

Some events more important than football

When you bring a child into the world, should you be punished?

The NFL's Houston Oilers don't think so as long as it's not between the months of September and January.

This past week, the Oilers let offensive lineman David Williams know that he would not be paid a game check because he didn't accompany the team to New England. When I heard about this, I thought Williams had gone AWOL or something.

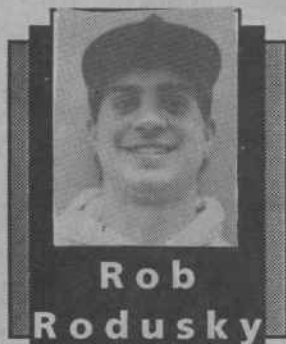
It couldn't be further from the truth. Williams wasn't faking an injury or anything like that. He was doing what any husband should do: standing by his wife's side while she gave birth to a healthy son.

How on earth do the Oilers justify not paying his game salary, which is about \$125,000? The team says that Williams had enough time to catch a flight to Boston for Sunday's game. What was he supposed to do?

I can just see it now. "OK honey, it's a boy. I have to go to Boston now and protect the quarterback. See you in a couple of days."

Maybe the Oilers are making Williams a scapegoat because they are having a poor season. Who knows? All I know is that it stinks on ice.

It's not something that was just sprung on either the organization or the Williams family. My God, there's been months to plan this out. What might make



Rob Rodusky

this a greater story is if Williams knew he would be fined a game's pay for his son. I'm sorry the Oilers don't want this to be construed or reported as a fine.

For too long, athletes have dogged their professions and missed games for lame excuses and have gotten away with it. Now, one guy misses a game for a valid reason and gets in trouble with the organization. Go figure.

While sports enthusiasts love to cheer, scream and get ulcers watching games, it's something such as Williams' situation that puts a lot of things in perspective. This past year, some famous athletes have lost their lives. These made us realize how precious life is. Why should Williams' child be any different?

Let me be one of the first to cast my vote for David Williams as "Father of the Year."

Rob Rodusky is sports editor of The Gamecock. His article appears every other Friday.

USC must battle injuries, option

JIMMY DeBUTTS
Staff Writer

USC — The football team will look to get back on the winning track when it faces the Vanderbilt Commodores Saturday at Williams-Brice Stadium.

Both teams come into the game with losing records, Vanderbilt (2-4) and USC (3-4). All losses for both teams have come against SEC opponents.

Vanderbilt is coming off a loss to Georgia in Nashville, Tenn. The Commodores put up an early 3-0 lead but were unable to slow quarterback Eric Zeier and the Bulldog offense. The result was a 41-3 massacre in which the Vanderbilt defense gave up 379 passing yards and four touchdowns.

Vanderbilt is ranked No. 2 in the SEC in rushing with 208.7 yards per game this season. This could pose a problem for the Gamecocks, who have to face the option again this week. USC's defense was unable to effectively stop Mississippi's option attack this past week.

Leading the attack for the Commodores is senior tailback Tony Jackson, who is No. 11 in the SEC in rushing and ranks third in all-purpose yards with 131.5 per game.

The Commodore defense is anchored by senior ends Alan Young and John DeWitt. Young has 33 tackles, including 8.5 for a loss. Young also leads Vanderbilt with 5.5 quarterback sacks. DeWitt has three sacks and 18 tackles, five of which are for losses.

Complementing Young and DeWitt is junior middle linebacker Gerald Collins, who leads the team with 58 tackles, including 16 against Alabama.

Vanderbilt is ranked No. 3 in the SEC and No. 17 in the nation in rushing defense. The Commodores have limited opposing teams to 109.3 yards per game rushing.

SERIES NOTES

Series: 2-0 (USC). Last Year: South Carolina 21-17. Vanderbilt holds a 7-6 mark vs. teams from the state of South Carolina (Citadel 3-2, Clemson 3-1, Furman 1-1, USC 0-2). The Commodores jumped out to a 14-0 lead in the first quarter last year and held a 17-7 lead at halftime but USC posted two 2nd half TD's to earn the win. The match-up marks Vandy's first ever visit to Columbia. USC head coach Sparky Woods is a native of Tennessee.

Handling the kicking duties for Vanderbilt is junior college transfer Steve Yenner, who has hit five of seven field goals this season, including one for 53 yards against Auburn. Redshirt freshman Bill Marinangel punts for the Commodores and averages 39.3 yards per punt.

USC will enter Saturday's game battered with injuries. Jerry Inman, Norman Greene, Damian Younue, David Turnipseed and Benji Young are listed as out and will watch the game from the sidelines.

Free safety Bru Pender is listed as probable, while Hank Cambell, Mathew Campbell, Anton Gunn and Corey Louchiey are listed as questionable. Others Gamecocks who might not be in the lineup include James Dexter, Mike Reddick and Vincent Simpson. The three are listed as doubtful.

Overcoming these injuries will be the real test for the Gamecocks Saturday. An optimistic note is that runningback Brandon Bennett has had a

full week to strengthen his sprained knee. Bennett was ineffective against Mississippi State, gaining six yards in seven carries.

With Bennett out of the lineup for most of the game, Sparky Woods gave sophomore runningback Stanley Pritchett a chance to show his abilities. Pritchett responded by displaying his running and receiving abilities. He had longs of 18 yards in both categories.

The offense had few highlights against Mississippi State, while the defense gave up 23 points, the most allowed by the Gamecocks this season. Quarterback Steve Taneyhill threw for 184 yards, but his receivers let him down several times by dropping balls.

The Gamecock defense is fourth in the SEC and No. 15 nationally in scoring defense with 15.1 points per game. In total defense, USC is sixth in the SEC and No. 26 in the nation, giving up 324.1 yards per game. This means nothing if the offense can't put points on the scoreboard.

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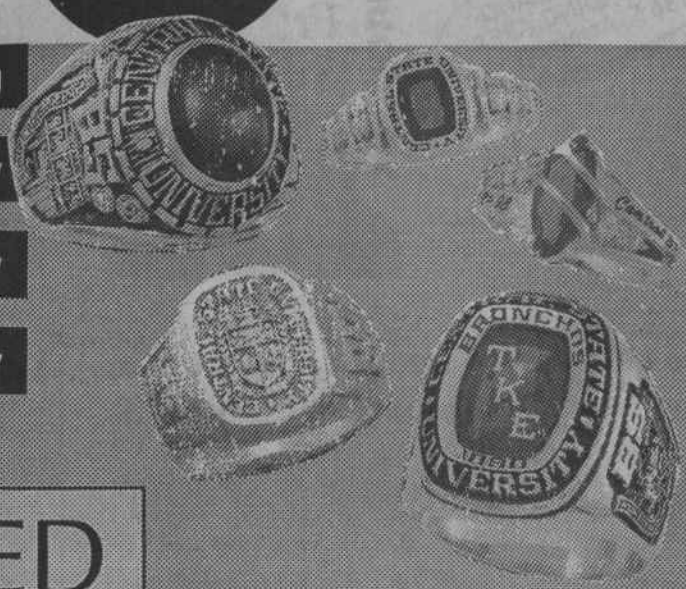
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