

Improved play of Gamecock defense not enough for victory

Big individual numbers didn't amount to a victory as the Gamecocks couldn't capitalize on their opportunities.

JOSH PENROD Staff Writer

Prior to Saturday's postgame press conference, reporters and cameramen alike all speculated as to the degree of anger that USC's head coach Brad Scott would reach.

Various reporters readied themselves to start firing shots at him, while everyone else braced themselves for the sharp, biting comments of a coach whose team squandered some late game opportunities and lost a close Homecoming game, 14-10.

It was going to be a room in which women and children would not want to be in.

As coach Scott entered the room, such a hush fell over everyone that it could have appeared as an instant version of the quiet game.

He paused for a moment to collect his thoughts, possibly to ready himself for a thrashing of his team and any interrogator that dare challenge him.

As he looked up from the podium marked South Carolina, these are the grueling words that rolled out his mouth: "Well, that was a hard fought football game. I guess that's SEC football, maybe at its best, where you go out and compete for 60 minutes, and the game comes down to execution of a few plays at the end of a ball game. You win some of those kind and you lose some of those kind."

What everyone had expected to hear did not come out. That is because Scott understands the game in a way many

coaches never will.

He sees into the future and knows this game is just a stepping stone.

He knows redshirt sophomore quarterback Anthony Wright's 352 yards passing in only his fourth game as USC's starting quarterback is no fluke.

He knows sophomore Arturo Freeman's eight tackles, one assist, and one pass defended may be just short of the defensive numbers he is likely to put up in the future.

He knows redshirt freshman Ray Green's first career interception as a Gamecock is sure to be the first of many.

All three Gamecocks played important roles in a game that USC kept close in all four quarters but just could not hang on to, dropping them to 2-2, and 1-1 in the SEC.

USC received the opening kickoff, but after Wright was dropped for a loss of six yards on 2nd down by Mississippi State's Eric Dotson, Carolina's Courtney Leavitt got hold of a 52-yard punt that found it's way to the MSU 24.

During MSU's first possession, on 3rd and two, touted running back Keffer McGee fumbled a pitch and recovered for a loss of seven yards, forcing an Andy Russ punt that pinned the Gamecocks at their own three-yard line.

On the first play of the series, Anthony Wright let loose a bomb to receiver Marcus Robinson that put USC at the 50-yard line, but the play was called back after Robinson was whistled for offensive pass interference.

Four plays later, Wright connected with Robinson for a gain of 44 yards that

put USC down on the MSU 42. Leavitt later missed a 38-yard field goal attempt wide right to end the series for Carolina.

On 3rd and 11, on the Bulldog's second series, quarterback Matt Wyatt scrambled for a gain of 20 yards before getting hammered by USC's Shane Burnham and having the ball stripped by Darren Hambrick. Defensive back Ben Washington recovered to give the Gamecocks the ball going into the second quarter.

USC then scored in a 3-play, 90-yard drive highlighted by a Corey Bridges' curl-route reception that froze his defenders as he darted 77 yards into the endzone. Leavitt came on to convert the extra point and put USC on top, 7-0.

Late in the quarter, sophomore quarterback Chad Barnhardt made his second appearance of the season, only to fumble on the MSU 24.

Mississippi State went on to score off of two Anthony Wright interceptions that gave the Bulldogs a 14-7 lead at halftime.

Mississippi State opened the second half with possession of the ball, and after driving down to the USC 31-yard line, Ray Green intercepted a Wyatt pass in the endzone.

Then, on 3rd and 20 from the USC 10, Wright looked long for Robinson for a 75-yard completion that put USC down to the MSU 15. Wright was then sacked twice, and Leavitt missed his second field goal of the game, a 49-yard attempt.

The next seven alternating series all ended on punts with Barnhardt making his second appearance of the game in one of them.

Robinson's back-to-back receptions, totaling 40 yards, highlighted a 66-yard drive that led to Reed Morton's 22-yard field goal, his first of the season, that cut the lead to 14-10.

In Carolina's next series, on 4th and 14 from the MSU 16-yard line, Wright missed a diving Zola Davis in the left corner of the end zone, which gave Mississippi State the ball with 2:37 left in the ball game.

The Gamecock defense then came up with a much needed three-and-out series and Mississippi State was forced to punt, giving USC the ball and one last chance from the 50-yard line.

In the last Carolina offensive series of the game, Wright had four straight incompletions and the USC rally came to a halt with Mississippi State coming out on top, 14-10.

In the suspenseful loss, USC had its fair share of lofty statistics. Wright's 77-yard touchdown pass to Bridges was the longest of the year.

Robinson had a five reception, 190-yard performance that gave him the second-highest single-game yardage output in USC football history. It was just nine yards shy of Fred Zeigler's record of 199 yards.

Duce Staley rushed for 99 yards, one yard short of his fourth consecutive 100-yard game.

Burnham paced the defense with nine tackles, one for a loss.

"It's a tough loss. We knew this week that we'd be facing a great back in Keffer McGee. We just tried to come out here and shut the running game down. I think we did a good job," Burnham said.

The Gamecock defense held McGee, the SEC's leading rusher and the nation's third leading rusher heading into the USC/MSU match-up, to only 108 yards rushing before McGee left the game with an injured knee.

"We had a good week of practice this week. We worked on sustaining drives, but we got out there today and we just couldn't get the ball in the endzone," Staley said.

"We wanted to come out of this homestand a lot better than .500. This is far below our expectations, which is tough to take. I think we'll go back to practice next week like we're 4-0 and we'll go into Auburn ready to play a good ball game," Burnham said.

This week the Gamecocks head into Auburn, which is 3-1, 1-1 in SEC action, and for the first time all season, they will go in as underdogs.

"We'll keep playing hard like this and we'll get this one back somewhere along the line. Because that's the way football happens and that's why the ball is shaped kind of oblong and strange things happen. We'll keep competing like this and that (ball) will bounce our way a few times," a confident coach Scott said.

And when a coach that has been an important cog in a Florida State program that has had 10 straight bowl wins, has won a national championship (1994), has produced a Heisman trophy winner in Charlie Ward and has been ranked in the final national top ten poll seven of 10 years, speaks, people listen.

SCORING SUMMARY

1st quarter	None				
2nd quarter	USC-14:48, C. Bridges, 77 pass from Wright (Leavitt kick)				
	MSU-11:45, Woodberry, 42 pass from Wyatt (Hazelwood kckic)				
	MSU-3:40, McGill, 28 Int. return (Hazelwood kick)				
3rd quarter	None				
4th quarter	USC-5:48, Morton 22 FG				
Score by Quarters					
Team	1	2	3	4	Final
MSU	0	14	0	0	14
USC	0	7	0	3	10

Attendance -75,814



ROBERT WALTON The Gamecock

Carolina wide receiver Corey Bridges is brought down by Mississippi State fullback Dennis McKinley on a punt return during the 14-10 Bulldog victory Saturday. The Gamecock's offense put up impressive numbers, but were plagued by missed opportunities.

USC BRIEFS

FROM STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Men's Tennis

USC sophomore Keith Brill won three matches Sept. 25 to qualify for the main draw of the ITA National Collegiate Clay Court Championships in Baltimore, MD.

Brill, a Columbia, SC, native, defeated Alberto Brause of Duke 6-1, 1-6, 6-4 in his first match of the day. Then, he defeated Jack Brasington of Texas 6-1, 6-2. Needing to win his final match to qualify for the main draw, Brill responded with a straight set victory over Fazel Syed from Temple University 6-1, 6-4.

After losing an opening round match to top seed and the NCAA's number one ranked singles player Cedric Kauffman (Kentucky) 6-4, 6-4, he defeated Nick Chisholm (South Alabama) 6-2, 6-4 and Richard Wernerhilem (VCU) 5-7, 6-4, 6-2 in the quarterfinals.

Brill was then eliminated when he lost to Dmitry Muzyka (Duke) 6-7, 6-4, 6-3 in the semifinals.

Soccer Honors

University of South Carolina soccer players, junior All-American midfielder Clint Mathis and freshman forward Jennie Ondo were each named to the Soccer America Team of the Week, respectively, for the week ending September 22.

Mathis, the nation's leading goal scorer a year ago, broke out with his first four goals of the season, netting two goals against Charleston Southern and two goals against No. 20 UMass.

Mathis is currently fifth on the all-time Carolina point list with 83 points and his 38 goals paces him third on the Carolina all-time list behind former All-Americans Doug Allison and Chris Faklaris.

Ondo, scored a goal and an assist in the program's biggest win to date, a 3-2 victory over then-No. 9 Clemson.

Ondo leads the team in scoring with

18 points on 8 goals and 2 assists and has scored at least one goal in six of the Gamecocks' eight games. She is currently tied for fourth in scoring and tied for third in goals scored in the Southeast Region.

Men's Soccer

The men's soccer team battled Santa Clara to a 2-2 tie Friday night in the Nike Coca-Cola Classic in California. Clint Mathis and Josh Wolff scored goals for the Gamecocks.

On Sunday, the Gamecocks lost to San Francisco, 2-1. J.C. Nicholson scored the lone goal for USC. The loss drops the team to 2-4-1.

Women's Soccer

The Lady Gamecocks lost to Tennessee Friday night, 3-2. Ondo and Mindy Sanders had goals in the defeat. USC outshot Tennessee 12-7.

On Sunday, USC dropped their second game of the weekend when they lost to Georgia 2-1 in overtime. Gina Iacovella scored the only goal for USC in the 113th minute during overtime.

After winning three in a row, USC is now 4-6 overall, 0-4 in the SEC.

Volleyball

The Lady Gamecock volleyball team defeated Mississippi State Friday night in Starkville, 15-3, 15-9, 13-15, 15-11.

Heather Larkin had a career-high 22 kills and Ashley Edlund had a career-high 71 assists in the victory.

Sunday, USC defeated Ole Miss 15-10, 10-15, 16-14, 15-6 in Oxford to improve their record to 11-3 overall and 2-0 in the SEC.

USC was led by Columbia native Cindy Robarge, who had 15 kills and four block assists - hitting an impressive

played solidly with 15 kills and 25 digs. Carolina returns home to host SEC Western Division rival Auburn on Friday, Oct. 4 at 7 p.m.

USC will then host Alabama on Sunday, Oct. 6 at 2 p.m.

Equestrian

South Carolina was the reserve champion at the Intercollegiate Horse Show equestrian competition Saturday. The Gamecocks are competing in collegiate zone five, region two.

Kristen Drozenski was USC's top rider. Georgia was the high point champion.

On Sunday, the Gamecocks finished in second place as the high point team reserve champion.

Senior Leslie McDill finished in second place as the Reserve High Point Champion and Drozenski captured first place in her open flat class.

The Gamecocks are now in first place in the Zone 5 Region II point standings.

Intramurals

On Saturday, September 14th, the initial Red Zone Challenge was held at the Blatt PE Center Fields. The tournament was sponsored by Gatorade.

A total of 32 games registered for the chance to attend the SEC Championship Football Game in Atlanta on December 7th. Through the single elimination tournament, Sigma Nu was crowned tournament champions of this annual event.

In addition to attending the SEC Championship game, Jon Beckham, Matt Goddard, and Brent Whitaker will represent the University of South Carolina in the SEC Red Zone Challenge.

This tournament will feature the winners from each of the SEC schools participating for a chance to go to the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans on January 1, 1997.

Major League Baseball increased interest with addition of wild-card playoff format

This year's baseball playoffs are promising to be the most competitive since the post-season playoff system began in 1969.

SHAWN SINGLETON SAFETY BLITZ

I commend Major League Baseball for installing the Wild Card system. Anyone who thinks otherwise need not look any further than last year's playoff between the Seattle Mariners and the New York Yankees.

However, I do have one grievance to file about the playoff system. Can someone please tell me how a team can give its all and win its prescribed ball games, then be rewarded by playing their first two opening round playoff games on the road?

This is a system that automatically favors the team with the lesser record. For example, the Cleveland Indians will go into Baltimore to meet the Orioles, who, by the way, are a very good team at home. The Indians could conceivably go

back to Cleveland down 0-2 and facing elimination.

Now, please tell me once again if this is a fair reward for winning your division?

Nevertheless, as idiotic as Major League Baseball in creating this system is, they at least know the Dodgers play in Los Angeles.

I, however, cannot say the same for this week's winner of the Rush Hudson Limbaugh Big Fat Idiot Award.

Presidential candidate Bob Dole vowed he would "pitch a no-hitter" between now and the election, then said, "the Brooklyn Dodgers had a no-hitter last night." The BROOKLYN Dodgers had a no-hitter last night?

The Dodgers haven't played in Flatbush since 1958. Next thing you know, he'll be telling the American people the Boston Braves will defeat the St. Louis Browns in the World Series.

Maybe that fall he suffered messed up his memory as well as his image.

USC TOP 25

1. Florida	245	1	16. UVA	105	19
2. Florida St.	234	2	17. Kansas St.	102	16
3. Ohio St.	233	4	18. Washington	64	22
4. Penn St.	224	3	19. Auburn	50	21
5. Arizona St.	213	6	20. Texas	49	13
6. Michigan	197	7	21. BYU	48	24
7. Nebraska	190	8	22. West Virginia	37	23
8. Miami	174	10	23. Northwestern	31	25
9. Tennessee	172	9	24. Syracuse	21	NR
10. Notre Dame	163	5	25. Virginia Tech	17	18
11. Colorado	149	12			
12. Alabama	133	14	also receiving votes:		
13. LSU	119	17	Kansas	16	
14. Southern Cal.	117	15	Iowa	15	
15. UNC	114	11	Utah	12	
			GT	3	
			Minn.	1	