

# Brad Scott continues to move program towards nation's elite

ACHIM HUNT Sports Editor

When Brad Scott arrived in Columbia on January 2, 1994, he was billed as the savior of the USC football program that had struggled to records of 5-6 and 4-7 during the last two years of the Sparky Woods era.

Scott immediately went to work on his first recruiting class, and pulled in Anthony Wright and Zola Davis as his prized recruits.

Although past coaches would snag one or two big names and a load of mediocre players, Scott got one or two great players, and then the rest of players were not great, but above average.

Scott then took the returning players from 1993 (who were not that great) and added his first freshman class, and sent them through what Coach Scott called "the most aggressive work-outs this school has ever seen."

He took a team that could not compete in the fourth quarter in 1993, and not only conditioned them to compete, but led them to the first bowl win in the history of Gamecock football. That history is 104 years old this season.

In his first game against Georgia in 1994, Scott's team fell just short of winning, as a late interception thwarted the Gamecock comeback. How did the

team respond?

They went on a four-game winning streak, including wins over Danny Ford and Arkansas, and a win at Death Valley against LSU.

And who can forget his gutsy call on the second half kickoff against the Clemson Tigers in the regular season finale in 1994.

He called the kickoff return throwback that went from Brandon Bennett to Reggie Richardson.

"That play could have went either way," coach Brad Scott said.

"I asked my coaches if we should have run it, and I thought the headphones were broken because those things went silent.

"So I decided to run it because I knew it had a chance against their swarming defense."

Then he led the team to a big win against West Virginia to finish his first year 7-5, and record the first ever bowl win for the football program.

Then he brought in another high ranking recruiting class that featured Auturo Freeman, Chad Barnhardt, and Darren Hambrick.

**"That play could have went either way. I asked my coaches if we should run it, and I thought the headphones were broken because those things went silent."**

Brad Scott, football head coach, on the second half kickoff against Clemson in 1994 that led to a 33-7 USC victory and a berth to the 1995 Carquest Bowl

Expectations for a big winning season were rampant and people were expecting a nine- or ten- win season, and a major bowl.

And then came along a little thing we like to call reality.

Coach Scott said the Gamecock fans were on a wild ride, not really knowing where they were going.

Well, the fans found out soon enough when they came crashing off that horse against Georgia.

Last season was awful, as the defense struggled to even show up for some of the games, especially those against Kentucky, Tennessee and Florida.

After the horrible showing last year, Scott made some changes in his coaching staff, including his secondary and defensive line coaches.

Then he went out and pulled in some of the nation's top rated players

including Jacob Bush, Courtney Leavitt and Troy Hambrick. All of these players have been impressive thus far in practice, but the true test comes Saturday, not only for them, but in many fans' eyes, as it is time for the Gamecocks to start winning games.

Will he produce? My answer is that coach Scott has all of the right players to compete, but those players are really young and have not experienced much, if any at all, big time college football.

Most people do not understand this concept. Think back to our first day on campus.

You were probably nervous and did not know where anything is or did not know anybody.

Well, that is the same for those first-year ball players.

They have been exposed to only three weeks of the Gamecock playbook, and even the players that have come from the larger high schools have only played in front of maybe 10,000 fans tops.

There will be 80,000 in the stands on Saturday.

So coach Scott continues to build a program that was struggling, at best. Will he accomplish his goal? Stay tuned and find out.



File Photo

Gamecock football head coach is known as both a good coach and a motivator. At Florida State he coached stars such as Delon Sanders and Charlie Ward. Carolina fans are hoping that he can do the same for players like Zola Davis and Anthony Wright. The Gamecocks play their home opener tomorrow against Central Florida at 7:00 pm. The next game is against Georgia Sept. 14.

## Football team will have ups and downs this season

BRYAN JOHNSTON Asst. Sports Editor

The Gamecock football team has high hopes for improving in the 1996 season, following last year's disappointing 4-6-1 record.

With a great recruiting class put together by Brad Scott and his assistants, the next few years could be good for Carolina.

But down the road is not what fans want, they want a winner now to cheer for.

This year's team should be better than last year's, but the Gamecocks are still a year or two away from competing week-in and week-out.

So expect better results this year,

but don't set your sights on the SEC championship...yet.

There are two important reasons the Gamecocks are a step away from greatness.

First of all, they are young. To start things off, one of two sophomores, Anthony Wright (a redshirt) or Chad Barnhardt, will direct the offense. Neither have started a college game, so experience is a problem. The two are set to battle it out in pre-season.

Second, the Gamecocks have a very difficult schedule. After an easy opener against Central Florida, the Gamecocks host Georgia, East Carolina and Mississippi State.

Then, the next tough leg of their

schedule begins. Road games at Auburn and Kentucky, followed by a home game against Arkansas, should prove to be a challenge.

After a light week with Vanderbilt, USC better hold on, because they're in for a rough trip.

On November 2, USC hosts Tennessee, and then travels to "The Swamp" to take on Florida.

Finally, the annual grudge-fest with Clemson is on November 23 in Death Valley.

Here's the way I see things shaping up for the 1996 Gamecocks:

**USC 49 Central Florida 3.** The Knights will score if they are lucky

but will serve as an early season feast for the Gamecocks.

**USC 24 Georgia 19.** This will be a great ball game. USC wants revenge for last year's second-half collapse in Athens.

**USC 27 East Carolina 17.** This will be a much closer ball game than some expect. Two years ago, the Pirates came into Williams-Brice and won. If USC takes them lightly, it could happen again.

**USC 35 Mississippi St. 13.** The Gamecocks should remain undefeated and keep their hopes of a na-

tional championship alive by thumping the Bulldogs.

**Auburn 31 USC 13.** Carolina takes the day off against the wrong opponent and gets waxed. The dream of a national championship is dashed.

**USC 35 Kentucky 28.** This should be an offensive show as the Gamecocks come back strong to redeem themselves.

**Arkansas 22 USC 21.** A heart-breaking, last-second loss to the

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