

Improvement in store for USC football team

Last November 19, the men in garnet and black went into Death Valley and blew the Tigers off of their own turf. The Gamecocks then went on to beat the West Virginia Mountaineers in the Carquest Bowl.

These two victories meant that the Gamecock program was right where it needed to be, right? The Gamecocks were now in the upper echelon of the SEC, right? They would definitely be back to a bowl this season, maybe the Sugar Bowl, right? At least a 8-3 season, right?

Wrong. First, the Gamecocks are still a long way away from the SEC elite. The Tennessees, the Floridas, the Alabamas, the Auburns, and the Georgias have played their dues and have long built traditions. Now we have to pay our dues.

Second, last season the Gamecocks won a lot of games more on heart than talent. As Coach Brad Scott has said time and time again, Carolina is still a long way away from where they need to be as far as talent is concerned.

Third, when playing in the best conference in America (the SEC of course), an 8-3 season is never guaranteed.

It's easy to look back on the 1994 season and only think of the Clemson and West Virginia games. This is where most Gamecock fans get deceived. The season was full of ups and downs.

The season started with a 24-21 loss to a sub par 6-4-1 Georgia team. Then the Gamecocks rolled off 3 straight wins before traveling to Baton Rouge to face LSU. The Gamecocks beat the Tigers,

OVERTIME

Robbie Meek

a team that went 4-7, by a score of 18-17.

The Gamecocks then came home to play two straight games in Williams-Brice Stadium. Carolina lost to East Carolina 56-42 and then Mississippi State, 41-36. So, the USC defense gave up 97 points in two consecutive weeks. Sound familiar?

In these two games the Gamecocks gave up an average of 540 yards per game. The 1995 Gamecocks have given up an average of 505 yards per game the last two weeks. The Gamecocks were also held to 26 yards in the ECU game in 1994, sound familiar?

Carolina beat Vanderbilt the next week by only three points, 19-16. The Commodores were 5-6 on the season. The Gamecocks then gave up 79 points the next two weeks to Tennessee and Florida before traveling to Clemson. To sum up the season, USC had 7 wins. Those 7 teams that Carolina beat had a combined record of 29-50.

The reason for me throwing out this information isn't to bring down the fan's opinion of the 1994 team or to try to discredit their accomplishments. I'm a die hard Gamecock and the 1994 team gave me some of the greatest Gamecock memories that I've ever had. The bowl game was great, but the Clemson thrashing

alone was satisfying enough.

Fans should realize that Brad Scott is building a program. No team can walk into the SEC and just start winning. Even Arkansas, who has a rich football tradition has struggled since joining the SEC along with Carolina. I also want them to realize the season is far from over.

This season the Gamecocks have lost soundly to Georgia and Arkansas, but don't be deceived by preseason predictions that said that Georgia and Arkansas didn't have a lot in their favor.

Georgia has not played well the last couple of seasons, but their talent level has not dropped much if any at all. The Bulldogs have to win this season to keep Coach Ray Goff's job, this so far has been extra incentive for Georgia, who has responded very well. This past week, Georgia played a very good Tennessee ball club in a very tight game in Knoxville.

Arkansas is a team who played Carolina well in Columbia last season although the Gamecocks won 14-0. The Razorbacks returned 8 starters on offense and 7 starters on defense. They also have a coach in Danny Ford who knows how to win and has proven it to Gamecock fans plenty of times in the past.

This season has been rough so far for the players, coaches, and fans. Who knows what the future holds for the 1995 Gamecock football team. But be patient. Brad Scott knows how to win and eventually he and the Gamecocks will win regularly.



Runningback Duce Staley and the Gamecocks will play their first home game Saturday against Louisiana Tech. Kickoff is at 7:30 p.m.

Florida to roll versus Volunteers

Associated Press

Tennessee gave up 457 yards and 27 points to Georgia last week. That's a bad omen for the Volunteers, whose next opponent may be the best offensive team in the country.

The eighth-ranked Vols travel to Gainesville on Saturday to meet the No. 4 Florida Gators, whose Fun 'N Gun attack has averaged 575 yards and 43.5 points in their first two games.

"They're very good at what they do," Tennessee coach Phillip Fulmer said in a classic understatement.

What's even scarier for the Vols is that Florida's offense has yet to operate at full speed. Against outmanned Houston and Kentucky, coach Steve Spurrier didn't need to pull anything out of his crowded bag of tricks.

"We haven't done any dippy-do plays yet," Spurrier said. "We have been sort of basic."

Tennessee displayed some offensive firepower of its own against Georgia. Sophomore Peyton Manning, son of Archie, completed 26 of 38 passes for 349 yards and two touchdowns in the 30-27 victory.

The Vols aren't likely to score 30 points against the Gators, and even if they do, it probably won't be enough. Florida beat Tennessee 31-0 last year

in Knoxville. This time, the Gators are favored by 8 ... FLORIDA 41-24.

North Carolina St. (plus 27) at No. 1 Florida St. Seminoles are too good for the ACC ... FLORIDA ST. 45-21.

Arizona St. (plus 27) at No. 2 Nebraska. Huskers troubled off the field, but not on it ... NEBRASKA 45-10. Tulsa (plus 29) at No. 3 Texas A&M Aggies lost to Tulsa in 1991 ... TEXAS A&M 41-10.

No. 5 Auburn (minus 6 1/2) at LSU LSU nearly pulled off upset last year ... AUBURN 28-14.

Houston (plus 37) at No. 6 Southern Cal. Major mismatch ... SOUTHERN CAL 55-10.

Temple (plus 33) at No. 7 Penn State Owls haven't beaten Lions since 1941 ... PENN ST. 45-7.

Northeast Louisiana (plus 38) at No. 9 Colorado. Buffaloes warm up for showdown with Texas A&M ... COLORADO 48-7.

No. 18 Washington (plus 8) at No. 10 Ohio St. Buckeyes haven't played since Kickoff Classic ... OHIO ST. 24-14.

No. 11 Michigan (minus 6 1/2) at Boston College. 3-0 Wolverines off to best start since 1986 ... MICHIGAN 21-17.

No. 20 Oregon (no line) at No. 12 UCLA. Injury-riddled Bruins win a close one ... UCLA 21-20.

Arkansas (plus 7 1/2) at No. 13 Alabama. Tide keeps winning ugly ... ALABAMA 27-24.

Southern Methodist (plus 29) at No. 14 Oklahoma. First meeting since 1985 ... OKLAHOMA 41-7.

Pittsburgh (plus 11 1/2) at No. 15 Texas. Improved Panthers stun the Longhorns ... PITTSBURGH 24-23.

Georgia Tech (plus 14 1/2) at No. 16 Virginia. Cavs won last three meetings by average of 23 points ... VIRGINIA 27-14.

No. 17 Arizona (no line) at Illinois Illini regroup after 0-2 start ... ILLINOIS 17-14.

Colorado St. (plus 6 1/2) at No. 21 Air Force. Falcons allowed only 48 rushing yards in first two games ... AIR FORCE 24-20.

New Mexico St. (plus 33) at No. 23 Georgia. Call off the Dogs ... GEORGIA 48-14.

Vanderbilt (plus 19) at No. 24 Notre Dame. Irish win one for ailing coach Holtz ... NOTRE DAME 24-17.

Miami of Ohio (plus 17) at No. 25 Northwestern. Wildcats ranked for first time in 24 years ... NORTHWESTERN 28-7.

Last week: 17-1 (straight); 7-8 (spread). Season: 30-6 (straight); 17-15 (spread)

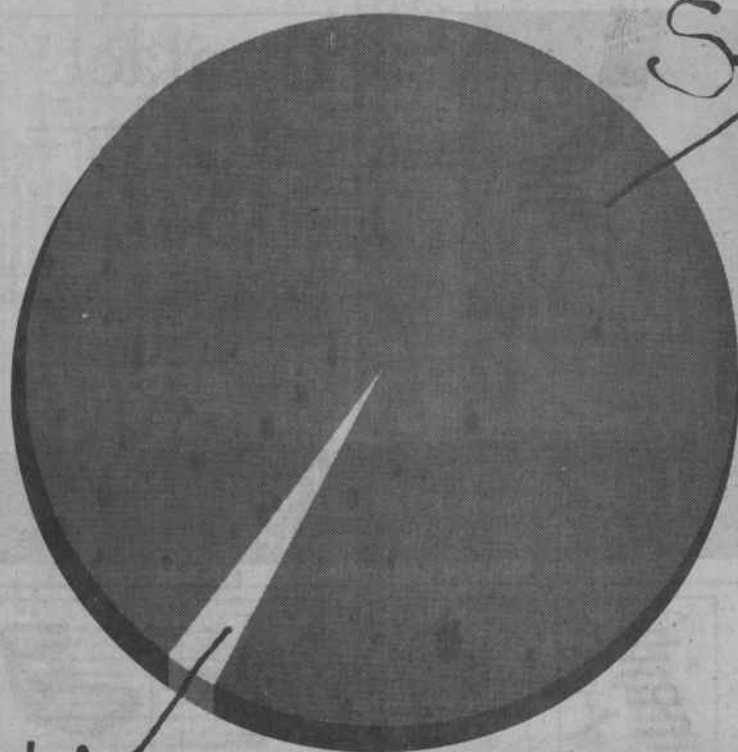
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