



Offense a joke no longer

BY KYLE ALMOND
THE GAMECOCK

This past season, the South Carolina offense was a national joke.

Out of 114 Division I-A colleges, USC was dead last in total offense, mustering only 228 yards per game. South Carolina was also the only team in Division I-A to average fewer than 10 points a game, finishing the 1999 season with a measly 7.9 points per contest.

After the first game of 2000, no one is laughing anymore.

The offense erupted for 31 unanswered points, all in the first three quarters of play, as it dominated New Mexico State in a season-opening 31-0 win this past Saturday.

"I thought at times we looked very good on offense," said USC head coach Lou Holtz, who switched the team's primary offensive scheme over the off-season from the I-formation to a spread offense.

The spread offense, which features one running back and up to four wideouts, worked wonders for the Gamecocks, who were able to move the ball down field consistently for the first time in almost a year. The Gamecocks were able to keep the Aggie defense off-balance with play-action fakes, quick patterns and misdirected plays. USC also displayed a no-huddle offense, calling plays from the line of scrimmage.

In all, the Gamecocks racked up 353 total yards

and 21 first downs, while converting seven of 11 third downs.

Starting quarterback Phil Petty was pleased with the offensive production.

"We've worked awfully hard in the off-season, fall practice and everything leading up to this game," Petty said. "I thought for the first game situation, we played really well on offense."

Petty completed 10 of 18 passes for 87 yards, and ran for 46 yards. He seemed to find his groove in the shotgun offense, connecting with his receivers on short, quick passes.

"I'm real comfortable with [the shotgun]," Petty said. "We've been doing it since the spring, and I think a lot of the other guys are comfortable with it, too."

A key factor for the Gamecocks' offensive success was the play of its offensive line. Last season, the line was riddled by injury, and the quarterbacks often found themselves running for their lives. The Gamecocks started 16 different offensive linemen in 1999, and they allowed 43 sacks. On Saturday, USC quarterbacks were only sacked twice.

"I think the guys up front played really well," Petty said. "The offensive line was outstanding."

The running game thrived in Saturday's game as well. Sophomore tailback Derek Watson rushed for a game-high 114 yards on 14 carries and scored the first touchdown of his collegiate career. Sophomore Andrew Pinnock added two touchdowns of

his own, one of which brought the first score of the game.

"Derek Watson obviously ran well," said Holtz. "That's the one reason we spread out, to let Derek run some."

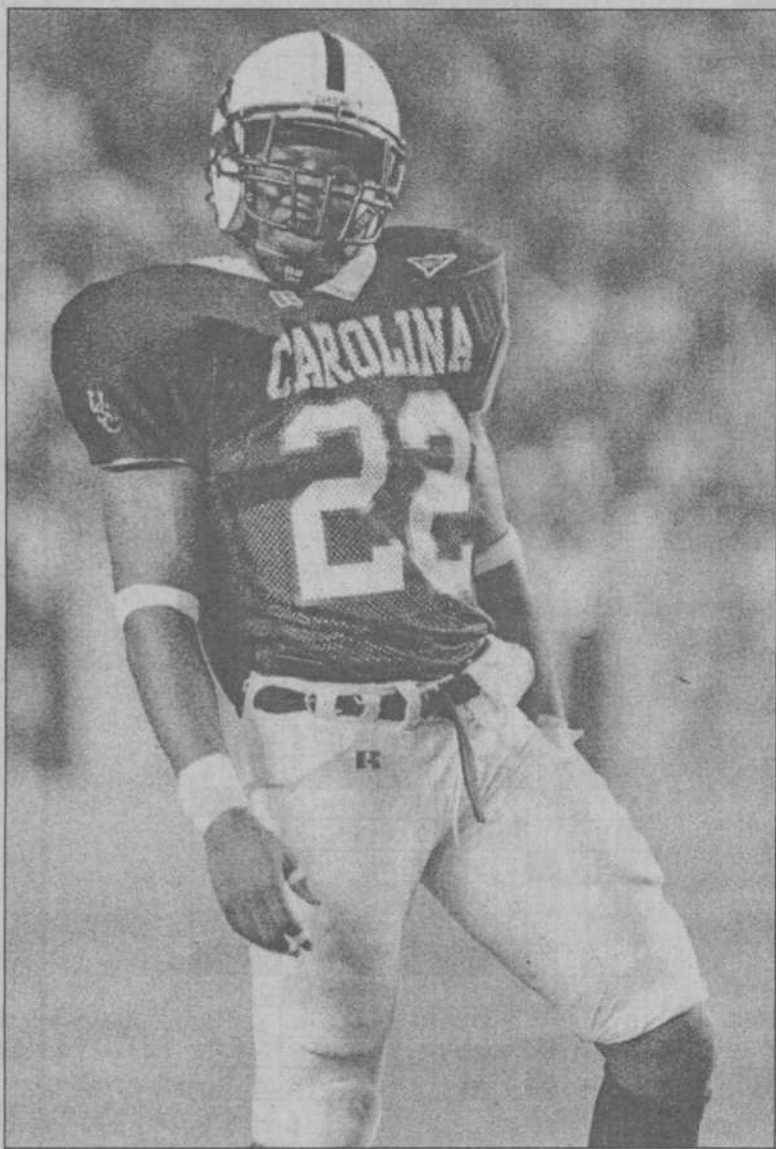
The Gamecocks scored on their first possession of the season. After the Aggies missed a field goal attempt in the first quarter, USC took over from its own 27-yard line.

Pinnock carried twice for eight yards out of the I-formation, and then the Gamecocks switched to its new spread offense. Off the snap, Petty turned and threw a quick-pass to receiver Jermale Kelly for seven yards and the first down.

Petty also completed two more quick passes to Kelly and junior college transfer James Adkisson on the opening drive. The two receivers showed their game-breaking skills, gaining yards after the initial catch to get first downs. Pinnock capped the drive with a four-yard touchdown run.

The first drive in the new spread offense was a model of efficiency, as South Carolina burned nearly six minutes off the clock on 13 plays, and it set the tone for a night dominated by the Gamecocks.

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SEAN RAYFORD THE GAMECOCK

Gamecock running back Derek Watson struts after a big gain during Saturday's game against New Mexico State.

Defense shuts down Aggies, ends Gamecocks' infamous losing streak

BY JARED KELOWITZ
THE GAMECOCK

The Roman Empire fell, the Berlin Wall crumbled and another impressive monument fell on Saturday evening. USC's infamous 21-game losing streak halted Sept. 2, when the Gamecocks shellacked the visiting NMSU Aggies 31-0.

"We were real fired up, I mean, everyone was. If we could have played the game at three o'clock today, we would have," USC linebacker Kenny Harney said. "We're just real happy to get this one out of the way and see if we can keep this momentum rolling," added Harney, who had six tackles.

"This is something a lot of us have been waiting two years for. It's really a relief to get this off our backs," said Phil Petty, USC quarterback, who had 87 yards passing and 47 yards on the ground.

Over the past few years, one steadfast aspect of Gamecock football has been its defense. However, at the start of this season, the Gamecock's defense was in question. Due to the departure of John Abraham and Arturo Freeman, many fans and critics alike were left wondering how effective the USC defense would be. Those questions and more were answered Saturday night at Williams-Brice Stadium.

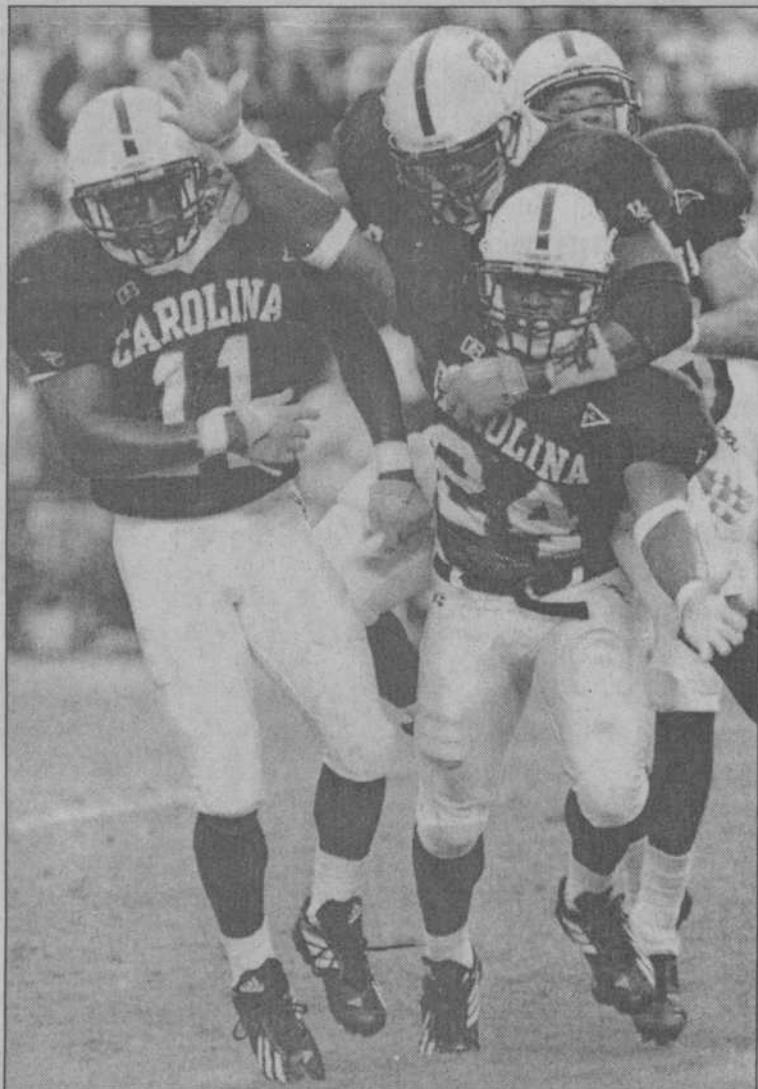
The Gamecock defense forced three turnovers, two interceptions and one fumble. The two interceptions resulted in a field goal for USC, but the fumble resulted in a USC score.

The first interception came at the 8:12 mark of the second quarter, when USC defensive back Willie Offord picked-off K. C. Enzinger and returned the ball to the South Carolina 45-yard line. On the ensuing Carolina drive, place kicker Reid Bethea nailed his first field goal attempt of the season, a 24-yard kick.

The second Gamecock takeaway came with only 13 seconds left in the first half. USC safety Kevin House intercepted Enzinger and returned the ball 22 yards to the New Mexico State 42-yard line. The half ended with an attempted Hail Mary that resulted in an incompletion.

With 1:18 left in the third quarter Aggie quarterback Enzinger was victimized by noseguard Langston Moore. On the sack by Moore, Enzinger gave up the ball and Andre Offing picked it up and returned it 24 yards for the last Gamecock score of the evening. This was the first time a Gamecock returned a fumble for a touchdown since October 14, 1995, against Kent State.

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SEAN RAYFORD THE GAMECOCK

Rashad Faison (left) and Sheldon Brown (center) celebrate with other members of South Carolina's defense.

Quarterback Petty redeemed by win over NMSU Aggies

BY KYLE ALMOND
THE GAMECOCK

Phil Petty had a painful season in his first year as starting quarterback for South Carolina.

The junior play-caller from Boiling Springs, S.C. only completed 44.5 percent of his passes last season. He threw only one touchdown but threw seven interceptions. Four games into the season, he was injured against Mississippi State. The injury left Petty on the sidelines for five games, and USC finished the season with a dismal 0-11 record.

Saturday's win against New Mexico State helped ease Petty's pain.

Playing in a totally new offensive scheme, Petty led the Gamecock offense to a 31-0 drubbing of the Aggies.

"I'm just real excited," Petty said after the win. "We've worked awfully hard in the off-season."

Petty finished with 10 completions on 18 attempts, threw for 87 yards and rushed for 46 yards. It was his first win as starter and his second win in his Gamecock career.

"When [Petty] is in there, we are a different team," South Carolina head coach Lou Holtz said. "I thought he played brilliantly, I really did."

After a season in which South Carolina finished last in the country in al-

most every major offensive category, Holtz revamped the offense. Included in the new package were a shotgun formation, additional wide receivers and no huddles.

What resulted was an offensive explosion that saw the Gamecocks compile 353 total yards, more than any of their games from last season.

Petty completed passes to Jermale Kelly and James Adkisson on the team's opening drive for first downs, and on the team's third possession, he connected on passes of 12 and 15 yards. Petty also found Kelly in the end zone for a two-point conversion after USC's second touchdown, and he completed a 13-yard pass to Carlos Spikes in the second half.

"I think we did some good things in the offense," Petty said. "I think the offensive line played outstanding, our receivers played well and our tailbacks ran the ball awfully hard."

Petty ran pretty hard himself. He had a long run of 26 yards in the third quarter.

He had to leave the game after that long run as he started getting leg cramps. Petty never returned to action, but it didn't matter, as the Gamecocks held on to the win.

"I probably could have played toward the end if I had to," Petty said. Red-shirt sophomore Erik Kim-

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Men's soccer falls to Charlotte, faces Virginia and Maryland

BY KYLE ALMOND
THE GAMECOCK

The South Carolina men's soccer team, ranked 22nd in the nation by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America, lost a hard-fought match to unranked UNC-Charlotte Monday night at the Graveyard, 2-1.

Despite dominating possession and attacking for most of the game, the Gamecocks (1-1) came up short against the 49ers (2-0). USC had 12 shots on goal to Charlotte's four, and four corner-kicks to Charlotte's two.

"We had a lot of really good

opportunities," USC head coach Mark Berson said. "And when you don't finish those chances, they come back to haunt you. That was the case tonight."

UNC-Charlotte first struck thirty minutes into the game when sophomore forward Chris Wargin knocked in a rebound from a shot tipped by Carolina goalkeeper Henry Ring.

USC was quick to bounce back, however, knotting the score three minutes later when freshman Jack Cummings scored his first goal of the season. Sophomore forward

Jordan Quinn's shot was deflected by Charlotte goalkeeper John McDonough, and Cummings was there to take advantage.

After Cummings' goal, Carolina had numerous chances to take the lead, but the shots just couldn't get past McDonough.

Charlotte midfielder David McGill, a freshman from Dublin, Ireland, scored what proved to be the game-winning goal for the 49ers at the 71:23 mark. Rob Evitts crossed the ball into the center of the box, where McGill jumped

up to head the ball over the outstretched fingers of Ring.

USC continued to press until the final minute, but they failed to equalize, and the Gamecocks suffered their first loss of the season.

Berson still had positive things to say about his team's performance after the loss.

"This team showed a lot of character, a lot of heart, a lot of fight and a lot of attacking soccer," said Berson.

"We just have to try to keep working to get better, as far as limiting mistakes, because we

were punished dearly for the mistakes we made tonight," said Berson.

USC defeated UMass 2-1 in their season opener last Friday at the Graveyard.

Berson and the Gamecocks will next travel to College Park, Md. this weekend to take part in the Maryland Soccer Classic. USC will face No. 3 Virginia on Friday before facing host No. 8 Maryland on Sunday.

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AMY GOULDING THE GAMECOCK

Gamecock forward Jordan Quinn