

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

**Remarks Honoring the 2016 College Football Playoff National Champion
Clemson University Tigers**

June 12, 2017

Hello, everybody. Mr. Governor, how are you? We campaigned long and hard together, right? That worked out well, and you became Governor. So nobody complaining. *[Laughter]*

Good afternoon, everybody. Today I'm truly proud to welcome to the White House our College Football Playoff National Champions, the Clemson Tigers. And they look like the real deal, don't they?

Congratulations to all of you and to your terrific coach—and you know who that is, right? Do we love him? Dabo! Dabo Swinney. What a great job. I was with Coach Belichick; he said, this guy is a real coach. That's a pretty good compliment, right? That's—you can't do better than that. *[Laughter]* Congratulations, Coach.

You have many dedicated fans and admirers here today to celebrate your victory, including many distinguished Members of Congress, lots of them. I especially want to thank your Governor, Henry McMaster, my friend, my endorser. Don't forget, he endorsed me when it wasn't exactly in vogue to do that. So I remember. Right, Henry? And thank you, Henry, and everybody for joining us today.

Clemson Tigers, you gave America an incredible game that will go down in the record books as one of the hardest fought and probably one of the most exciting games ever played. Last second, boomf. *[Laughter]* That's pretty good, Coach. Good job, Coach.

All of you played with such tremendous heart and determination. You never, ever gave up. You can never give up in life. And it all paid off. With your grit and resolve, you proved one of the most important truths in life: that success is about how hard you are willing to fight in order to overcome and in order to win.

After being down 14 to nothing—I don't think the Coach was worried. Were you worried? Yes, probably. *[Laughter]* A little bit. How about a little bit, Coach? Maybe? You're down 14 to nothing almost halfway through the game, like true tigers, Clemson roared back—and with the whole Nation watching, and beyond the Nation, Deshaun Watson—going to be a great NFL player, watch. Where's Deshaun? Get over here. Come here. Hey, fellas, is he that good? Tell me. You better believe it. He's going to be fantastic. He passed the ball to Hunter Renfrow—where's Hunter? Come here, Hunt. Oh, Hunter, you're so lucky you caught that ball. *[Laughter]* To score the game-winning touchdown with just 1 second left on the clock, that's pretty cool.

It was an inspirational finish to a historic season for Clemson. The team willed their victory—and just, you willed it. That was a victory that was willed. Arnold Palmer, they used to say—great champion—he would will a victory. Jack Nicklaus, he would will a victory. The great champions tend to do that. This team willed their whole way to victory. You came so incredibly close last year against Alabama—you don't remember that game, Coach, do you? *[Laughter]*

Head Coach William C. "Dabo" Swinney. I remember.

The President. You'll never forget. And you wanted a rematch, and you got the rematch, and you went on and you earned it. You beat great teams like Florida State, Ohio State, and of

course, your big rival, South Carolina. You believed in yourselves, you believed in each other, and you won a championship victory for the ages. It's one of the greatest games I ever watched, actually.

People are going to be talking about what you did for a very, very long time. That victory and the great comeback was the product of a vision that began 9 years ago, when Coach Swinney assembled a team of assistant coaches who believed in his vision. They recruited great, great players, and together, you worked hard, had fun, and turned Clemson football into a winning machine. It's what it is.

The Tigers have gone an astonishing 89 and 28—how did you lose 28 games, Coach? [Laughter] Huh? That was the early seasons, right? Most of them were in the early—while you were building—under the coach's leadership. He helped forge a new culture at Clemson. It was on display in the locker room right after the big game.

The coach recalled how he told the team that "the theme of the College Football Playoffs this year is 'chasing greatness.'" He told them, "Nobody is better than us, and we've got to believe it!" It's great. Tell yourself that: Nobody is better. You chased greatness, and now you've achieved true greatness.

I understand that on the inside of your championship ring, there's a tiger climbing upwards, and it says "little extra"—just a little extra. That's often the difference between winning and losing, just a "little extra." Right, Coach? Is that right? And by the way, standing next to the coach is another winner—your *el presidente*—Jim Clements. That's another winner, I'll tell you that.

We don't talk about Jim too much. But number one, he made a lot of good decisions. Number two, what people don't realize about Clemson—it's a great academic school. One of the top 25.

Clemson University President James P. Clements. Thank you, sir.

The President. So—and as a combination, probably number one, right? [Laughter] Great job, Jim.

That's how Clemson achieved great things. When you set an expectation of maximum effort and a culture of confidence from the top, you inspire every person to perform at their very, very best.

And that is exactly what you have done. More Tigers this year than ever before—nine of you—went to the NFL Scouting Combine, and two of you were drafted in the first round. That's pretty good.

But during that championship game, all of you shined, every single one. Offensive MVP, quarterback Deshaun Watson took some very, very hard hits, but he never rattled. He's great under pressure. I've seen that. I've heard that. He's great under pressure. That's a good thing to be. [Laughter] He is great under pressure. He always got right back up. And he fought, and he fought, and he kept winning. Now he'll bring that toughness together to the Houston Texans. And I have the owners of the Texans here someplace—we just saw them—and they are so excited about Deshaun.

Defensive tackle Carlos Watkins had an incredible game, and he'll be joining Deshaun in Houston. I'm going to be watching that team very closely.

Nobody can read plays like Defensive MVP Ben Boulware. Where's Ben? Carlos—get up here, Carlos. You think I could take these guys in a fight? I don't know. Great guys.

First Team All-American defensive end Christian Wilkins was a big part of the defensive effort in the championship game. And wide receiver Hunter Renfrow had that incredible 10 receptions that night.

I also want to extend our best wishes to defensive end Richard Yeargin, who suffered a terrible neck injury in a recent automobile accident and is out for the 2017 season. But he'll be back. And we're praying for you. And, Richard, I know you're going to get better and you're going to be all set.

All of you are continuing a proud sporting tradition at Clemson, established long ago by some of football's greatest champions and leaders. Your school was home to the legendary Coach Heisman—Heisman Trophy—who delivered a win in the Tigers' first Alabama matchup way back in 1900. I know Coach Heisman would be very proud of you, Coach, today, looking down, would be very proud—he liked to win; he knew winners—and his team's most recent, incredible, and most exciting victory.

So thank you for being here today. It's our honor to be in the company of great, great champions. And that's what they are. I wish you all the best in your careers, wherever they may take you. Whether it's football or business or anything else, you're going to be very successful. And if you work hard, fight hard, and believe in yourselves, perhaps I'll see you one day back here right at the White House.

In fact, I think one of the folks behind me has a really good chance of standing where I am today as a future President of the United States. They have that tremendous, incredible talent, more than just athletic talent.

So congratulations, again, to the College Football Playoff National Champions, the Clemson Tigers! And with that, I want to introduce President Jim Clements, who has truly done an amazing job on and off the field. And he's a special man—that I can tell you.

Jim, come on up and say a few words.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:03 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to William S. Belichick, head coach, National Football League's New England Patriots; professional golfer Jack W. Nicklaus; Ben Boulware, linebacker, Wayne Gallman, running back, Jadar Johnson, safety, Jordan Leggett, tight end, Artavis Scott, wide receiver, Cordea Tankersley, cornerback, and Mike Williams, wide receiver, Clemson Tigers; and Robert C. McNair, majority owner, National Football League's Houston Texans.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : 2016 College Football Playoff National Champion
Clemson University Tigers.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Belichick, William S.; Boulware, Ben; Clements, James P.; Gallman, Wayne; Johnson, Jadar; Leggett, Jordan; McMaster, Henry D.; McNair, Robert C.; Nicklaus, Jack W.; Renfrow, Hunter; Scott, Artavis; Swinney, William C. "Dabo"; Tankersley, Cordea; Watkins, Carlos; Watson, Deshaun; Wilkins, Christian; Williams, Mike; Yeargin, Richard III.

Subjects: Elections : 2016 Presidential and congressional elections; South Carolina : Governor; Sports : Football.

DCPD Number: DCPD201700387.