History

The Sun Bowl was first played on January 1, 1935, as a fund-raising event for a local service club, to benefit underprivileged children and to finance improvements to the El Paso High School Stadium. It has grown into El Paso's number one national attraction and is second only to the Rose Bowl in longevity.

On October 18, 1934, at a meeting of the El Paso Kiwanis Club, Dr. Brice Schuller suggested that the club sponsor a football game on New Year's Day, matching an El Paso High School All-Star Team against a worthy opponent. The motion was passed unanimously. It was decided to ask for public suggestions as to the name of this annual game, and the name "Sun Bowl" was submitted by Dr. C. M. Hendricks, who became the first Sun Bowl Association president. The following year, a week-long schedule of events was added to the Sun Bowl festivities, and four other local service clubs (Rotary, Lions, Optimist and Active 20-30) joined the Kiwanis in coordinating the entire "Sun Carnival" calendar. In 1936, New Mexico State and Hardin-Simmons were invited to play, and the Sun Bowl has been a college game ever since.

Over the years, many great collegiate stars who went on to illustrious football careers in both the college and professional ranks have participated in the Sun Bowl. Some of these athletes include Ara Parseghian, Merlin Olsen, Tony Dorsett, Barry Sanders, Billy Stevens, Charlie Johnson and Jesse Whittenton. Another famous Sun Bowl participant was Burt Reynolds, who was a member of the 1955 Florida State team.

Today, events held in conjunction with the Sun Bowl include the Western Refining College All-America Golf Classic, the FirstLight Federal Credit Union Sun Bowl Parade and the State Farm Sun Bowl Basketball Tournament. During the early years of the Sun Bowl, it was a tradition to match the Border Conference champion against the best available opponent. Today the Sun Bowl matches teams from the tradition-rich Big Ten and Pac-10 Conferences.