

**December 3, 2008**



## **Clemson Accepts Invitation to Konica Minolta Gator Bowl**

### **Tigers Make Record Ninth Appearance in Jacksonville**

Clemson, SC—Clemson has been extended an invitation to the Konica Minolta Gator Bowl in Jacksonville, FL. The contest will be played on January 1 at 1:00 PM and will be nationally televised by CBS. Clemson's opponent will be named at a later date.

Clemson has a 7-5 record entering the Konica Minolta Gator Bowl and has won four of its last five games, including a 27-21 win over Boston College in Boston, and a 31-14 win over South Carolina in the regular season finale. The Tigers finished strong under Head Coach Dabo Swinney, who became interim head coach on October 13 after Tommy Bowden resigned. He was named head coach on December 1.

Clemson's 4-1 record over the last five games of the season ties for the best among ACC teams and Clemson's 3-1 mark in the second half of the ACC season, is topped only by NC State's 4-0 finish to the ACC schedule. Clemson ranks 19<sup>th</sup> in the nation in the latest Sagarin computer rankings and played the 12<sup>th</sup> most difficult schedule in the nation according to the NCAA.

"We are thrilled to be invited to the Konica Minolta Gator Bowl," said Clemson Head Coach Dabo Swinney. "Clemson has a proud history in this bowl game dating back to Frank Howard's years as Clemson head coach. It has long been one of the top bowl games in college football. It will be a great experience for our players, especially our seniors who have meant so much to our program."

Clemson is led on offense by running backs James Davis and C.J. Spiller, quarterback Cullen Harper and wide receiver Aaron Kelly. Davis has 725 yards rushing and has scored 11 touchdowns this year. He needs just 112 rushing yards in the Gator Bowl to become Clemson's career leader and two touchdowns to establish a Clemson career record. He currently has 49 after a three touchdown performance against South Carolina in the regular season finale.

Spiller leads the ACC in all-purpose running and was named first-team All-ACC as a specialist this year. Spiller needs just 114 all-purpose running yards to become Clemson's career leader. He has 612 yards rushing and 430 yards receiving in addition to ranking 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation in kickoff returns. His reception yardage total was a Clemson record for a running back.

Harper ranked second in the ACC in passing efficiency and had a league best 63.2 completion percentage. He leads the ACC in passing yards per game with nearly 200 per contest. He has 501 career completions, second best in Clemson history. He owns the Clemson record for completion percentage in a career and ranks second in efficiency.

Kelly is the ACC's career leader in receptions with 226 and needs just 23 receiving yards in the bowl game to become Clemson's all-time leader. He has 61 receptions for 648 yards and three scores this year. He is Clemson's career leader in touchdown receptions as well. Kelly was a second-team All-ACC selection this year.

Michael Hamlin, a first-team All-ACC safety, is the leader of Clemson's defense. The graduate has six interceptions to rank in a tie for sixth in the nation, and he has also contributed a team best nine pass deflections. His 15 passes defensed rank among the national leaders as well. Hamlin is second on the Clemson team in tackles with 102 and has 18 career takeaways (interceptions plus fumble recoveries). He ranks second in Clemson history in that category, just one short of Terry Kinard's career record of 19 set between 1978-82.

Clemson's top tackler is linebacker Kavell Conner, who has a career high 114 stops. Graduate Chris Clemons is third on the team in tackles with 84, while freshman Brandon Maye is fourth with 83. Maye was second in the voting for ACC Defensive Rookie of the Year.

Clemson ranks among the top teams in the nation in many defensive categories. The Tigers are ninth in the nation and first in the ACC in scoring defense with a 16.6 average. That includes four touchdowns scored via returns when the defense was not on the field. Clemson is also 16<sup>th</sup> in the nation in total defense and 12<sup>th</sup> in pass defense.

This will be Clemson's ninth appearance in the Konica Minolta Gator Bowl, more than any other school, but its first appearance since the January 1, 2001 contest when the Tigers lost to Virginia Tech, 41-20. Clemson has a 4-4 overall record in the Konica Minolta Gator Bowl.

Clemson's first appearance in the Gator Bowl took place at the conclusion of the 1948 season. The Tigers defeated Missouri in a battle of Tigers 24-23, clinching a perfect 11-0 season for Frank Howard's team. Clemson also participated in the Gator Bowls at the conclusion of the 1951, 1977, 1978, 1986, 1989 and 1995 seasons.

Clemson's appearance in the Gator Bowl in 1977 ended an 18-year stretch without a bowl for the Tigers program. Clemson defeated Ohio State, 17-15 in the Gator Bowl the following year. That was Danny Ford's first game as Clemson head coach. He had taken over for Charley Pell, who had resigned at the end of the regular season to become head coach at Florida. A late interception by Charlie Bauman, the only interception of his four-year career, clinched the victory for the Tigers.

Clemson had a 2-0 record in the Gator Bowl in the 1980s, a 27-21 win over Stanford in 1986 and a 27-7 win over West Virginia in 1989. The win over West Virginia was the final game for Danny Ford as Clemson head coach. West Virginia had played for the National Championship

the previous year. The 1989 Clemson vs. West Virginia game attracted a crowd of 82,911, still the record crowd for the Gator Bowl.

Virginia Tech defeated Clemson 41-20 in the Tigers last Gator Bowl appearance at the end of the 2000 season. The game was a battle of mobile quarterbacks, as the Tigers featured Woody Dantzler and Virginia Tech featured Michael Vick.

This will be Clemson's first appearance on CBS since the 1989 season when the Tigers defeated Virginia at Clemson, 34-20.

**Quote from Brian Goin, Chairman, Gator Bowl Association**

"We are very excited that the Clemson Tigers won their way back into the Gator Bowl and we are looking forward to hosting their legions of fans in Jacksonville. It is also exciting to note that this will be the ninth time Clemson has played in the Gator Bowl Classic setting a new Gator Bowl record as the university with the most Gator Bowl appearances by one team," said Brian Goin, Chairman, Gator Bowl Association.

**Quote from Kevin Kern, Vice President of Marketing, Konica Minolta Business Solutions U.S.A., Inc.**

"In our second year as the title sponsor of the Konica Minolta Gator Bowl, we are excited to have Clemson University as the first team selected to play in the 2009 Konica Minolta Gator Bowl," said Kevin Kern, vice president of marketing, Konica Minolta Business Solutions U.S.A., Inc. "We look forward to seeing the Clemson Tiger fans in Jacksonville on New Year's Day and would like to encourage Tiger fans to visit [www.kmbssports.com](http://www.kmbssports.com) to register for a chance to win a trip for two to the 2009 Konica Minolta Gator Bowl."

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