

Coffee, a Handshake, and Goosebumps

The Georgia Dome has always relished its strong relationships. That's what Team Dome thrives on: the pride in making and maintaining those relationships. It's no surprise that, when inclement weather rained out the 1992 and 1993 South Eastern Conference (SEC) Championship games in Birmingham, Alabama, the Georgia Dome stepped up to provide a more convenient venue for the championship games.

The SEC, an American college athletic association, organizes its college football teams into two divisions: the Western Division and the Eastern Division. College teams in the Western Division include Auburn, Alabama, Ole Miss, Louisiana State University, Mississippi State, Arkansas, and Texas A&M. The Eastern Division includes Georgia, Tennessee, Vanderbilt, Florida, Kentucky, Missouri, and South Carolina. The SEC Championship Game is held every year on the first Saturday in December. This is a major college football event in which the top football team from the Western Division plays against the top team from the Eastern Division. This football game is nationally televised on prime-time television, and is unlike any other football game. The stakes are higher, the fans are fiercer, and the rivalries more intense. It is arguably the biggest college football game of the year.

When the SEC contacted Atlanta to meet up with the Georgia Dome's leadership, it wasn't hard to pitch to them why the Dome was the ideal place to host the SEC Championship Game. It's been proven many times that Atlanta is more than capable of hosting such a big event. With Atlanta's diverse population, multiple hotels, road and air transportation, and, of course, the Georgia Dome's bright reputation, the deal was made over a cup of coffee and a handshake.

Ever since then, the Georgia Dome has been hosting the SEC Championship Game. However, the fans' pride for their favorite college team cannot possibly match the pride of Team Dome. Carl Adkins, former general manager of the Georgia Dome, explained that he, too, indulged in the experience of the game.

Every SEC Championship Game, Adkins made it a point to go out onto the 50 yard line before the game started and watch. He watched as the bands prepared to play the national anthem, the teams warmed up for kick off, and over 70,000 fans got ready to cheer for their favorite team to win. He watched as the teams kicked off, and, as the flash bulbs lit up around the stadium, he felt an amazing adrenaline rush. A rush that gave him goosebumps just talking about it. This rush of emotion not only came from the atmosphere of the game itself, but from knowing that they had done it once again.

"There's just this incredible flood of emotion in knowing that we built the stage. We were the ones that created the stage. We created and provided the conveniences and the services and everything that goes into making that happen," Adkins said as he reminisced and rubbed the goosebumps that appeared on his forearm.

The SEC Championship Game has spent a successful 23 years at the Dome, and will continue to be hosted in Atlanta for another 10 years at the least.