

## Monday with Mikey: January 9, 2017

### I'll admit it: I'm excited about THE GAME tonight!

I took the opportunity to look up "a few fun facts" about the team names and mascots for Clemson University and The University of Alabama, who are playing for the NCAA Division I National Championship (right here in Tampa) tonight. Okay, so district 6950 doesn't actually *include* Tampa, but hey – close enough!

### The Alabama Crimson Tide and the Elephant Mascot

Early newspaper accounts of the University's football squad simply referred to them as the "varsity" or the "Crimson White". The first nickname popular with the media was the "Thin Red Line", which was used until 1906. Hugh Roberts, former sports editor of the Birmingham Post-Herald credited is with coining the phrase "Crimson Tide" in an article describing the 1907 Iron Bowl played in Birmingham. The game was played in a sea of red mud which stained the Alabama white jerseys crimson.

There are two stories, perhaps both true, about how Alabama's football squad became associated with the elephant, both dating to the coaching tenure of Wallace Wade (1923–1930). The earliest account attributes the Rosenberger's Birmingham Trunk Company for the elephant association. Owner J. D. Rosenberger, whose son was a student at the University, outfitted the team with "good luck" luggage tags for the trip to the 1927 Rose Bowl. The company's trademark, displayed on the tags, was a red elephant standing on a trunk. When the football team arrived in Pasadena, the reporters greeting them associated their large size with the elephants on their luggage. Another story dates to 1930. Following the October 4 game against Ole Miss, Atlanta Journal sports writer Everett Strupper wrote: "At the end of the quarter, the earth started to tremble, there was a distant rumble that continued to grow. Some excited fan in the stands bellowed, 'Hold your horses, the elephants are coming,' and out stamped this Alabama varsity. It was the first time that I had seen it and the size of the entire eleven nearly knocked me cold, men that I had seen play last year looking like they had nearly doubled in size." Sports writers continued to refer to Alabama as the "Red Elephants" afterward, referring to their crimson jerseys. Despite these early associations of the elephant to The University of Alabama, the university did not officially accept the elephant as university mascot until 1979. Alabama's elephant mascot is known as "Big Al."

### The Clemson Tigers

The roots of Clemson's nickname are said to have first sprouted at the turn of the 20th century. In those days, many of the football players wore long hair as a form of protection since there were no helmets. The long manes might have led to the name lions, had it not been for the orange and purple striped jerseys and stockings that the players donned. Because of these stripes, the natural nickname selection was "Tigers." Another nickname theory focused on Clemson's first football coach, Walter Riggs. He arrived at the helm after leaving the Auburn "Tiger" football team. By 1900, John Heisman's (yes, THAT John Heisman's) 1900 team was called the Tigers and the team's motto, "Eat 'em Up Clemson," was displayed on an insignia of a Tigers head. While there are still some clouds of doubt about how the nickname surfaced, the Tiger name has shown brightly for many great years at Clemson.

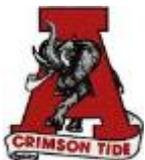
The Tiger Paw logo was introduced at a press conference on July 21, 1970. It was created using a mold of an actual Bengal Tiger.<sup>1</sup> The telltale hook at the bottom of the paw is a sign that this is the official licensed trademark for Clemson University. Clemson's colors are "Burnt Orange and Northwestern Purple" according to the official website, and Clemson wins more games when they wear Orange pants than any other uniform.

Both of these teams are champions, but if you know me, you know for whom I'm cheering.

### Let's all keep on "Doing Good, Having Fun!"

*Mikey*

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**Rotary District 6950**  
Citrus, Hernando, Pasco, and Pinellas Counties  
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