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FILE

This familiar scene won't play out at Clemson's Memorial Stadium this season due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the school announced Thursday roughly 19,000 fans will be able to attend home games this fall.

'A huge blessing'

Clemson to allow roughly 19,000 fans for home games

BY ERIC SPROTT
THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — The atmosphere will be unlike anything seen in recent memory when the Clemson football team has its home opener against the Citadel on Sept. 19, but at the very least, the Tigers don't plan on playing in front of empty stands at Memorial Stadium.

On Thursday, the school an-

nounced it has received approval to host approximately 19,000 fans — less than a quarter of the listed capacity of 81,500 — after considering 10 different seating configurations. The South Carolina Department of Commerce greenlit the plan, which is based on 6 feet of social distance among outdoor seating pods, with fans to be seated in pods of two or four affiliated guests.

It's not an ideal scenario, but giv-

en some schools across the country won't allow fans at all season due to COVID-19, a pair of Clemson cornerbacks said following practice Thursday they're thankful they'll get to play in front of at least some fans.

"That's huge, because we all thought that we were just going to be just us out there just talking to

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each other," sophomore Andrew Booth said. "To be able to have that amount of people, that's a huge blessing. It won't just feel like we're doing a scrimmage, so that's going to be beautiful."

"I feel like it's a good little relief for us knowing they'll at least let some of the fans come in and see the game," junior LeAnthony Williams added. "That's pretty cool that they allowed the school to do that, and that'll be a plus for the season."

Though details of how tickets will be divided weren't included, a news release from the school said the approved model is best for including "as many IPTAY donors and students as possible during the season," as it does not appear tickets will be made available to the general public. The release added the Clemson athletic department and IPTAY will reach out to donors who expressed interest in attending games this season via email today with more details.

In the release, Clemson said it will ask fans to refrain from tailgating, with parking areas opening three hours before kickoff, then closing an hour after games. Tents, trailers and large groups will be prohibited, and fans will be asked to wear face coverings and maintain social distancing whenever possible in parking areas. Additionally, parking assignments will be based on seating location to

minimize contact.

Inside the stadium, face coverings will be required unless eating or drinking, and stadium re-entry will not be permitted. As previously announced, Clemson will use an all-mobile ticketing method this season, and ticketholders will be provided assigned times for entry.

Additionally, some pregame and postgame traditions — such as the Tiger Band parade, Tiger Walk and Gathering at the Paw — won't take place this fall.

"We are thankful for the careful review and approval from Governor (Henry) McMaster, the South Carolina Department of Commerce and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control for our plan to host fans in our venues this fall," Clemson athletic director Dan Radakovich said in the news release. "Our IPTAY and athletic staff have worked tirelessly and taken a comprehensive look at the gameday experience."

"Clemson sought input from external medical,

public health and facility planning experts during the process, as well as the University Strategic Operations Group. With the information available today, we are confident in our ability to safely allow fans at games, which is incredibly important to our student-athletes, coaches, fans and local community. We'll contin-

ue to monitor guidance and make adjustments if necessary."

The school also announced the capacity for volleyball in Jerve Gym will be 250 fans, while soccer matches at Riggs Field will host up to approximately 1,000 fans.

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