



2026-27 CLEMSON BASKETBALL  
**CLIPS FILE**

## Clemson basketball knows it will need Carter Welling. The question is when he'll be back.

BY JACKSON CASTELLANO, THE CHARLESTON POST AND COURIER  
OCTOBER 12, 2026

CHARLOTTE — Carter Welling knew his season was over the moment it happened.

"When you feel something like that in your knee that you never felt before, and just the overwhelming emotions of what you think it might be, it's obviously not a good feeling," he said.

In the first half of a win over Wake Forest on March 11 in the 2026 ACC Tournament, Welling went down during a layup attempt with a non-contact injury that immediately looked serious. He was helped off the field by two Clemson staffers. The next day, Clemson announced Welling had torn his ACL.

Clemson's season didn't last much longer than that. The Tigers dropped out of the ACC Tournament against Duke on March 13 and lost to Iowa in the first round of the NCAA Tournament on March 20. Clemson missed Welling's team-high 5.4 rebounds per game as it was outrebounded 81-54 in its final two games.

Welling started rehabbing immediately for his senior season in 2026-2027.

"It's been hard, but we've been making great progress. We're on track, and got the strength, mobility's good, all those things, the milestones have been checking off," he said. "Pretty difficult rehab, but it's been a good process, and I've learned a lot about myself."

The 6-foot-11 forward isn't practicing at the moment. He experienced a setback earlier in the offseason, which he described as pain where surgeons dug out space for his bone graft. During that time he did his physical therapy underwater to reduce impact, but he's back to working on regular drills.

Welling said the current timeline has him on track for a return around the new year.

"Around that time is when I would hope to be back, maybe sooner, maybe after," he said. "You never know, but really hopeful."

In his place, Clemson will occupy the paint with freshman Will Stevens, sophomore Trent Steinour and senior David Fuchs. The Tigers also added Samford transfer Dylan Faulkner to their frontcourt. Clemson coach Brad Brownell said Steinour got extended reps during the team's August tour of Italy while a handful of Clemson players dealt with injury.

Ace Buckner and Faulkner are expected to be ready for the season opener on Nov. 2 after Buckner had shoulder surgery at the end of last season and Faulkner broke his toe during the offseason. Zac Foster began practicing recently after tearing his ACL last December, but Brownell couldn't say if he'd be ready for the first game.

"Probably more challenging than I would like. We really missed just about all the summer," Brownell said. "When you look at our team going into it, we're sitting here. We knew we didn't have Carter, but you'd think you're going to have Zac and Ace and Dylan Faulkner could be three starters, and they don't they don't really work out all summer."

Brownell said that Welling's return would be a big boost for Clemson's interior on a team he said is likely going to rely more on its guards than in years past.

Whatever his impact is later this season, Welling just wants to be out there again.

"You learn a lot about yourself when you base your identity so much in basketball, and when you can't do that anymore, you realize that you got a lot more to life than just basketball," he said.

"But I'll be excited to be a basketball player again."

## How do Clemson players handle a program with changing expectations?

BY NIC PAINTER, TIGERNET  
OCTOBER 11, 2026

CHARLOTTE — When someone thinks of Clemson sports, football easily comes to mind. People think of the run down The Hill; they think of Death Valley, and they think of Dabo Swinney holding up two National Championships.

Brad Brownell has been changing that assumption.

Another sport on campus has become a national mainstay over the last couple of years.

Brownell has shifted the culture of Clemson men's basketball and created a perennial tournament expectation within his program.

Brownell has taken three straight teams to the NCAA Tournament, and he has made the tournament in four of the last six years. One of these tournament berths also includes a run to the Elite Eight in the 2023-24 season.

With this culture shift, the Tigers have been given greater responsibility on the court.

His veterans on each roster are being tasked with carrying this expectation. This year's expectations fall on guard Ace Buckner and forward Carter Welling.

Neither player wants to be a part of the team that fails to meet this standard.

"You don't want to be the team that doesn't make the tournament," Buckner said. "But I'm very confident in this team. I think we can make a deep run in the tournament and in the ACC tournament. I'm excited to see what we can do."

Buckner knows there is a standard to meet, but he believes this year's team can go further than just hearing its name called on Selection Sunday.

With that faith, he has carried a new responsibility every day as a leader.

"I just carry it with confidence, man," Buckner said. "Having a responsibility like that, it comes with (it), you've got to take it with pride. You can't shy away from something like that. You've got to use it during the season and be excited for it."

Carter Welling is facing this same responsibility, and he is sharing that load with his teammates.

"It lies within each other," Welling said. "Coach does a great job of doing it himself. But at the end of the day, that doesn't really mean anything if the players aren't holding each other accountable. And so, we have a really talented team that is all holding each other accountable."

The responsibility to make the NCAA Tournament is becoming intertwined with Clemson basketball, and it is also bringing excitement to its roster.

The Tigers are experiencing one of the best eras in Clemson's history, and it comes with a thrill.

"It's awesome," Welling said. "I feel like being a part of something great is always a good thing to be a part of. And so, just super grateful for the opportunity to wear the Paw at this time and to wear it with a bunch of great guys who can get a lot done."

This era is bringing new meaning to the Paw for many players and fans associated with college basketball, but Buckner has felt this excitement since childhood.

"It's very exciting, especially coming from my background," Buckner said. "My dad played here back in the day. Just now that I have the opportunity to do something he never did, it's exciting for sure."

Buckner has been part of Clemson for a while, and now it's his turn to further the legacy his dad, Greg Buckner, started in Tiger Town.

Brownell has created buzz in Clemson around his roster, and it will soon be their time to continue the run the Tigers have seen in the last couple of years.

Carrying that expectation comes with the territory, but

the recent successes have also brought a lot of excitement for Clemson to take the court.

## How Clemson Guard Ace Buckner Learned, Worked on Weaknesses in 2026 Offseason

BY GRIFFIN BARFIELD, CLEMSON ON SI  
OCTOBER 9, 2026

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Clemson basketball guard Ace Buckner was candid when discussing what he needed to do during the offseason: he wanted to be the most complete player possible.

Speaking to the media at ACC Tipoff, Buckner was vulnerable about what he needed to do to be the next All-ACC guard that Clemson would have, and he was a gym rat to improve on those things.

"I realized what my weaknesses were, and I tried to fix those this summer," he said on Wednesday.

So, what are those weaknesses? He mentioned shooting and growing as a leader to be two of those that he was improving on.

Buckner was recovering all summer from shoulder surgery, missing the games during Clemson's trip to Italy and was sidelined for a majority of the last few months. During that time, with so many transfers and young pieces playing, he let his voice be heard from the bench, looking to instill the team's culture that the players before him had left.

While his first season had him out with a redshirt, he learned from the likes of Dillon and Chase Hunter, Jaeden Zackery and Justin Porter, all upperclassmen.

"I feel like I picked up a lot of things this summer when I was injured, just being on the sideline, talking a lot more, stepping out of my comfort zone, showing guys the way," Buckner said. "Showing them the Clemson way, showing them how we do things."

From a shooting standpoint, the Dallas native wasn't the worst, but he wanted to see improvement from the 42.9% field goal percentage and 31.2% rate he had from beyond the arc.

"I feel like shooting was probably my biggest weakness early in the season," he said. "I feel like at the end of the season, ACC play, it got better. I think that came with just not playing basketball for a year."

Buckner is expected to take another step in 2026-27, and both parts of his game will certainly play a role in that. Clemson's expected to be more dynamic in its guard play, with Buckner starting alongside sophomore Zac Foster, one of the Tigers' most committed recruits in program history.

The junior trusts his game, and the ceiling on this Clemson team could be at its highest in years if Buckner plays his cards right.

"I stayed confident in my shot," he said. "I understood the work that I put in, and I'm excited to see what I can do this year."

## Clemson has to get healthy, but Brownell likes what his team has once it does

BY GRAYSON MANN, TIGERNET  
OCTOBER 7, 2026

CHARLOTTE — Brad Brownell stood at the Hilton Uptown podium with a bright smile.

In the back of his mind, he knows injuries have cast doubt on how his team will reach the offseason finish line before a November 2 tipoff against Stetson.

He's waiting on Ace Buckner to return to form.

He's watching Zac Foster get back to 100 percent after his ACL tear last season.

A few more injuries from a trip to Italy have his attention,

but one certainty excites him once this group is at full strength.

"We have been battling some injuries this summer, so we're probably a little bit behind schedule from where I'd like to be, but I think we've got great potential," Brownell said, opening Clemson's ACC Tip-Off availability.

Brownell is chasing his fourth straight NCAA Tournament appearance, something no head coach has managed in the program's history. The last time the Tigers reached four in a row in March featured three appearances led by Oliver Purnell, from 2007-10, and Brownell taking the team a fourth year in 2011.

How does Brownell achieve a program-first feat? Well, pursuing that will look very different than last year's Clemson team.

Clemson won with defense and post play last spring, with RJ Godfrey and Carter Welling as the spark plugs on that offense while Buckner grew up as ACC play came into focus.

This group will be much more guard-centric, with Buckner and Foster headlining the backcourt alongside freshman standout Harris Reynolds. Brownell feels the unit can space the floor more efficiently.

Should Clemson play up to the vision in Brownell's mind, he thinks another dance in March is absolutely possible.

"We might be a little bit different in how we play; I think we're a little more guard-centric than maybe the last few years," Brownell said. "And so we're trying to open the floor a little bit more, playing some spread ball screen stuff a little bit earlier in the clock and see how that goes. I think we've recruited some really good shooters and worked really hard in that area to be able to space the floor. If we can come together and be connected and defend like most of the Clemson teams that I've coached, we have a chance to achieve the kind of things you talked about."

If Clemson can't go immediately, Brownell is confident the trip to Italy will be a huge boost for a team that may have to shift roles at the start of the season.

Reynolds, the freshman four-star, handled the top responsibilities of the backcourt.

Dallas Thomas continued to refine his craft.

Chase Thompson reached new heights as a playmaker.

For Brownell, it was a great experience on and off the court.

"We took a trip to Italy this summer, and it was a great experience, not only the basketball but really the off-the-court bonding and things that we got to do together," Brownell said. "But we did it with a group that was really only about half the team. These guys (Buckner, Welling) were out, Zac Foster was out, and Dylan Faulkner was out. So it's been a bit of a challenge to put the pieces together. I think we're going to have great depth when we all get there."

Clemson has to get healthy, but when it does, Brownell likes what he has on this roster.

It may look different than last year, but one consistency Clemson hopes to achieve is hearing its name called in the Big Dance for the fourth straight season.

## Why Brad Brownell, Clemson Basketball's Trip to Italy Will Be About More Than Hoops Itself

BY GRIFFIN BARFIELD, CLEMSON ON SI  
JULY 24, 2026

Every summer, there's a Clemson athletic program that makes a trip overseas to combine both competition and team bonding. Clemson basketball is the lucky program this offseason.

On Thursday, men's basketball head coach Brad Brownell gave more details about his team's trip to Italy, which will be a 10-day tour throughout the country while stopping in three cities. Each city will feature a contest against an overseas

opponent.

But it won't be about those three games that will define the trip; it will be about the relationships that will be built in Europe, beginning next week.

"I think, as much as any, the relationship building that happens organically," Brownell said on Thursday. "Through time together and all the different things that happen during your journey, you can't put a price tag on that in terms of what that means."

The Tigers are visiting Rome, Florence and Como for a week and a half abroad. In Rome, they will face BC Silute, a Lithuanian A2 League team, next Wednesday. On Aug. 1, while in Florence, Brownell's group will face Pro Camp, an A2 and B1 Italian Select Team. The final game the team will play is Orange Bassano, an under-20 Italian team, in Como on Aug. 4.

Brownell is looking forward to what his new group can showcase while playing three unique teams that might not play the style that traditional college basketball teams play.

"It's good to see guys actually competing against another team and seeing how guys think, how they react, how they handle adversity?" he said. "It'll be different, poise under pressure, decision making, execution."

But he admitted that playing basketball is the topic that is "probably being the least significant" during their travels. There have been plenty of practices over the course of this summer, including Brownell's famous "Strongman" competition during the hot weeks. He considers this trip a "reward" for the endeavors the Tigers have worked towards.

"I think it's a little bit of a reward for how hard our guys have worked all of a sudden to know, hey, we're building to this," he said, "and then we're going to have a great experience together."

Especially with the construction that has gone on within Littlejohn Coliseum, the coaching staff hasn't had a traditional office. Player locker rooms are also different, meaning connecting as a team has been untraditional for Brownell, entering his 17th season and being the mainstay of the ACC.

Despite this, the unity within the team, especially over 10 days, couldn't have come at a better time.

"I think, moving forward with building relationships, both with players and players together, certainly the learning experience is awesome," Brownell said.

## Clemson's Brownell looks beyond analytics for players

BY GRIFFIN BARFIELD, THE CHARLESTON POST AND COURIER  
JULY 8, 2026

CLEMSON-Brad Brownell doesn't need a spreadsheet and analytics to tell him how to build a basketball program. But his numbers already tell the story.

The most important qualities in a player aren't always found in a spreadsheet.

"I think we find guys that like to play and want to get better and be coached, and those guys generally improve and have success," he said.

The ACC's longest-tenured head coach understands the boundaries of his program. He doesn't have the history of other in-conference schools such as Duke and North Carolina. He won't outspend the likes of blue bloods Kansas and Kentucky.

But he does have a knack for finding hard-working players who want to be pushed. That's allowed the program to go to three straight NCAA Tournaments for the first time in over 15 years.

"We all kind of know what we have," Brownell said in June, "and then try not to waste our time getting involved with guys that we can't afford."

While analytics aren't his style, there's one bit of data that shows how efficient he is with his players. A statistic from college basketball analyst Evan Miyakawa has Clemson as a top 15 school in player development in the last 10 years.

Brownell is included in a list that features names like Kelvin Sampson, Dan Hurley, Rick Barnes and Matt Painter, but he's quick to give others credit.

"I think assistant coaches get a lot of credit too for how much they work with our guys and I think we try to give guys confidence," he said.

There are plenty of facets that make up Brownell's culture, one that is built on "grit." Embedded within that is all around success, both as a player and as a human. Another is being up front with players instead of telling them what they want to hear.

Transfer guard Justin Porter heard both of these during his trip to Clemson last offseason.

"He was going to make me a better man, a better player, and so he was telling me all that in the portal and [I] felt good about it," he said.

Boomerang transfer RJ Godfrey said that his coach's philosophy has him adopting a "soldier mentality," doing difficult things whether he's in the mindset to do so or not. It led him to coming back from Georgia after the 2024-25 season.

"He's changed the way I think," Godfrey said. "He's just helped me be strong, just as a man too."

On the court, it's about adjusting the player he's seen into a cog in a system. Brownell admits that his staff do "things that make sense with players." A visible takeaway from this idea can be seen with how most of his frontcourt players make a jump shooting threes.

Former center Viktor Lakhin went from a near 26% three-point shooter the year before he arrived to a 37.5% clip in his only season with the Tigers. Forward Hunter Tyson went from a 23.4% shooter his freshman season to over 40% in his final year, which saw him with a First-Team All-ACC honor in 2022-23.

"What can we improve, and what can we feel like we can help that's going to make a difference, and maybe are there some things that we can leave alone," Brownell said. "I think efficiency is some of it."

That efficiency has created the consistency in the ACC, where Clemson has been a mainstay in the top half of the conference standings in the last four seasons.

While performances on the court are just as important, the time spent off of it matters, especially in a place like the Upstate. Throughout losing streaks, Brownell brings confidence into the fray to get players back to where they need to be.

It's never used in a negative manner, rather to bring the group up to gain internal momentum.

"It's really challenging them when guys are struggling to keep the spirit and morale of your team where you need it," he said.

Being selective about player's characters also helps bring enjoyment into everyday activities with the group. Guard Butta Johnson saw the "real love" over the course of his only season with the Tigers, creating an impact immediately.

"I do think as a staff, myself included, we enjoy spending time with our players," Brownell added. "We enjoy being in the gym."

That will be his method for seasons to come, and players continue to buy in. That's allowed for Clemson to play its gritty style of basketball: Brownell's players want to win for him.

It's not just the coaching staff, but the people in the stands that help the push too. Just ask four-year guard Joseph Girard III with Syracuse, who was changed by the solo season he had with the Tigers.

"Anyone looking forward to living in a great place, playing with great people, playing for great people, should go to Clemson," he said.

## Most Clemson offseasons feature a transfer point guard. Brad Brownell chose not to get one this time.

BY GRIFFIN BARFIELD, THE CHARLESTON POST AND COURIER  
JUNE 23, 2026

The trend has been consistent for Clemson basketball: every offseason, a portal point guard joins the program.

2022 brought in Anderson native and former College of Charleston standout Brevin Galloway to aid the backcourt. A year later, Syracuse transfer Joseph Girard III helped take the Tigers to the Elite Eight. In recent seasons, Boston College guard Jaeden Zackery and Middle Tennessee State's Jestin Porter were the names bringing the ball up at times.

But in the 2026 offseason, Tigers coach Brad Brownell broke the streak. He decided to stick with his current group and didn't end up adding a transfer point guard to help it.

He explained why last week during his offseason media availability. He sees three helping him next season with that role: sophomore Zac Foster, redshirt sophomore Ace Buckner and true freshman Harris Reynolds.

"I just think basketball's different," he said. "I think all different kinds of guys can handle the ball, and certainly between Zac and Ace and Harris, we've got three guys that can all bring the ball up with speed and make plays off the bounce, create for themselves or others."

Porter and four-year contributor Dillon Hunter made up last year's backcourt, meaning Clemson will have a new duo for the 2026-27 season. Foster was an energetic freshman who dazzled at Littlejohn Coliseum before tearing his ACL last December.

Meanwhile, Buckner, redshirting in 2024-25, averaged over eight points while playing roughly 20 minutes per game. Despite his father, Greg, having his jersey retired, his son used the pressure as an opportunity to show how good he can be in the future.

It has led Brownell to go with a younger group, but they bring something different than some of his previous teams did.

"I do think we'll be able to space the floor, have more shooters on the floor than maybe last year, and hopefully put pressure or open lanes for our speedy guards to drive," he said.

Reynolds, an Atlanta guard, headlined a trio of recruits for Clemson's 2026 class. The Tigers have needed him to do more because of the injuries to Foster and Buckner, who have been out for the entire offseason thus far.

But it's helping the freshman.

"So far, I've liked what I've seen in terms of, not just basic talent and all those kinds of things," Brownell said. "We knew that he was fast and athletic and can make shots and all those kinds of things, but he's a good listener."

Clemson's transfer portal class featured more shooting than anything else. The Tigers were 176th in the country in 3-point percentage last season, deciding to use their interior scoring threats to win games.

This offseason, Brownell brought in Notre Dame sharpshooter Cole Certa and TCU wing Liutauras Lelevicius to change that. Certa shot the 3 at a 35.3-percent clip in ACC play last season and averaged 16.1 points against conference opponents, while Lelevicius was a consistent 38-percent deep shooter for the Horned Frogs.

Certa, a 6-foot-5 guard, has had to "do a lot of different things right now as well" without Foster and Buckner on the court, too.

The transfer bigs, David Fuchs and Dylan Faulkner, could add to that ability. Fuchs wasn't afraid to shoot the 3, averaging 30.3 percent from beyond the arc with San Francisco.

Faulkner is the outlier, having only attempted five of those with Samford in the 2025-26 season. But with how

Brownell has been able to develop previous bigs into pick-and-pop shooters, namely Viktor Lakhin and Carter Welling, it wouldn't be considered out of the cards.

It would allow the Tigers to look like a completely different team compared to that of last season, beginning with their new backcourt.

"I think our big guys, as long as we play multiple big guys, you can keep guys fresh to run," Brownell said. "So yes, we're trying to play faster."

A quick offense that's centered around the perimeter is expected from Clemson men's basketball for the 2026-27 season, which will look to bring Brownell back to the NCAA Tournament for the fourth straight season. To do that, Foster and Buckner will be pivotal in getting there.

## What Brad Brownell said about Clemson basketball's NIL compared to other schools

BY DERRIAN CARTER, GREENVILLE NEWS  
JUNE 18, 2026

CLEMSON — Clemson basketball coach Brad Brownell believes the Tigers can compete in the ACC and nationally despite not being big spenders in the sport.

"We're not near the top, but we're enough that we could be competitive, and that's where we need to be," Brownell said June 17 at a media availability. "There's teams that have rosters that are twice as much."

Brownell's sentiments are similar to Clemson football coach Dabo Swinney. Brownell recognizes that money is a "challenge" for basketball, especially at Clemson where football gets a larger piece of revenue-sharing.

Brownell said he and athletic director Graham Neff have a plan in place for men's basketball to have a competitive roster, but the 17th-year Clemson coach recognizes the Tigers can't pursue every recruit or transfer they want.

"You're trying to find really good people that you can afford. That's what it is," Brownell said. "We don't have unlimited resources. There's certainly guys who we would like to recruit sometimes that would fit our culture, but we can't afford them... but we're pretty pleased with the guys that we get."

Those guys include returning guards Ace Buckner and Zac Foster, forward Chase Thompson and Dallas Thomas and center Carter Welling.

Clemson added four transfers: guards Cole Certa (Notre Dame) and Liutauras Lelevicius (TCU) and forwards Dylan Faulkner (Samford) and David Fuchs (San Francisco). The Tigers also signed three high-school players: four-star guard Harris Reynolds, three-star center Will Stevens and three-star guard Amare James.

Brownell is banking on these additions and player development to help the Tigers make the NCAA Tournament for the fourth straight season. Clemson lost five seniors because of expiring eligibility, including guard Dillon Hunter and forward RJ Godfrey, and Jake Wahlin, who transferred to BYU.

Clemson's most notable transfer addition was Certa. The 6-foot-5 guard averaged 12.8 points, shooting 37.4% from the field and 36.7% from 3-point range in 31 games and 16 starts last season.

Reynolds could also play immediately, similar to Zac Foster in 2025-26, because of his talent and speed.

Brownell said it is too early to tell, but Clemson's strength next season could be its perimeter players. He said Buckner, Foster and Reynolds play with a tempo that can push the pace offensively, and Certa and Lelevicius are capable 3-point shooters.

"I do think we'll be able to space the floor, have more shooters on the floor than maybe last year consistently," Brownell said. "Hope we'll put pressure or open lanes for our speedy guards to drive."

Ace Buckner, Carter Welling, Zac Foster injury updates

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Brownell said Buckner underwent offseason shoulder surgery. The third-year guard will be out for “most of the summer,” but it will have no impact on his availability this season.

Buckner averaged 8.3 points, 2.9 rebounds and 1.8 assists in 35 games and three starts last season. He projects to be a starter for the Tigers.

Welling tore his ACL on March 11 in the ACC Tournament that caused him to miss the NCAA Tournament. Brownell said it is “too early to tell” regarding Welling’s recovery, but if things go well and the center wants to play, he will be on the floor.

Welling, who transferred to Clemson from Utah Valley last season, has one year of eligibility remaining and could redshirt in 2026-27 to play his final season in 2027-28.

Foster also tore his ACL last season. Brownell said he is doing well in his recovery and hasn’t had any major setbacks, but he doesn’t think the guard will be able to scrimmage during the team’s trip to Italy next month. Foster projects to be a starter for the Tigers, too.

## Clemson spent more this spring on basketball roster building. The results showed.

BY CHAPEL FOWLER, THE STATE  
MAY 21, 2026

In one of their first offseason planning meetings, Clemson men’s basketball coach Brad Brownell remembers athletic director Graham Neff giving him a number.

It was an initial stab at how much money Brownell would have to construct next year’s basketball roster. The total dollar amount — a combination of in-house revenue-sharing dollars and additional NIL funds — was “maybe a little more than last year,” Brownell recalled.

“But we quickly realized that wasn’t even going to be close,” Brownell told The State during ACC spring meetings in Amelia Island, Florida.

So Clemson upped its financial commitment for men’s basketball — and quickly saw the results.

Brownell’s team retained every player with remaining eligibility from last year’s roster except for one. The Tigers also signed a four-man transfer portal class that included a big-time scorer and addressed their major front-court needs.

Clemson’s longtime coach — who admitted last year that his program’s smaller revenue-sharing cut relative to other basketball programs would be a “challenge” — credited Neff and the administration for adjusting after acknowledging that the college basketball player payment market was “going crazy” in 2026.

The end result, Brownell said, was Clemson having enough funds to be competitive in a sport where top schools nationally are reportedly shelling out \$15 million to \$20 million (and sometimes more) to fill out their rosters each year.

“Certainly, we’re a factor,” Brownell said.

### Inside Clemson basketball’s 2026 offseason

Offseason roster highlights for Clemson included holding onto promising young guards Zac Foster and Ace Buckner, scooping up former Notre Dame sharpshooter Cole Certa and signing three more veteran transfers who all project as rotation players: Samford forward Dylan Faulkner, TCU wing Liutauras Lelevičius and San Francisco forward David Fuchs.

The Tigers signed a three-player high school class that’s led by four-star guard Harris Reynolds of Atlanta and ranks No. 33 nationally per the 247Sports Composite.

Starting forward Carter Welling is back as well, though a late-season torn ACL could sideline the former Utah Valley State transfer for some or all of the 2026-27 season.

Rotational forwards Chase Thompson and Dallas Thomas return, too. Clemson’s only departure was forward Jake Wahlin, who transferred to BYU.

It’s not the type of roster that screams “preseason national champion” or even “preseason top 25.” Recruiting services are mixed on the strength of Clemson’s four-man portal haul: 247Sports ranked the Tigers as the No. 52 class nationally, while On3 Sports had the group at No. 17 overall.

Even Brownell said this year’s Clemson team is “probably in a similar spot” as last year’s team, in terms of outside expectations.

“But we have spent more money, because the market’s demanded it, right?” Brownell said. “It’s going crazy. ... The amount of guys getting \$2 million and \$3 million is remarkable.”

Last year, Brownell publicly confirmed in an interview that Clemson men’s basketball would receive about 11% of the school’s rev-share money in the first year after the House settlement, which allowed colleges to directly pay athletes up to \$20.5 million. (After some deductions, the total was more like \$18 million.)

That was a smaller cut than other schools’ basketball programs, primarily because Dabo Swinney’s Clemson football team is an incredibly valuable asset to the university and commands a massive percentage of rev-sharing money (86% of the total last year, or over \$15 million). Men’s basketball got about \$2 million.

All told, according to a report from Larry Williams of TigerIllustrated, Clemson spent around \$6 million on its men’s basketball team last year. That total includes NIL money the school was able to legally “front-load” before college sports shifted to a revenue-sharing model in July 2025, as well as “above-the-cap” NIL dollars within the NCAA’s new rev-sharing framework.

### Elevated spending helps Clemson stay ‘competitive’

Brownell didn’t give specific numbers about this year’s roster spending, but he and Neff both confirmed in interviews with The State that it was higher than last year’s.

You don’t hold onto a player like Foster, Clemson’s dynamic sophomore guard, or execute a quick-turn recruitment on someone like Certa, a double-digit scoring wing who shot 36.7% on 3-pointers at Notre Dame last year, without having some spending power.

TigerIllustrated, citing sources, said Clemson’s financial commitment to this year’s men’s basketball roster is “approaching” \$10 million, which would be a roughly 66% increase from last year’s reported total.

Neff meets frequently with Clemson’s coaches to talk about big-picture roster planning and spending. He said he and Brownell arrived at an adjusted spending number together after evaluating the state of the college basketball market.

“I’m pleased with what that partnership looked like,” Neff said, adding he has “a lot of confidence” in Brownell’s roster construction ability based on his track record.

Clemson has won 20-plus games four seasons in a row and reached three straight NCAA Tournaments for the first time under Brownell, who’s entering his 17th season and has talked openly about coaching basketball at a football-inclined school.

But Brownell said Clemson’s willingness to up its financial commitment to men’s basketball paid off this offseason.

“We’re (doing) enough to be competitive, certainly, and Graham has been good about recognizing that,” Brownell said. “... We’ve done some things to try to make it better, and, again, I think we’ll be competitive that way (moving forward).”