

# 1981 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON



## NOTES

- Clemson won its first national title in any sport and the first for the ACC in football in 28 years.
- Clemson had five different players earn All-America honors, at the time more than any other Tiger team in history.
- There was no controversy concerning the voting of the National Champion in 1981. Clemson ended the season as the only undefeated, untied team and was the only team with three top-10 wins.
- Head Coach Danny Ford (age 33 at the time) remains the youngest head coach in history to win the National Championship.
- Clemson forced 41 turnovers in the 12 games, still a school record for turnovers forced in a season.
- During one stretch in the season, the Clemson defense held the opposition without a touchdown for 18 consecutive quarters and no opponent scored a rushing touchdown against Clemson during the first seven games of the season.
- Clemson won the national title in 1981 after going 6-5 the previous year. The Tigers were unranked in every preseason poll.
- Clemson's victory improvement of 5.5 games from the 1980 season to the 1981 season was the largest improvement in the nation.
- Only one team (Wofford) had more time of possession in a game against Clemson all season.
- Clemson had the lead at the end of the first quarter in only four of the 12 games.
- Clemson scored 316 points during the regular season of 1981, the exact same total Georgia scored during its

## 1981 TIGERS IN THE NFL

Player	Pro		S.B.	Draft	NFL
	Pos.	Bowls	Champ.	Round	Years
Cliff Austin	TB	---	---	3	5
Dan Benish	DT	---	1	FA	6
Jeff Bryant	DT	---	---	1	12
Brian Clark	OT	---	---	12	1
Kenny Danforth	SS	---	---	FA	1
Billy Davis	DB	---	---	FA	1
Jeff Davis	LB	---	---	5	6
Ty Davis	DB	---	1	3	3
K.D. Dunn	TE	---	---	5	3
Dale Hatcher	P	1	---	3	7
Andy Headen	OLB	---	1	8	6
Donald Igwebuike	PK	---	---	10	6
Homer Jordan	QB	---	---	FA	1
Terry Kinard	FS	1	1	1	8
Kevin Mack	FB	2	---	1	9
Jeff McCall	FB	---	1	7	1
Chuck McSwain	RB	---	---	5	3
Rod McSwain	DB	---	---	3	7
William Perry	MG	---	1	1	10
Reggie Pleasant	DB	---	---	6	2
Johnny Rember	OLB	1	---	4	10
Perry Tuttle	WR	---	---	1	3

## FINAL 1981 AP POLL

Rk	Team	Head Coach	W-L
1.	Clemson	* Danny Ford	12-0
2.	Texas	Fred Akers	10-1-1
3.	Penn State	* Joe Paterno	10-2
4.	Pittsburgh	Jackie Sherrill	11-1
5.	Southern Methodist	Ron Meyer	10-1
6.	Georgia	* Vince Dooley	10-2
7.	Alabama	* Bear Bryant	9-2-1
8.	Miami (Fla.)	Howard Schnellenberger	9-2
9.	North Carolina	Dick Crum	10-2
10.	Washington	* Don James	10-2
11.	Nebraska	* Tom Osborne	9-3
12.	Michigan	* Bo Schembechler	9-3
13.	Brigham Young	* LaVell Edwards	11-2
14.	Southern California	* John Robinson	9-3
15.	Ohio State	* Earle Bruce	9-3
16.	Arizona State	Darryl Rogers	9-2
17.	West Virginia	* Don Nehlen	9-3
18.	Iowa	* Hayden Fry	8-4
19.	Missouri	Warren Powers	8-4
20.	Oklahoma	* Barry Switzer	7-4-1

\* - in College Football Hall of Fame

11-game regular season of 1980, the year the Bulldogs won the National Championship.

- Good health was a big reason for Clemson's success in the 1981 season. Only five different starters missed any games during the entire season and no player missed more than two games all year. A collective total of only eight games were missed by five starters during the 1981 season.
- No opponent had a run longer than 26 yards and no opponent had a play over 30 yards. The longest touchdown play against Clemson was 25 yards, on a halfback option pass from Mike Rozier to Anthony Steels (Nebraska) in the Orange Bowl.
- During offseason conditioning in the summer of 1981, Strength Coach George Dostal constructed a simple sign for his strength training facility... "1982 Orange Bowl, Clemson vs. Nebraska."
- The Clemson senior student who was in charge of pep rallies in 1981 was former CBS This Morning anchor Jane Robelot.
- The day after Clemson won at North Carolina, placekicker Donald Igwebuike flew to Maryland, where Clemson's No. 3 soccer team beat Maryland 4-0 to clinch the ACC title. Igwebuike played on two ACC title teams that fall, both of which finished in the top 10 in the nation.

## RECORDS SET IN 1981 THAT STAND TODAY

- Points vs. ACC opponent (82 vs. Wake Forest, 10/31)
- Rushing yards in the modern era (536 vs. Wake Forest, 10/31)
- Third-down conversion percentage in a game (100.0 (12-12) vs. Wake Forest, 10/31)
- Turnovers forced in a game (9 vs. Georgia, 9/19)

- Wins over top-10 teams in a season (3)
- Turnovers forced in a season (41)

## TEAM HONORS & AWARDS

- AP National Champion
- UPI National Champion
- Sporting News National Champion
- Sports Illustrated National Champion
- Football Writers Association National Champion
- Football Coaches Association National Champion
- Washington Touchdown Club National Champion
- Chicago Tribune Fans National Champion
- Orange Bowl Champion
- ACC Champion
- Nation's most improved team (+5.5 games)
- Second in the nation in rushing defense
- Seventh in the nation in scoring defense
- Seventh in the nation in turnover margin
- Eighth in the nation in total defense

## HEAD COACH DANNY FORD

- Football Writers Association National Coach-of-the-Year
- UPI National Coach-of-the-Year
- American Football Coaches Association National Coach-of-the-Year
- WTBS National Coach-of-the-Year
- Washington Touchdown Club National Coach-of-the-Year
- ACC Coach-of-the-Year

## ALL-AMERICANS

- Jeff Bryant - 2nd (Football News)
- Jeff Davis - 1st (Football News, FWA, Kodak, UPI), 2nd (AP)
- Terry Kinard - 1st (AP, FWA, NEA, WTBS)
- Lee Nanney - 2nd (UPI)
- Perry Tuttle - 1st (NEA, Sporting News), 2nd (Football News)



# 2016 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON



## NOTES

- National champions for the second time in school history, including the first time since 1981.
- The Tigers finished with a 14-1 record after defeating previously-undefeated and top-ranked Alabama 35-31 in the CFP National Championship Game on Jan. 9. Clemson's 14 wins tied the FBS record for victories in a season. It was the second year both Alabama and Clemson finished with 14-1 records.
- Clemson won the national championship while playing the nation's most difficult schedule according to the NCAA. Tiger opponents were 107-51 (.677) when not playing Clemson.
- Clemson was just the sixth national champion (since 1977) to have played the nation's most difficult schedule the season it won the title.
- Clemson defeated 11 FBS schools that finished the season with a winning record, including five that totaled 10+ wins and six who finished in the top 25 of the AP poll. Those schools were No. 2 Alabama, No. 6 Ohio State, No. 8 Florida State, No. 16 Virginia Tech, No. 21 Louisville and No. 24 Auburn. The six wins over teams that finished in the AP top 25 were the most in school history.
- For the sixth straight year, Clemson finished at least the same in its final poll as its preseason ranking by AP. Clemson was No. 2 in the preseason AP and coaches polls, then finished No. 1.
- Clemson beat top-ranked Alabama to win the national title, the first time Clemson defeated the No. 1 team. In the CFP semifinal, Clemson defeated No. 2 Ohio State 31-0. It marked the first time Clemson beat a No. 2 ranked team. Clemson was 0-9 in history when playing teams ranked in the top two, then defeated both in consecutive games just nine days apart.
- Clemson defeated No. 3 Louisville earlier in the season, giving Clemson wins over the No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 teams.
- Clemson was never ranked No. 1 until the final poll and had to defeat a team (Alabama) that had been ranked No. 1 in every poll entering the playoff. It marked the first time a team defeated an opponent in the championship game who had been No. 1 in every poll since 2006, when Florida defeated Ohio State to win the national championship. It also happened in 2005, when Texas defeated Southern California, and in 1983, when Miami (Fla.) defeated Nebraska.
- Clemson was the first non-SEC team to beat Auburn and Alabama in the same year since 1990, when Southern Mississippi achieved the distinction.
- Clemson had a 3-0 record against SEC teams, the first time the Tigers defeated three SEC teams in one season.
- Clemson defeated Auburn, Florida State, Ohio State and Alabama, the programs that had combined to win each of the previous seven national championships.

## FINAL 2016 AP POLL

Rk	Team	W-L	Points	Head Coach
1.	Clemson	14-1	1500	Dabo Swinney
2.	Alabama	14-1	1440	Nick Saban
3.	Southern California	10-3	1292	Clay Helton
4.	Washington	12-2	1277	Chris Petersen
5.	Oklahoma	11-2	1252	Bob Stoops
6.	Ohio State	11-2	1240	Urban Meyer
7.	Penn State	11-3	1130	James Franklin
8.	Florida State	10-3	1105	Jimbo Fisher
9.	Wisconsin	11-3	1032	Paul Chryst
10.	Michigan	10-3	1001	Jim Harbaugh
11.	Oklahoma State	10-3	920	Mike Gundy
12.	Stanford	10-3	730	David Shaw
13.	Louisiana State	8-4	651	Ed Orgeron
14.	Florida	9-4	640	Jim McElwain
15.	Western Michigan	13-1	619	P.J. Fleck
16.	Virginia Tech	10-4	610	Justin Fuente
17.	Colorado	10-4	585	Mike MacIntyre
18.	West Virginia	10-3	368	Dana Holgerson
19.	South Florida	11-2	358	Willie Taggart
20.	Miami (Fla.)	9-4	338	Mark Richt
21.	Louisville	9-4	277	Bobby Petrino
22.	Tennessee	9-4	253	Butch Jones
23.	Utah	9-4	222	Kyle Whittingham
24.	Auburn	8-5	206	Gus Malzahn
25.	San Diego State	11-3	113	Rocky Long

- Clemson's 49-point win over South Carolina was the largest margin of victory by an ACC team over an SEC team in history. It was Clemson's third straight win over its rival.
- Clemson won the ACC championship for the second consecutive year, the first time in 28 years the Tigers won back-to-back league titles.
- The Tigers defeated a school-record five top-25 teams, including three top-three teams for the first time. Clemson finished the season with three straight wins over top-25 teams, the second time the program did that.
- Clemson joined Alabama as the only schools to advance to the College Football Playoff in consecutive years.
- Clemson had nine First-Team All-ACC players, the most for the program since 1991.
- Sixteen of Clemson's starting 22 made an All-ACC team. Clemson had five more All-ACC selections than any other team.
- Seven different players were named first, second or third-team All-American, most in school history.
- Clemson showed an ability to win close games. The Tigers were 7-1 in games decided by seven points or less, establishing a school mark for wins by seven points or less in a season.
- The Tigers posted an 8-0 record away from home, the school's best mark for wins away from home in a season. Clemson had a 5-0 record on the opponents' home fields.

- Clemson opened the season with a win at Auburn, Clemson's first win there since 1950. It was first time Clemson opened the season with a road win over a current SEC team since 1903.
- Clemson left a game at Georgia Tech with a perfect record for the first time since 1903. Clemson had lost 11 straight when entering a game at Georgia Tech unbeaten.
- Clemson opened the season ranked No. 2 in the AP poll, its highest preseason ranking in school history.
- Clemson defeated Florida State in Tallahassee, just the second win for the program at Florida State since 1989.
- Clemson was honored for its graduation success rate of over 90 percent by AFCA.
- Clemson Defeated Alabama for the first time since 1905.
- Dabo Swinney became the first head coach to win the national championship by defeating his alma mater.
- Dabo Swinney joined Bud Wilkinson as the only people to play on and serve as head coach of an AP national champion.
- Dabo Swinney won the Bear Bryant National Coach-of-the-Year Award, the first coach to win it in consecutive years.
- Clemson ended Alabama's 26-game winning streak, the longest winning streak Clemson has ended in its history. The 26-game streak was the third longest in SEC history and longest since the Crimson Tide had a 28-game winning streak from 1978-80.
- Clemson trailed 24-14 entering the fourth quarter. Nick Saban had been 97-0 with a 10-point lead in the fourth quarter.
- Nick Saban was 5-0 in national championship games and 12-1 in national or league championship games prior to the contest.
- Clemson ended Alabama's FBS record-tying 16-game winning streak against AP top-25 opponents.
- Nick Saban was 106-6 when leading at halftime at Alabama. Clemson overcame a 14-7 halftime deficit.

## ALL-AMERICANS

- **Ben Boulware** - 2nd (AFCA, FWAA, USA Today, Walter Camp), 3rd (AP)
- **Jordan Leggett** - 2nd (AFCA, CBS)
- **Cordrea Tankersley** - 1st (USA Today), 3rd (AP)
- **Carlos Watkins** - 1st (CBS), 2nd (AP)
- **Deshawn Watson** - 2nd (AFCA, AP, Sporting News, Sports Illustrated, Walter Camp)
- **Christian Wilkins** - 1st (AFCA, FWAA), 2nd (Sporting News, Walter Camp), 3rd (AP)
- **Mike Williams** - 2nd (Phil Steele, Walter Camp)



# 2018 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON



## NOTES

- Clemson won its third football national championship in school history, joining the 1981 and 2016 squads. It marked the sixth national championship in any sport in Clemson history.
- Clemson had a 15-0 record, becoming the first team to accomplish the feat since Penn in 1897.
- Clemson became the second team to win multiple national championships in the College Football Playoff era since 2014 (Alabama).
- Clemson broke the school record of 14 wins, a mark previously shared with the 2015 and 2016 Tigers.
- Clemson finished its sixth undefeated season (1900, 1906, 1948, 1950, 1981, 2018) and fourth perfect season (1900, 1948, 1981, 2018) in school history.
- Clemson became the 20th team in AP poll history to finish a season as the AP No. 1 despite never appearing at No. 1 at any point of the regular season (2018 Clemson, 2016 Clemson, 2015 Alabama, 2014 Ohio State, 2011 Alabama, 2006 Florida, 2005 Texas, 2002 Ohio State, 1992 Alabama, 1989 Miami (Fla.), 1987 Miami (Fla.), 1986 Penn State, 1983 Miami (Fla.), 1982 Penn State, 1977 Notre Dame, 1973 Notre Dame, 1970 Nebraska, 1965 Alabama, 1964 Alabama, 1946 Notre Dame).
- Clemson won the ACC title for the fourth year in a row, marking the first time in ACC history a school won four consecutive outright league titles. The Tigers joined Florida (1993-96) as the only teams to win four consecutive Power Five Conference championship games.
- Clemson posted a 15-0 record against a schedule that included a school-record 12 games against teams who finished with winning records. The Tigers played the nation's most difficult schedule, as their opponents had a 120-57 record (.642) when not playing them.
- Clemson was in the top four of every CFP poll in 2018, including a No. 2 ranking entering the bowl games, ending the season having been ranked in the top four in 24 consecutive CFP polls.
- Clemson ranked in the top four of all 15 AP and USA Today Coaches polls for the first time in school history.
- Clemson won a school-record 13 of 15 games by at least 20 points, surpassing 2013 Florida State (12) for the most by any team since 2000. Clemson won its final 10 games by 20 points or more.
- Clemson won by an average margin of 31.1 points per game, the best margin in the nation and the second-largest in school history, trailing only a 35.3-point average margin in 1901, a season in which Clemson won one of its five games by a score of 122-0.
- Clemson played an average of 72.5 players per game in 2018, the most of any team in the AP Top 25. No other College Football Playoff participant averaged more than 56 players per game (Alabama, 55.7; Notre Dame, 54.4; Oklahoma, 52.4).

## FINAL 2018 AP POLL

Rk	Team	W-L	Points	Head Coach(es)
1.	Clemson	15-0	1525	Dabo Swinney
2.	Alabama	14-1	1462	Nick Saban
3.	Ohio State	13-1	1364	Urban Meyer, Ryan Day
4.	Oklahoma	12-2	1356	Lincoln Riley
5.	Notre Dame	12-1	1286	Brian Kelly
6.	Louisiana State	10-3	1119	Ed Orgeron
7.	Florida	10-3	1103	Dan Mullen
	Georgia	11-3	1103	Kirby Smart
9.	Texas	10-4	1076	Tom Herman
10.	Washington State	11-2	959	Mike Leach
11.	Central Florida	12-1	898	Josh Heupel
12.	Kentucky	10-3	820	Mark Stoops
13.	Washington	10-4	806	Chris Petersen
14.	Michigan	10-3	745	Jim Harbaugh
15.	Syracuse	10-3	683	Dino Babers
16.	Texas A&M	9-4	552	Jimbo Fisher
17.	Penn State	9-4	492	James Franklin
18.	Fresno State	12-2	466	Jeff Tedford
19.	Army	11-2	418	Jeff Monken
20.	West Virginia	8-4	296	Dana Holgorsen
21.	Northwestern	9-5	284	Pat Fitzgerald
22.	Utah State	11-2	188	Matt Wells
23.	Boise State	10-3	184	Bryan Harsin
24.	Cincinnati	11-2	171	Luke Fickell
25.	Iowa	9-4	120	Kirk Ferentz

- Clemson ranked second in the nation in yards per rush (6.57) and first in the nation in yards per rush allowed (2.51), becoming the first program since at least 2009 to rank in the top two in both categories in a single season.
- Clemson tied team records in wins at home (seven), on the road (five), away from home (eight), in regular season conference play (eight) and against conference opponents (nine).
- Clemson posted a 5-0 record in true road games, joining Northwestern as only teams in the nation to go 5-0 on the road. It marked the sixth time in school history (and the third time in last four years) Clemson has been 5-0 on the road.
- Clemson completed the four-year span with a 55-4 record, a school and ACC record that tied 2015-18 Alabama for the most wins in a four-year span in FBS history.
- With a victory over South Carolina in November, Clemson reached 100 wins in a decade for the first time in program history.
- Clemson featured five first-team All-ACC selections and a total of 18 who made first, second or third team, more than any other school and the most in a season in school history.
- Clemson produced seven players who made an All-America team, second-most in a season in school history. That included a record five first-team selections by at least one of the five major teams, the most first-team All-Americans in one season in school history.

- Clemson set a school record with 44.3 points per game, ahead of the previous record of 41.0 set in 2012. The Tigers reached 27 points in 15 straight games, a school record.
- Clemson scored a school-record 664 points, becoming the second team in ACC history to score 650 points in a single season (Florida State, 723 in 2013).
- Clemson broke the school and ACC record of 7,718 yards of offense, set in 2015, by recording 7,908 yards of offense.
- Clemson posted a school-record 527.2 yards per game, which included a record 15 games with 400 or more yards and a record-tying three 600-yard games. The Tigers set a school record by averaging 7.35 yards per play, shattering the previous record of 6.5 from 2006.
- Clemson led the country in scoring defense (13.1 points per game) for the first time in school history.
- Clemson set a school record with 54 sacks, breaking the mark held by the 2016 team (49). The 54 sacks were the third-most by any FBS team in a season since 2000.
- Clemson led the nation in sacks and tied for the national lead in tackles for loss (136).
- Clemson won the AFCA Academic Achievement Award for the first time in school history, becoming just the third program to win it and the national championship in the same year since the award began in 1981 (Notre Dame 1988 and Alabama 2017).
- In addition to the on-field success, Clemson produced team records in team GPA and number of players with recording a 3.0 or better GPA (66).
- Clemson placed seven players on the All-ACC Academic team, tied for second-most in school history and one shy of the school record.
- Christian Wilkins won the William V. Campbell Trophy from the National Football Foundation, the first Clemson player to win the award known colloquially as the Academic Heisman. He joined Barrett Jones (2012 Alabama), Joaquin Gonzales (2001 Miami), Danny Wuerffel (1996 Florida) and Rob Zatechka (1994 Nebraska) as the only players to win the Campbell Trophy and a national championship in the same season.

## ALL-AMERICANS

- **Travis Etienne** - 1st (Sporting News), 2nd (AFCA, AP, FWAA, Walter Camp)
- **Clelin Ferrell** - 1st (AFCA, AP, Sporting News, Walter Camp)
- **Mitch Hyatt** - 1st (AFCA, AP, FWAA, Walter Camp), 2nd (Sporting News)
- **Tre Lamar** - 2nd (AFCA)
- **Dexter Lawrence** - 1st (AFCA)
- **Trayvon Mullen** - 2nd (AFCA)
- **Christian Wilkins** - 1st (AFCA, AP, FWAA, Sporting News, Walter Camp)