

Peach Bowl Looking Forward To “Fantastic” Opportunity To Host Ohio State



In the long history of the Peach Bowl, which dates back to its inaugural contest in 1968, one of college football's most prestigious bowls has yet to host one of college football's most prestigious teams – that won't be the case, though, come Dec. 31.

In the semifinals of the College Football Playoff, the Peach Bowl will host No. 4 Ohio State vs. No. 1 Georgia, the premier matchup of the semifinal round given the 8 p.m. kickoff time on New Year's Eve. This will be Ohio State's first-ever appearance in the Peach Bowl, and the Atlanta-based contest is excited for the matchup.

"It's been great to have two of the biggest brands in college football coming into your town and playing for a game that's so meaningful," Peach Bowl CEO Gary Stokan told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "It's great for Atlanta, it's great for college football, great for Ohio State, great for Georgia."

Given the Peach Bowl's contracts with other conferences over the years, Ohio State hadn't been in position to make the bowl until the introduction of the College Football Playoff for the 2014 season. Ever since the Buckeyes were potentially on the table for the Peach Bowl, Stokan said he's been hoping to see Ohio State at some point.

"Growing up in Pittsburgh, I go back to Rex Kern and (Jack) Tatum and those guys," Stokan said. "Ohio State's just such an important brand to college football (and) the success of college football."

"During my time, we never had the opportunity to have a Big Ten team," he continued. "But since we joined the CFP, it's been great that they were able to bring in teams from around the country like Ohio State, Michigan, TCU, Washington – we've had Michigan State – and we've had a lot of teams from outside the southeast, which has been fantastic to host them."

But beyond being able to host Ohio State for the first time, the matchup is a dream for most fans. The Buckeyes and Bulldogs have played just once before – a win for Georgia in the 1993 Citrus Bowl – and have been on a collision course as national championship contenders over the past several seasons.

The game will finally be played on Dec. 31 with a trip to the national championship game on the line against either No. 2 Michigan – a potential chance for revenge for Ohio State – or No. 3 TCU, and there will be no shortage of storylines as kickoff approaches.

"You start with the brands, the success that they've had in college football, and then you go to the

people,” Stokan said. “Gene Smith and Ryan Day, (Georgia athletic director) Josh Brooks and Kirby Smart, are four people that are just first class, great to work with.

“Then you go to the team and you say, ‘OK, now you’ve got No. 1 versus No. 4 that are both playing for the opportunity to get to the national championship,’ which is very significant,” he continued. “And then lastly, you start talking about the fans that are ardent and vibrant and very, very passionate about following their teams.

“Then you get the 8 p.m. media opportunity with ESPN to be primetime on New Year’s Eve, so all those things are just very, very meaningful to us, and why we’ll have a great week at the Chick-fil-a Peach Bowl.”