

## Only in the South...

...does Game Day trump any and all events—even weddings. Andrew Lawrence, *Sports Illustrated* writer-reporter, shares 10 more reasons we're in a league of our own. Nowhere else...

**...do football games register on the Richter scale.** On Oct. 8, 1988, LSU trailed Auburn at home 6-0 with less than 2 minutes left when LSU quarterback Tommy Hodson found tailback Eddie Fuller in the end zone for the winning touchdown. The score whipped the crowd of 79,431 at Tiger Stadium (aka Death Valley) into a frenzy that reverberated in Baton Rouge. A day later stunned campus geologists discovered the moment had registered on the Richter scale. Tiger Stadium hasn't played host to any official seismic events since, but its crowds have produced enough intimidating ones to keep opponents quaking in their cleats.

**...are animal mascots as much a part of the family as the marching band.** Texas has Bevo the long-horn, Oklahoma has twin ponies Boomer and Sooner, and Arkansas has Tusk the razorback. Beware of Tusk, as great escapes run in his family. One predecessor was captured after killing a coyote, a 450-pound domestic pig, and seven rattlesnakes.

**...can bitter rivals mend fences in trying times.** When one deranged Crimson Tide fan poisoned Auburn's landmark Toomer's Oaks, Bama Nation raised \$50,000 through Tide for Toomer's, a Facebook group. When tornados sacked Tuscaloosa two months later, the Auburn Family reciprocated with more than \$175,000 in relief funds.

**...do you go for the halftime show.** The cavalcade of funky sounds and animated formations of the Grambling State vs. Southern University Battle of the Bands is ultimately what makes the teams' annual Thanksgiving Day clash, dubbed the Bayou Classic.

**...do rivalry games not mean a thing if they ain't got that bling.** The truest satisfaction comes from denying your rivals the kind

of oversize bauble that transforms trophy cases into china cabinets. Louisville and Kentucky vie for a brass chalice (the Governor's Cup); Oklahoma and Oklahoma State, a crystal dinner chime (the Bedlam Bell); Rice and Houston, a copper ice pail (the Bayou Bucket).

**...is football an excuse to play dress-up.** Just as the players have their attire guidelines, so too do Southern fans—it's a sport coat and sundress affair. And the formalwear extends to the tailgate table:

sterling silver, bone china, and candelabra are common trimmings.

**...do single guys flock to football games in search of a wife.** In addition to being exceedingly good-looking, the Southern female football fancier knows how to dress, how to drink, and how Coach is going to adjust for the second half. That's the kind of girl you take home to Mama.

**...is tailgating a military exercise.** Alabama has its RV army, whose troops converge by the hundreds on Crimson Tide games. And Tennessee has its Volunteer Navy, a fleet of various

vessels that collects in equally impressive numbers around Neyland Stadium—one of only two college football venues accessible by water.

**...does football now feature more cowbell!** After a 36-year ban for being too noisy, Mississippi State's official noisemaker is back—before games, between quarters, during time-outs, after scores, and during possession changes. Chime in any other time, though, and the Bulldogs could get rung up for \$5,000.

**...is football and winning one and the same.** Since the advent of the Bowl Championship Series in 1998, Southern teams have won 11 of 13 national championships. Which is just another way of saying: Only in the South do you get real bragging rights.



LSU's Tiger Stadium, 1988

### IN SEASON

## 4 Downs to Tough Turf

Want a lawn that rivals this year's top football fields? Associate Garden Editor Rebecca Bull Reed says you can gain good yardage by mastering these plays



TEAM TRIVIA

In 1958 (seven years before Gatorade was created on the University of FLORIDA campus), Bengal Punch was served to LSU's team.

**1 CHOOSE THE RIGHT GRASS** Bermuda is the main choice for Southern sports fields, but zoysia is great for homeowners striving for game-day quality with less mowing. Top zoysia picks: 'Emerald,' 'Cavalier,' 'Zeon,' 'Zorro,' 'Diamond,' and 'PristineFlora.'

**2 OVERSEED TO STAY GREEN** Warm-season grasses turn brown and enter dormancy to survive the cold. Enjoy a green lawn beyond the bowls by overseeding in early October with a perennial or intermediate ryes. (Avoid annual rye.)

**3 MOW LIKE A PRO** Maintain proper mowing height (between  $\frac{3}{4}$  and 2 inches for grasses listed here) to deter weeds, encourage new growth, and increase density and uniformity. Never remove more than one-third of the leaf blades in a mowing.

**4 GET THE LOOK** To achieve striping in warm-season grasses, a sports field manager may continuously mow in the same pattern. If you overseed with perennial rye, it's easier to produce stripes: the softer blades lie down better when mowed.