

Scott 'anxious' to get on the gridiron

DWAYNE McLEMORE Sports Editor

The preseason football polls have been released, fall practice has begun and no one is more ready for Sept. 6 than Gamecock head coach Brad Scott.

"I'm anxious to get started," Scott said. "There's so much talk about this season around the community, really around the entire state, and there's only so much you can talk about. It's time to get out there and get going."

The Gamecocks were picked to finish third in the SEC East behind Florida and Tennessee. The Gators were also picked to win the overall conference title.

Although Scott said the gap between the Gamecocks and the Gators and Volunteers is still great, he is content that the gap is more narrow than it has been in the past.

"We're closer now than we've been," Scott said. "We've gained a little respect in the conference. We're beginning to look like an SEC team now."

It has been more than 250 days since the last time the Gamecocks took the field, a long time for Scott's anxiety to build up. It was that long ago USC marched to Clemson to take a 34-31 victory and claim the unofficial "state title."

And after being snubbed by the bowl selection committee with a 6-5 record, next season was on the minds of the Gamecocks much earlier than they expected.

The Gamecocks were unranked in the AP and USA Today preseason polls, receiving seven votes in both. Penn State was voted No. 1 by the AP, while Florida took top honors in the USA Today poll.

The Gamecocks kick off the season Sept. 6 as they host Central Florida. Is this the year Scott leads the Gamecocks to seven, maybe even eight victories?

"Well I hope so," Scott said. "That's certainly what you're working for. It's been a process to get us to this point. You've got to be good and hopefully not make mistakes and get key injuries."

"It's our fourth season and a lot these players

have been with us from the very beginning. Because of that and the attitudes and efforts of our players, we're much further ahead."

Scott, who was the offensive coordinator for Florida State from 1990-94, said not throw seven or eight games around as if it were an easily attainable mark.

"I've been on some great football teams as a coach, and it's awfully difficult when you're a top five or 10 ten to win eight, nine and 10 ball games," he said.

Scott, however, doesn't deny that more wins that last season is a goal for this year's team.

"We've got to win one more than we did last year because six won't get us in a bowl game," Scott said. "That's our goal as we head into this season to is to do whatever we have to do to get ourselves in a bowl game. Right now it looks like you're going to have win seven or eight-in this conference to accomplish that."

Most of the tools to improve will be there for this year's team. Returning will be eight defensive and seven offensive starters.

Quarterback Anthony Wright will be in his second season as the leader of the offense, following a solid sophomore season. But he won't have a familiar face, in Duce Staley, to hand to ball off to.

Scott said it will be hard to replace Staley, who is now with the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles. Staley's injuries in 1996 might have been a big plus for this season, as it forced the Gamecocks to play some of their younger backs in Scott Moritz, Boo Williams and Troy Hambrick.

"All three of those guys started and played reasonably well in some very big ball games for us," Scott said.

Moritz was named the starter coming out of spring practice, although Scott said all three should play a lot of football this season.

Scott said the experience factor is what he hopes will the team over the hump this season.

"In the past we've returned some starters, but we've not been maybe as excited as we are about this year," he said. "We are returning some



Sophomore defensive end Matt Marsters puts 100 percent into one of the team's many defensive drills. The Gamecocks have been holding two-a-days since Tuesday.

NIKKI THORPE The Gamecock

quality players who've played a lot of football. And we've got a little more depth than we've had in the past."

The good news for Scott is that he won't have to wait much longer to unveil his 1997 football team. Only 22 days left until the season kicks off.

"Every football season, every coach is kind of anxious and there's always that little churn

in your stomach," Scott said. "We do know more about this football team than maybe we have in the past. And we have to be realistic, too, is that it's an awfully tough schedule. There's some great teams in the SEC again this year, but we're going to compete a little bit better. Hopefully we'll catch a few breaks along the way and have that really solid season."

Gamecocks picked third in SEC East, Gators to win conference

Selected by 16 media members covering the SEC. Point values were given to each team based on how the media voted. For example, a first place vote was worth one, and a sixth place vote was worth six, so the lower the score the better.

SEC Champion			
Florida (11), Tennessee (4), LSU (1)			
Eastern Division		Western Division	
1. Florida (12)	20	1. LSU (11)	22
2. Tennessee (4)	28	2. Alabama (5)	33
3. South Carolina	51	3. Auburn	41
4. Georgia	61	4. Mississippi State	76
5. Kentucky	88	5. Arkansas	77
(T) Vanderbilt	88	6. Ole Miss	87



The Gamecocks kick off their 1997 football season Sept. 6 at home against Central Florida. Check out the modified football schedule, along with other fall sports schedules, on Page 14.

All-SEC preseason team chosen

Selected by 16 media members covering the SEC.

Offense	
WR	Jacquez Green, Florida
WR	Marcus Nash, Tennessee
TE	Larry Brown, Georgia
OL	Alan Faneca, LSU
OL	Victor Riley, Auburn
OL	Jamar Nesbit, USC
OL	Matt Stinchcomb, Georgia
C	Paul Beckwith, USC
QB	Peyton Manning, Tennessee*
RB	Kevin Faulk, LSU
RB	Dennis Riddle, Alabama
PK	Jeff Hall, Tennessee

Defense

DL	Michael Myers, Alabama*
DL	Chuck Wiley, LSU
DL	Ed Chester, Florida
DL	Leonard Little, Tennessee*
LB	Takeo Spikes, Auburn*
LB	Jamie Duncan, Vanderbilt
LB	Johnny Rutledge, Florida
DB	DeShea Townsend, Alabama*
DB	Terry Fair, Tennessee
DB	Fred Weary, Florida
DB	Mark Roman, LSU
P	Chad Kessler, LSU

*Unanimous selection.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Lawson out for season

Gamecock football tight end Jason Lawson broke his ankle Thursday and is reported to be out for the season. The redshirt senior also underwent surgery Thursday to repair the injury, and a plate was inserted in the injured foot. Since Lawson has already been redshirted, his Gamecock career is over.

Kirtsey a no go

Torin Kirtsey's football career with the Gamecocks was over before he could step foot on the gridiron.

Speculation that the former Georgia tailback wanted to transfer to USC to play football surfaced in mid-July. It then materialized when it was made public that Kirtsey had indeed contacted the institution.

But disciplinary problems got in the way of his transferring to USC. And after head coach Brad Scott spoke with Kirtsey July 30 about his reasons for leaving Georgia, it was decided USC was not going to ask him for his services in football.

Fan appreciation day is here

The annual fan appreciation day for Carolina football is Sunday from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. at Williams-Brice Stadium. Fans will be admitted through the Northwest corner of the stadium only and will get to meet and get pictures, as well as get autographs from the 1997 Gamecock football team. Fairgrounds parking lots open to the public at 2 p.m.

RNE's Lucas to sign with USC

Aaron Lucas, a standout rising senior at Richland Northeast, said he will sign a letter of intent during the early recruiting period to play basketball for the Gamecocks.

Lucas, a 5-foot-10 guard, averaged 17.3 points, 3.5 rebounds and 2.2 assists during the 1996-97 season. A member of last season's Class AAAA first-team all-state squad, Lucas said he also considered Syracuse and the College of Charleston.

Misipeka competing in SPGs

Gamecock track and field's Lisa Misipeka is competing in the South Pacific Games for America-Samoa. She will be participating in the shot put, hammer and discus. Misipeka is looking to be the first from America-Samoa to medal at the games.

Assistant track coach leaves

Larry Judge has been named head coach at the University of Wyoming. Judge, 33, had been with the Gamecocks for the past five years, primarily coaching throwers and overseeing strength and conditioning.

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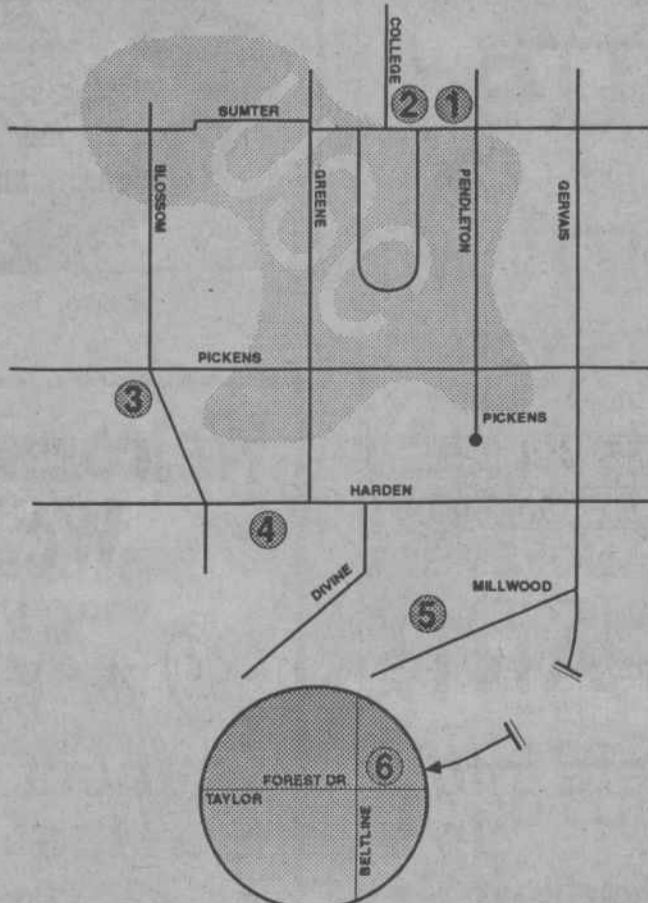
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