

A close-up photograph of two plush South Carolina Gamecocks. The birds are primarily maroon with bright yellow beaks. One bird is in the foreground, looking towards the right, while another is partially visible behind it. They are wearing white t-shirts with maroon lettering. The background is a blurred crowd of people.

# South Carolina Gamecocks

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# South Carolina Gamecocks

Get the facts on this fine-feathered fowl from the University of South Carolina.



A gamecock is a rooster, or male chicken, raised to fight other roosters in a cruel contest called a cockfight. Because the animals are usually hurt or even killed in these battles, cockfights are against the law in the United States. So how did the University of South Carolina decide on the name?

## A Fiery Conflict

The story of the USC nickname is one of the wildest in college history. Back in 1902, South Carolina defeated their archrivals, the Clemson University Tigers, in a football game. To celebrate, students drew a huge poster of a rooster crowing over a fallen tiger, and taunted Clemson with it in a parade. Furious, 200 military cadets from Clemson marched to the USC campus—with swords—to capture the hated poster. Seeing them coming, 40 USC students grabbed knives and pistols and got ready for actual combat! Before any blades could cross, police ran to the school and managed to prevent violence. The poster was burned in a bonfire, but the students decided the symbol of the rooster was a good match for their “fighting spirit.” From then on, they’ve called themselves the Gamecocks.

### FUN FACT

**To this day, before every Clemson game, USC students build a large paper tiger and burn it at a huge party.**



## South Carolina Gamecocks



Cocky, the costumed mascot gamecock for USC, poses on the sidelines with Sir Big Spur, a live rooster!

### Those Cocky Fellows

The first costumed mascot didn't appear until 1971. A biology student named John Nelson got his mom to sew him a gamecock costume—including a cardboard beak—to wear to sports games. Then in 1980, the current mascot, Cocky, began strutting the sidelines wearing his smiling, oversized head.

USC also has a second mascot, who doesn't need a costume at all. In the 1990s, a pair of graduates started bringing a live rooster to baseball games, and fans loved it when he would prance on top of the dugout. He was titled Sir Big Spur (a rooster's spur is a long claw on its lower leg). Engineering students built him his own car, called the Roost Roller, and now Sir Big Spur cruises at big games and parades—just like the rooster poster that made Clemson so mad years ago.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

**During the late 1980s, Cocky the mascot was fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) and often used ASL to speak to fans during games.**

### The Reigning Champs

The South Carolina women's basketball team gives their fans plenty to crow about during March Madness. Since 2014, they've never finished below the Sweet Sixteen. They've won the national championship twice—

in 2017 and 2022—and are top contenders for the 2023 title.



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USC's power forward Aliyah Boston was last year's College Player of the Year, and she's hoping to lead her team to another national title before she graduates. 11 USC women have gone on to play in the WNBA, including pro MVP A'ja Wilson.

Supporters of the USC women's team show up in huge numbers—the team averages more than 10,000 fans at every home game, and sometimes sells out the entire 18,000-seat arena!