

Writer to blame for lopsided loss

By KEVIN ADAMS
Sports editor

Last week, when I picked Florida State to beat USC, I said — and I quote — “Remember back in September when I picked Georgia to pick the beloved Gamecocks? We won, 23-10. Here’s hoping history repeats itself . . . FSU, 27-24. Just remember fellas — I’m doing it for the team.”

Pretty smart, eh? I figured I couldn’t lose. If the Seminoles won, I called the game correctly. If USC won, I could claim I was a good luck charm. Either way, I won. Right?

Wrong. The Seminoles won, but I certainly didn’t call the game (a 59-0 FSU win) correctly. 59-0. Not even close. But at least I’ve figured out why.

Brant Long. For those of you who aren’t regular readers of the sports page, Mr. Long is a sports reporter. And a pretty good one at that, so don’t get me wrong. But he’s a jinx.

Without Mr. Long in the press box, USC is 7-0. But with him covering the games against Georgia Tech and FSU, the Gamecocks are 0-2 and have been outscored, 93-0.

Sorry, Brant. No more press passes.

With that, I can most confidently predict that the Gamecocks will win their last three games (including the Liberty Bowl).

Last week’s record was 17-4 (.810). For the season, it’s 125-32 (.796).

This week’s picks:

NO. 2 SOUTHERN CAL AT ARIZONA STATE: The Sun Devils have won three in a row. Make it four. . . upset special. . . Arizona St., 24-20.

NO. 4 WEST VIRGINIA AT RUTGER: After a good start, Rutgers has gone downhill. That’s not good against a team called the Mountaineers. . . West Virginia, 41-16.

VIRGINIA TECH AT NO. 5 FLORIDA STATE: I don’t think the Seminoles can beat even Virginia Tech, 59-0. . . Florida St., 45-10.

STANFORD AT NO. 6 UCLA:

I’ve picked the last three Bruins games wrong. Not this week. . . UCLA, 38-23.

NO. 19 COLORADO AT NO. 7 NEBRASKA: The Cornhuskers better not be looking ahead to next week’s clash with Oklahoma. . . Nebraska, 28-17.

NO. 8 OKLAHOMA AT MISSOURI: The Sooners can afford to look ahead to Nebraska. . . Oklahoma, 49-14.

NO. 17 GEORGIA AT NO. 9 AUBURN: The Bulldogs’ great rushing attack against Auburn’s great defense. When in doubt, go with defense. . . Auburn, 24-17.

NO. 10 WYOMING AT HOUSTON: The Cowboys’ dreams of an undefeated season come crashing to a halt as the Cougars move into the Top 20. . . Houston, 47-40.

TEXAS A&M AT NO. 11 ARKANSAS: The Razorbacks earn a bid to the Cotton Bowl. . . Arkansas, 27-23.

NO. 12 LSU AT MISSISSIPPI STATE: In their minds, the Bengal Tigers are already playing Miami. . . LSU, 34-22.

ILLINOIS AT NO. 13 MICHIGAN: Illinois has worked itself back into the bowl picture after a horrible start. But this won’t help matters any. . . Michigan, 29-18.

KANSAS AT NO. 14 OKLAHOMA STATE: The Jayhawk winning streak stops at one. . . Oklahoma St., 47-19.

NO. 15 SYRACUSE AT BOSTON COLLEGE: The Orangemen tune up for West Virginia. . . Syracuse, 31-20.

NO. 16 CLEMSON AT MARYLAND: The Tigers clinch the Citrus Bowl. . . Clemson, 24-16.

SOUTHWESTERN LOUISIANA AT NO. 18 ALABAMA: A welcome breather for the Tide. . . Alabama, 32-13.

OREGON STATE AT NO. 20 WASHINGTON STATE: The first Top 20 appearance for the Cougars in seven years will last at least one

See PREDICTIONS page 9



KENT BROOME/The Gamecock

USC sophomore placekicker Collin Mackie follows through on one of his kicks. Mackie is 13 of 18 in his field goal attempts this season.

Mackie kicks give boost to Gamecocks

By DAVE KAY
Staff writer

Collin Mackie is a tremendous asset to the Gamecock football team.

Not only did the sophomore placekicker set an NCAA record for field goals made by a freshman last year with 25, but this season he was selected to the *Playboy* preseason All-America team. Although a prestigious honor, the selection brought a few jokes from his family.

“My grandmother asked me if I was going to have my clothes on in the picture,” Mackie said, “but beyond that, they just tease me here and there.”

Mackie is 13 of 18 in field goals this season and is 38 of 50 for his career. Also, Mackie has not missed an extra point in his college career, with 60 consecutive made over the last two years.

At the age of 9, when Mackie was playing little league soccer, he developed an interest in kicking the football.

“I played a lot of different sports when I was young, and I was the only one with a soccer background,” he said. “So when the football

coach asked if anybody wanted to kick, I figured why not?”

Attending Irmo High School also played a big part in developing Mackie’s interest.

“At the time when I was young, we were the only team kicking extra points, and that was something new and exciting,” he said. “I just developed myself from there.”

“In little league, my father would help me a lot during the summer by holding the ball for me and charting my kicks. I played other positions in little league and not until high school did I primarily become a kicker and start concentrating on it.”

Various colleges other than USC recruited Mackie, but he said he never had a doubt as to where he would go.

“I saw great opportunities here not only athletically but academically as well,” he said. “It was the atmosphere that I wanted to be associated with.”

Mackie said adjusting to college football isn’t easy.

“You’re not used to the pressures of football on top of academics,” he said. “You’ve got to plan

your time around football and school and be able to make the right decisions.”

Practice for kickers is different from practice for the rest of the squad, according to Mackie.

Monday is usually a short practice for everyone, including kickers. Tuesday consists of heavy kicking, and Wednesday is the day to practice finesse shots. Thursday, the team practices in the stadium so he doesn’t get in much kicking then. The only time he kicks with the whole team is Friday, Mackie said.

Mackie admitted that it is tough to concentrate when he’s out on the field during a game.

“It’s all a state of mind,” said Mackie. “You’ve got to picture the ball going through the uprights. It’s a matter of applying yourself when it counts.”

Looking to the future, Mackie is almost certain to enter the ranks of professional football if he keeps up his standard of kicking for the next two years. But for now, Gamecock fans can count on Mackie to always do his best.

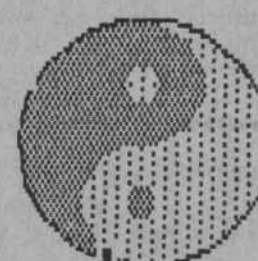
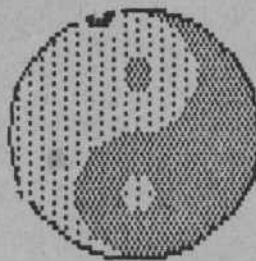
As Mackie says, “Just keep your head down, and follow through.”

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