

# Sports

The Gamecock

Monday, November 19, 1990

8

## Clemson survives rally to win 24-15, despite Gamecock big plays

By DOUG AUBE  
Sports Editor

CLEMSON — Going into Saturday's football game against the Clemson Tigers, much was said about how USC would have to get a lot of breaks and make the big plays needed to defeat the 17th ranked team in the nation.

The Gamecocks did register a number of firsts against the Tigers Saturday in Death Valley.

USC scored the first touchdown against the Tigers in Death Valley this season.

The Gamecocks blocked the first punt Tiger kicker Chris Gardocki has ever allowed as a Tiger.

USC had the longest play from scrimmage (43 yards) allowed by the No. 1 defense in the country at home all season long.

When you add the fact that the two teams were near even in statistics, you would probably think the Gamecocks were able to defeat their arch-rivals in Saturday's game.

Wrong. Before a crowd of over 84,000, Clemson survived a USC rally to win the intra-state battle 24-15.

"They (Clemson) are an excellent football team. They took advantage of opportunities and we weren't able to," USC head coach Sparky Woods said. "I thought at the beginning of the ballgame we had a good plan."

The Gamecocks took the opening kickoff and marched right through the Tigers defense to the Clemson 48-yard line.

Things were looking pretty good for the Gamecocks when running back Mike Dingle broke off left guard for a gain of six and then boom ... fumble, and the Tigers recovered.

The teams traded punts for the next few possessions and the first quarter looked as it might end in a scoreless tie.

With just under six minutes remaining in the quarter, the USC special teams came through with the first of the Gamecock's big plays.

Linebacker Ricky Ferguson

broke through the Tigers line and blocked Gardocki's punt, and USC was in business after receiver Bralyn Bennett recovered at the Clemson six-yard line.

But USC could not convert the opportunity into a touchdown and had to settle for a 22-yard field goal from Collin Mackie and a 3-0 USC lead.

"We blocked the punt, and we should never have recovered the punt," Woods said. "We should have picked up the (ball) and run with it or scooped it toward our goal line. It was automatically our ball. There is really no reason to recover it. I thought if we scooped it we could have picked it up and scored the touchdown."

The Tigers responded by marching 74 yards in 12 plays to take a 7-3 lead after tailback Rudy Harris plunged into the endzone from one yard out.

Clemson's defense held USC again, and after a 34-yard Daren Parker punt, Tiger return man Robert O'Neal rambled down field to the Gamecock 33-yard line setting up another Clemson touchdown.

The Tigers were able to go 33 yards in four plays, 17 on freshman Ronald Williams run, to put them up 14-3.

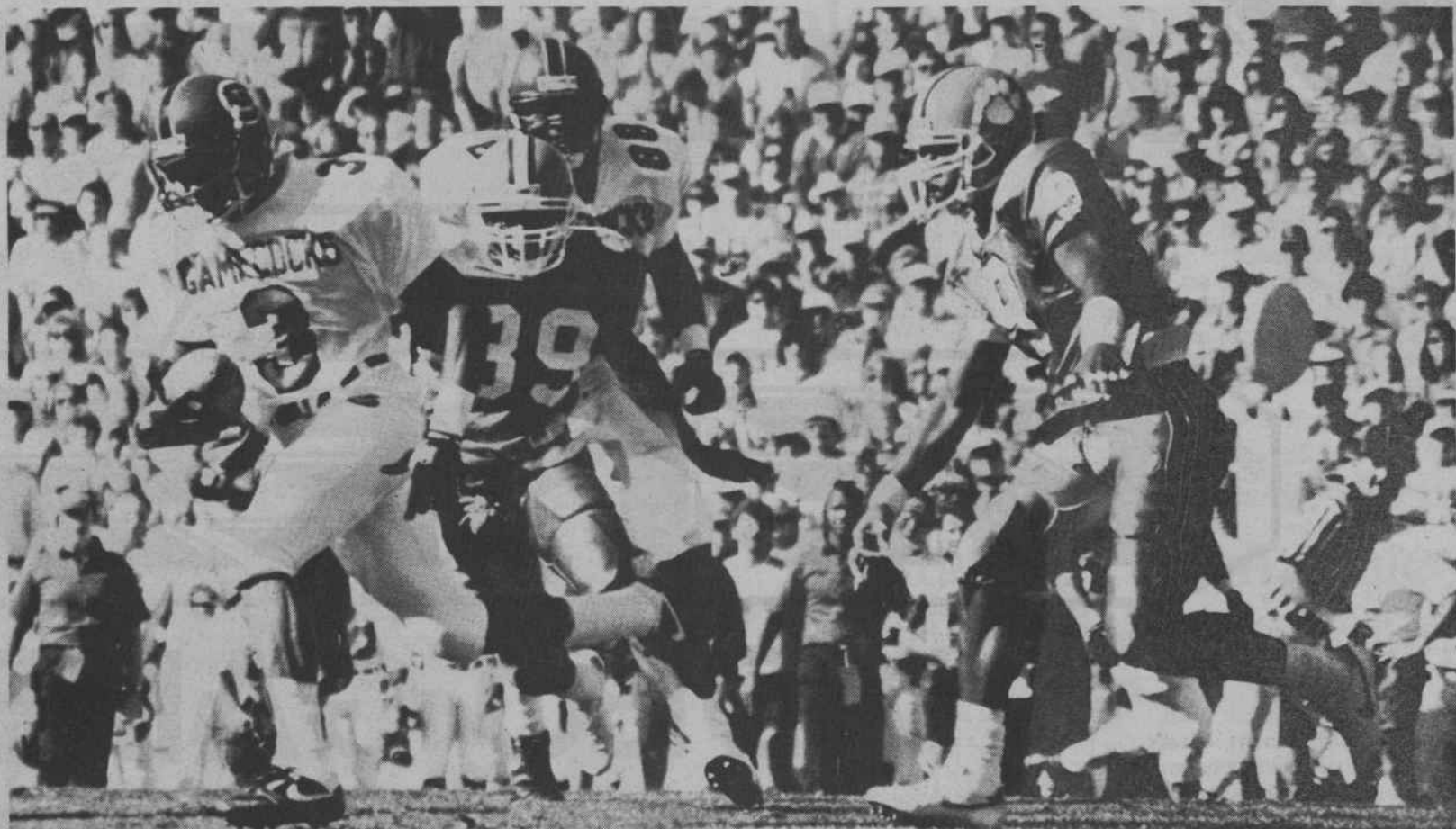
Not to be outdone, USC responded with a drive of their own trying to close the gap before the half.

Gamecock receiver and return man Robert Brooks hauled in the kickoff on the one-yard line and jaunted down field for a 57-yard return giving USC a first down on the Clemson 42.

On third and eleven, USC quarterback Bobby Fuller found a streaking Eddie Miller for a 22-yard reception and USC had the ball on the Tiger 43-yard line.

But the Gamecocks were not able to convert the good field position into a touchdown and had to settle for another Mackie field goal, this one 42 yards, with 2:15 left in the half, which ended with Clemson on top 14-6.

On the Gamecocks' first posses-



Renee Meyer/The Gamecock

USC receiver Eddie Miller races upfield in Saturday's 24-15 loss to arch rival Clemson. The Gamecocks play host to West Virginia on Thanksgiving Day in their final game of the season.

sion of the second half, Fuller was pressured out of the pocket and threw an interception setting the Tigers up on the USC 13-yard line.

The Gamecock defense stiffened, holding Clemson to six yards. Gardocki had to come in for the 24-yard field goal.

USC was facing a 17-6 deficit, and the Carolina fans were getting restless.

With 4:21 remaining in the third quarter, Gamecock defensive back Leon Harris intercepted a DeChane Cameron pass and momentum began to switch to the Gamecocks.

Again, the Tiger defense held USC to a field goal but Clemson failed to cover the kickoff and USC's Bru Pender recovered the ball on the Clemson 12-yard line.

This time, the Gamecocks were able to convert as Dingle bowled

through on third down from four yards out. The Gamecocks lined up for a two-point conversion trying to tie the score with a little over ten minutes to play. But a Fuller-to-Brooks pass sailed high and Clemson held on to the lead 17-15.

On the return, Clemson was called for a clip. The Tiger fans were starting to become restless.

Cameron rested that notion in a heartbeat.

The quarterback lofted a pass downfield to Williams for a 36-yard gainer setting up an 86-yard Clemson drive that immediately swung the momentum back in Clemson's favor.

"We scored and had the momentum, and they hit us for a long

pass on the sweep, and it really put them downfield," USC's defensive end Corey Miller said. "It was tough, I really thought we'd stop them on that drive. It cost us."

With 6:50 to play, the Gamecocks were down 24-15 and in need of a big play.

USC responded with a 43-yard pass play from Fuller to Brooks and the Gamecocks were knocking on the door.

But instead it was Clemson that came up with the big play.

On third and ten from the 25-yard line, Fuller hit Brooks, who had beaten his man, in the end zone for an apparent touchdown. But just as the ball arrived, Clemson strong safety Arlington Nunn, sprinting across the end

zone, delivered a jarring hit separating Brooks and the ball.

"It was a corner post. We put the play in a couple of weeks ago. Everybody was playing our corner routes, so we show them the corner route and come back inside on the post," Brooks said. "I had my guys beat on the weakside and the guy from the strong side (Nunn) came off the hash and made a great hit."

On the next play, Mackie missed a 42-yard field goal attempt and Clemson took over with 5:35 remaining.

Clemson head coach Ken Hatfield said Nunn's play was a key.

See FOOTBALL page 9

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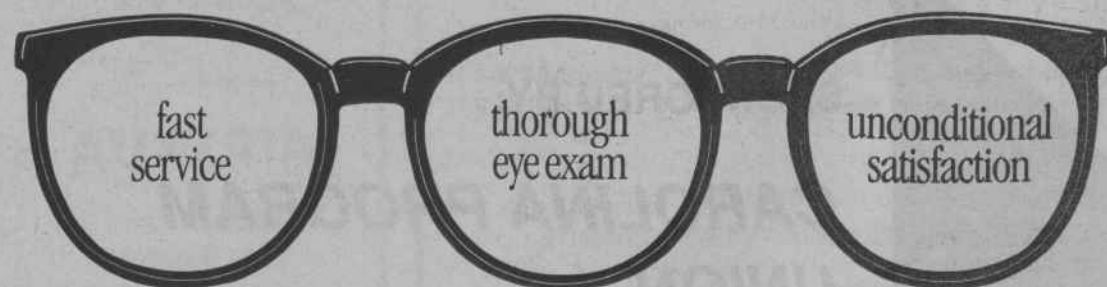
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