hall of Fame

From avid college football fans to occasional game-goers alike, there is something for everyone at the Hall. Fans of all ages delight in the only Fan’s Mecca that captures all the traditions, stories and iconic figures of 150 years of Saturdays: The Chick-fil-A College Football Hall of Fame.

A COLLEGE FOOTBALL FAN’S MECCA

The Hall of Fame was established in 1951 by the National Football Foundation, and the first brick and mortar Hall was built in 1978 in Kings Mills, Ohio. Historical pieces began flooding in, and the Hall grew to a larger venue in South Bend, Indiana in 1992. In 2014, the Hall moved to its new home in Atlanta, the capital of college football. The unique experience features more than 95,000 square feet of all things college football, including over 50 interactive and historical exhibits, 50,000 square feet of event space and a 45-yard indoor playing field. The cutting-edge blend of technology and the historical collection, dating back more than 145 years, allows the Hall to bring to life the stories of the game. Perhaps the most unusual piece is a box of dirt from the field where the first college football game was played 150 years ago — Rutgers vs. Princeton on November 6, 1869.

“The Hall is a fully personalized experience,” says Adamovich. “The moment fans walk in our building, they can customize their experience around their favorite team. For fans steeped in the history of the game, they’ll delight in the vast collection of the game’s most prized trophies and an in-depth look into the rivalries that have shaped the game for the past 150 years. Guests are also treated to augmented reality displays that share stats, photos and video highlights from their favorite players and coaches. It truly takes the Hall of Fame experience to a whole new level.”

From avid college football fans to occasional game-goers alike, there is something for everyone at the Hall. Fans of all ages delight in the only Fan’s Mecca that captures all the traditions, stories and iconic figures of 150 years of Saturdays: The Chick-fil-A College Football Hall of Fame.

The Chick-fil-A College Football Hall of Fame features a one of a kind Penley painting and a three-story helmet wall with helmets from 775 schools.
THE HOME OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL

There's only one home for the traditions, stories and iconic figures of 150 years of Saturdays: The Chick-fil-A College Football Hall of Fame.

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