

Students, fans 'Never Played The Game'

LUKE FONASH Staff Writer

As a first-time writer for this publication, picking topics to shed light on was not an easy task. Writing about predictions for the upcoming football season or the over-publicized baseball strike can be left to the others. I wanted to write a column that makes the sports fans at the school think about how we view the athletes we cheer and boo everyday.

The first major college football weekend is upon us. As the Gamecocks take the field Saturday against Georgia's Bulldogs, a new chapter in Carolina football history will unfold. New head coach Brad Scott came to Columbia with a vision, one filled with determination to establish our program as one of the finest in the country. Carolina fans should anticipate great things to happen under Scott, but they might not be too rosy at first.

I quote my title from the vernacular of the late television broadcaster/author Howard Cosell. I think it is an appropriate title that affects many sports fans

today, especially many at the university.

College football has been an intimate part of my life for many years. I grew up in a household in which college football is a religion and the boy's from South Bend, Indiana were its missionaries. So when I came to the University of South Carolina, I didn't know what to expect from the Gamecock program.

Three years have past and criticism has run deep. As the Gamecocks step onto the gridiron, they might lag a step behind or things just might not go their way. And the critics who praised Brad Scott's men before the contest will again show their true colors.

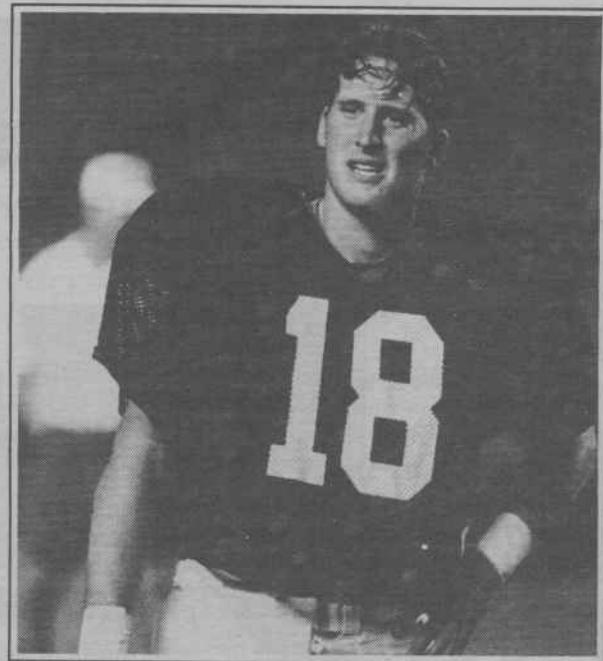
The love I have for college football does not give me the undeniable right to judge and criticize athletes my age who eat, sleep and breath a sport that is here for our enjoyment. True, things don't always go as planned or the Gamecocks would be in New Orleans every year around New Year's.

But when things are down this year,

and I know there will be some season low points, we as a student body mustn't abandon the team that plays for us and every student that has step foot on this campus. We must never abandon a team that plays for every small child in this state who has every dreamed of playing football for this university.

So, when the Gamecocks come down that tunnel Saturday night, and when 2001 blares for miles around, believe that each and every one of those players and staff members who have worked so hard to please your wanting hearts. Be objective, and do not lose sight of what's important.

The great Green Bay Packer coach Vince Lombardi once said, "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing." This is the attitude that Brad Scott will instill at Carolina. It might not be prevalent on Saturday night, but keep in mind that "we never played the game."



TAKIN' A BREATHER

Quarterback Steve Taneyhill takes a break during summer practice as the Gamecocks prepare for their season opener.

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