

Ford will be missed despite rivalry with USC, columnist says

One of the most prolific periods in the history of sports in the state of South Carolina has come to an end.

I figured that was need enough for an emergency sports column.

I realize that the name Danny Ford doesn't bring smiles to everyone's face at USC, but the man was closing in on legend status.

After a third straight 10-2 season, Danny Ford has resigned in the wake of 14 rule violations being investigated by the NCAA. For some, it is a tragedy. For others, many Gamecock fans included, it is a minor miracle. But no matter what the views, college football has lost a great personality and a great football coach.

The record speaks for itself. Overall, Ford was 96-29-4 and is the third active winningest coach in the country. His Tigers just completed their third straight 10-2 season and won their fifth bowl game in eight tries. Add to that a national championship in 1981 for not only Clemson University but the state of South Carolina, and you get a coach who ranks as one of the



BRANT LONG

Pep Talk

best . . . ever.

Ford was the South personified. Ask some Northerners what a Southerner is, and they would probably just say "Danny Ford."

The tobacco, the cussin', the love of football — they all add up to the perfect man of the South. When Danny was interviewed, he wouldn't spit out all kinds of football jargon, he would just talk. Many of his quotes featured classic Southern terms like "shoot," "dam," and the all-time favorite "hooooo-weeeee!!" Whatever the quote, Ford was interesting.

He was also a mastermind of the game. Sure, it wasn't always pretty — Terry Allen up the middle,

Joe Henderson over right guard — but it worked, and it worked well.

One of the plays that sticks in my mind is the tailback pass that Clemson had begun to use a couple of years ago. Even though you knew it was coming, it still worked. Against Virginia Tech, it worked well. Against USC, it worked well. But USC is another point.

Considered one of the biggest rivalries in the country, USC-Clemson usually wasn't much of a contest during the Ford era. USC was 3-7-1 against the Tigers, and this year it was no contest. Clemson fans can brag about how Ford ended his segment of the series with USC.

One question that is raised by Ford's resignation is where will he go now. It is almost definite a coach of his caliber will go somewhere. An interesting thought would be Danny Ford at the helm of the Michigan Wolverines. It sure would be nice to see a small dot of tobacco juice on the immaculate turf in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Since Alabama is out of the question, how about Oklahoma. Former Sooners coach Barry Switzer is one of the few men Ford trails on the winningest active coach list. The Sooners also lost to Colorado this year and lost a shot at the Big Eight title. OU also likes to run, just as Ford does, and run the option. Ford would fit in there.

One more suggestion is Florida. Despite troubles (like the ones Clemson is going through), they have a primarily running attack. If Ford teamed up with Emmitt Smith, the results could be earth-shattering. Look at Terrence Flagler and Kevin Mack (his football ability, not his criminal record). Ford took these youngsters out of high school and turned them into collegiate and then pro athletes.

Saying Danny Ford will be missed is like saying Roseanne Barr eats a little something at each meal. This column's purpose was not to make a hero out of Ford, but no one can accuse him of whatever wrongdoings Clemson may have committed.

Whatever Danny does, I think he'll do it well.

Ford Continued from page 1

son praised Ford for his accomplishments, but also said there had been differences between the two men.

"We have honest differences of opinion on certain basic aspects of the football program," Robinson said in a statement. "A separation under any terms would be difficult. An amicable parting is certainly less painful for all involved. That is why we felt it was in the university's best interest to agree to a fair settlement under the terms of Ford's contract and bring the matter to a close."

USC Athletic Director King Dixon was unavailable for comment. Head Football Coach Sparky Woods is out of town, according to the USC Athletic Department.

University of Georgia Athletic Director Vince Dooley said he was surprised by the news of Ford's resignation and said Clemson is "a good school with a good program."

Ford has not been available for comment since the NCAA informed the school of the allegations. Ford and his staff had been instructed not to comment on the allegations.

Head football coaches around the state reacted similarly to the news of Ford's resignation.

Charlie Taafe, head coach at The Citadel, praised Ford for his accomplishments at Clemson.

"Obviously, Danny has been one of the most successful college football coaches in the country," Taafe said. "He brought Clemson to new heights. I'm sorry to see him go."

South Carolina State Head Coach Willie Jeffries agreed.

"First of all, he was a fine coach," Jeffries said. "I hate to see him leave the ranks of coaching in South Carolina . . . It's very unfortunate."

"During the interim period (while Clemson looks to

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—Citadel Head Coach Charlie Taafe

replace Ford), it should give other schools a chance to catch up," Jeffries said.

Under the terms of his agreement with Robinson, Ford will be paid \$190,000 a year for the next three years. He could make \$190,000 for up to five years depending on whether Ford accepts another head coaching job.

Ford had a five-year contract with Clemson that paid him a \$94,000 annual base salary and automatically extended one year after each season.

Ford, who played at Alabama and later served as an assistant, joined the Tigers as an assistant in 1977. When Pell resigned to take the head coaching job at Florida in 1978, Ford was named head coach prior to the Tigers' Gator Bowl game with Ohio State. He was 30 years old at the time.

Ford compiled a 96-29-4 record with the Tigers including a 5-3 record in bowl appearances.

In 1981 Clemson won its first and only national championship by defeating Nebraska 22-15 in the Orange Bowl.

Clemson finished 10-2 this past season, but failed to win an unprecedented fourth straight ACC title.

The Associated Press contributed to this story

USC to begin Metro road play

By JEFF NICHOLS
Sports Editor

After a disappointing 57-56 loss to St. Peter's on Tuesday night, the USC Gamecocks will return to Metro Conference action Saturday afternoon against Florida State in Tallahassee.

The Gamecocks, 6-5 overall and 2-1 in the Metro, were up 56-55 with :27 remaining in the game Tuesday night, but St. Peter's forward Chuck Veterano hit a turnaround jumper with :13 left to win it for the Peacocks in front of 10,422 at the Meadowlands in East Rutherford, N.J.

After shooting 52 percent in the first half against St. Peter's, the Gamecocks' shooting dropped to 32 percent in the second half. And the Gamecocks were out-rebounded 27-16 in the second stanza.

The Gamecocks are down to nine players and only two guards after reserve guard Troy McKoy was declared academically ineligible on Monday.

Sophomore guards Jo Jo English and Bojan Popovich played 38 and 37 minutes respectively on Tuesday night. Popovich led the Gamecocks with 13 points while English added 12.

USC's 3:30 p.m. matchup with

Basketball Preview

USC (6-5, 2-1) vs. Florida State (11-6, 2-2)



Date: Saturday, January 20

Time: 3 p.m.

Site: Leon County Civic Center, Tallahassee, Fl.

Series: The series is tied, 12-12.

Last meeting: Florida State defeated USC, 80-63.

Radio: South Carolina Network with Bob Fulton and Don Williams (WVOC-560 AM).

Television: Raycom TV (WIS-TV 10)

Coaches: USC-George Felton (59-38), FSU-Pat Kennedy(60-30, 184-90)

Florida State at the Leon County Civic Center will mark the Gamecocks' first conference road game of the season. The game is scheduled to be shown locally on WIS-10.

The Seminoles are 2-2 in the Metro and 11-6 overall prior to a Thursday night game at Miami.

Pat Kennedy's squad finished first in the Metro Conference last year with a 9-3 record.

The Seminoles lost to Louisville in the Metro Conference Tournament championship game last year at the Frank McGuire Arena after beating USC 80-63 in the semifinals.

Around the Metro Conference

USC GAMECOCKS — USC leads the Metro in field goal percentage allowed (.398, 204-of-512). USC has opened Metro play with a 2-1 record in each of Coach George Felton's four years. Jeff Roulston's 29 blocked shots (in only 10 games) equal the most by a Gamecock in an entire season since Mike Brittain rejected 48 shots in 1984-85.

CINCINNATI BEARCATS — UC's home attendance average (8,999 per game) in the new Myrl Shoemaker Center represents a 257 percent increase over what the Bearcats averaged (3,572) at this point last year in the Cincinnati Gardens.

FLORIDA STATE SEMINOLES — Coach Pat Kennedy needs five more wins to reach the 200-victory plateau for his career (he is 195-96, .672).

LOUISVILLE CARDINALS — U of L has held 10 of its last 11 opponents below the 50 percent mark in field goal shooting, while holding six of those foes below the 40 percent level. The Cards have recorded 69 dunks in 13 games, just 15 less than the school record set by the 1980 NCAA championship team.

MEMPHIS STATE TIGERS — MSU's 10-4 start equals that of Coach Larry Finch's first team, which went on to post a 26-8 record. MSU is shooting 82.6 percent from the free throw line in Metro play . . . Elliot Perry's 1,310 career points have moved him into 10th place on the all-time scoring ladder.

SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI GOLDEN EAGLES — USM has four players averaging in double figures in scoring — Clarence Weatherspoon (19.6), Darrin

Chancellor (18.6), Daron Jenkins (12.6) and Russell Johnson (12.2). The Golden Eagles lead the league in field goal shooting (.538) but are next to last (.238) in three-point accuracy.

VIRGINIA TECH HOKIES — Bimbo Coles has become the

third Tech player and only the sixth Metro Conference player to surpass the 2,000-point career mark. He needs 67 points (he now has 2,070) to move into second place on the Tech list, and 320 to take over the top spot from Dell Curry (1982-86).

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