

# Bryant-Denny Stadium

Bryant-Denny Stadium is quickly becoming one of the most prominent college football venues in the nation. Located on the southwestern edge of the University of Alabama campus, the history-laden stadium ranks among the nation's top 5 on-campus football stadiums with a seating capacity of 101,821 after completion of the latest expansion in the summer of 2010.

## Stadium History

The 2010 project is the fourth expansion of Bryant-Denny stadium since 1988 and the seventh expansion in the stadium's history. Other expansions were completed in 1946, 1961, 1966, 1988, 1998 and 2006. Those projects have expanded Bryant-Denny Stadium to its current capacity of 92,138 and the stadium's capacity exceeded 100,000 following the completion of the south end zone expansion.



The evolution of Bryant-Denny Stadium has been significant from its origins back in 1929 when 12,000 seats were erected for a Crimson Tide team coached by Wallace Wade that featured an All-American lineman named Fred Sington.

The Tide beat Mississippi College, 55-0, in the first game played at Denny Stadium on September 28, 1929. The stadium was officially dedicated October 5, 1929, when the Tide beat Ole Miss, 22-7.

In the 1930s, during the heart of the Frank Thomas Era, Denny Stadium increased in size to approximately 24,000 in a time that the Crimson Tide featured the legendary Don Hutson. After Alabama's perfect season in 1945, which included a Rose Bowl win over Southern California, bleachers were added for the 1946 season. A record crowd of 31,000 watched the Harry Gilmer-led Tide beat Southwestern Louisiana, 54-0, on October 12 to dedicate the largest stadium in the state.

When Paul Bryant returned to Alabama in 1958, Denny Stadium had remained untouched, but the legendary coach mapped out details for an additional 12,000 seats and a new press box with an elevator that was completed for the run to the national title in 1961. In the first game with 43,000 seats, the Tide beat North Carolina State, 26-7, October 14. Noteworthy that autumn afternoon was the fact that the Wolfpack, led by future NFL superstar Roman Gabriel, jumped to a 7-0



lead. It would be the only time Alabama would trail an opponent all year long.

After national titles in 1964-65 and with an increasing demand for tickets, Bryant implemented an expansion of 17,000 seats, upping the capacity to 60,000 in 1966. A 26-0 victory over Clemson, coached by Frank Howard, was the first game in the 60,000-seat Denny Stadium. During the summer of 1975, Bert Bank, who had matured from a teenage fan to a World War II hero to a state senator, used his political clout to have the stadium re-named Bryant-Denny Stadium and on April 10, 1976, during the annual A-Day game, the official dedication took place.

Bryant-Denny experienced a first on November 17, 1979, when ABC, with Al Michaels calling the play-by-play, aired the first live television game from campus. Other on-campus stadiums had outpaced Alabama in refurbishing and expansions, as the Crimson Tide continued to play most of its key games at legendary Legion Field in Birmingham. That would change dramatically in the 1980s.

After Alabama beat Temple in the final game of the 1986 Tuscaloosa schedule, construction began on the upper deck, new press box, Ivory Club, President's Club and locker rooms. After playing its entire home schedule at Legion Field in Birmingham in 1987, the Tide returned to a 70,123-seat configuration in 1988. It was also the first season of Tide Pride and in the home opener; Alabama beat Vanderbilt, 44-10, on September 24.

Ten years later, and nearly four years after the planning stages began under Director of Athletics Hootie Ingram in 1994, the east side expansion was completed, upping the capacity to 83,818. Brigham Young served as the opponent on September 5, 1998, in a night game that featured a five-TD effort by Shaun Alexander in Alabama's 38-31 victory. Included in the 1998 east side expansion were 10,000 bleacher seats and two spiral walkways to give the stadium a more symmetrical appearance. A total of 81 skyboxes (on two levels) were also added.

In 1999, four additional skyboxes were added and a scoreboard with video replay capabilities was added to the south end. Other recent additions to Bryant-Denny Stadium include two east side reception areas for Scholarship and A-Club level patrons. These areas are located above the center entrance on the east side and include rooms large enough to host receptions and pre-game meal functions. A bank of lights was also added on the east side.

The North End Zone project, which began immediately following the 2004 football season, featured the addition of the North End Zone ("The Zone") complex which added more than 8,000 bleacher seats, added three levels of premium seating, a pair of large video scoreboards and state-of-the-art wrap-around display boards on the facades of the east and west upper decks. A unique addition to the stadium was a plaza connecting the stadium with University Boulevard. Known as "The Walk of Champions", the plaza quickly became a game day focal point and honors Alabama's national championship coaches while commemorating the school's 13 national championships and 22 SEC titles.

That expansion added 38 luxury skyboxes (bringing the total number of skyboxes in the stadium to 123), a club level area and traditional upper deck seating, a new home team locker room and a revamped sound system. When Alabama and Hawaii met to open the 2006 season, a sellout crowd marked the largest crowd to view a college football game in the state of Alabama as 92,138 fans packed the stadium.

The 2009 season was only the ninth time in the stadium's history that Alabama has played all of its home games at Bryant-Denny Stadium. From 1900 until 2003, Alabama played at least one home game at Birmingham's Legion Field. The Crimson Tide owns an impressive 225-46-3 (.827) all-time record in Tuscaloosa as more than eight million fans have witnessed the Crimson Tide play in 105 home games over the last 19 seasons.

By the fall of 2010, the structure will host 157 skyboxes, four large video scoreboards and wrap-around display boards on the facade of both the west and east grandstands.

## **Bryant-Denny Stadium's Namesakes**

### **Paul W. Bryant**

Paul William Bryant (1913-1983) returned to Alabama as head football coach in 1958 after playing for the Tide from 1933-35 and serving as an assistant coach from 1936-39. The Bryant Era at Alabama spanned more than a quarter of a century. Bryant-Denny Stadium, Bryant Hall, the Bryant Conference Center and the Bryant Museum stand as reminders of Bryant's unparalleled winning legacy to the University.

### **Dr. George Denny**

George Hutcheson Denny (1870-1955) accepted the presidency of The University of Alabama on January 1, 1912. He began an extraordinary presidential career that spanned almost a quarter of a century. Denny Chimes and Bryant-Denny Stadium stand as reminders of Denny's legacy to the University.

## **Stadium Growth Through The Years**

- 1936: 6,000 seats added as East grandstand is constructed, raising capacity to 24,000.
- 1946: 7,000 seats added via end zone bleachers at both ends, raising capacity to 31,000.
- 1961: 12,000 seats and a press box added to the west grandstand, raising capacity to 43,000.
- 1966: 17,000 seats added by enclosing both end zones and adding to the east grandstand, raising capacity to 60,000.
- 1988: 10,123 seats added by the addition of an upper grandstand on the west side, raising capacity to 70,123.
- 1998: 13,695 seats added by the addition of an upper grandstand on the east side, raising capacity to 83,818.
- 2006: 8,320 seats added by the construction of the upper grandstand on the north end zone, raising capacity to 92,138.
- 2010: 9,683 seats added by the construction of the upper grandstand on the south end zone, raising capacity to 101,821.

## **Recent History**

Despite many big games played at Legion Field, new memorable games and events have taken place in Bryant-Denny Stadium. Some of these include Marvin Constant's goal line stop against LSU quarterback Josh Booty in 1999; Alabama's 36-0 shutout against Auburn in 2008 (Alabama's first Iron Bowl victory in Bryant-Denny Stadium); and Terrence Cody's field goal block against Tennessee as time expired during Alabama's undefeated 2009 season.