

Carolina picking up the pieces



Carolina quarterback Corey Jenkins has turf toe, but he is expected to start Saturday when the Gamecocks play Temple at Williams-Brice Stadium. Jenkins is fifth in the SEC in rushing, at 102.7 yards per game.

USC on damage control after losing last two games



Temple at USC

7 p.m. Saturday
Williams-Brice Stadium
Radio: WTCB 106.7 FM

BY KYLE ALMOND
THE GAMECOCK

The USC football team, under .500 for the first time since 1999, looks to get back in the win column Saturday when it takes on the Temple Owls at Williams-Brice Stadium.

Carolina (1-2, 0-1 SEC) is at a low point after losing its first two games of the season. The Gamecocks lost a 13-7 heartbreaker last weekend to No. 9 Georgia, fumbling away the ball on the Bulldogs' 2-yard line with less than a minute remaining. Fumbles also cost USC in its previous game at Virginia, where the Gamecocks committed six turnovers and lost 34-21.

"Many a football team has gone downhill after losing a football game like we did the last two," USC head coach Lou Holtz said.

The Gamecocks will try to pick themselves up against the Owls (1-2, 0-1 Big East), who are also on a two-game losing streak. After beating Richmond in its opener, Temple has been handled by

Oregon State and top-ranked Miami.

"We are a better team than we've shown," Holtz said. "We self-destruct too much. If we can avoid self-destructing, we can turn this thing around. We've done a lot of positive things, but none of it counts unless we stop beating ourselves."

A key for USC will be getting consistent play out of its offense, which has scored only one touchdown in the last six quarters.

Senior quarterback Corey Jenkins leads the Carolina offense, and he is fifth in the SEC in rushing with 102.7 yards a game. After struggling with turnovers in the Virginia game, Jenkins turned his play around against Georgia, rushing for 101 yards and throwing for 180 yards and a touchdown. His backup, redshirt sophomore Dondrial Pinkins, played some against Georgia and could see more playing time this weekend.

"They are both going to improve," Holtz said of his quarterbacks. "When we can get settled at tailback and eliminate some of these turnovers, I think our offense will be OK."

Jenkins has turf toe, but he is expected to still get the start.

Fullback Andrew Pinnock is the team's lead rushing threat behind Jenkins, but his confidence might be shaken after his fumble cost USC the game last Saturday.

Holtz, who met with Pinnock

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NCAA should demote D-I bottom feeders



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Tomorrow night, the Gamecocks square off against the Temple Owls. The big, bad Temple Owls. Literally speaking, of course.

Doesn't that strike the fear of God into you? Maybe if you're Lou Holtz, but Temple, and teams like

it in Division I-A, shouldn't even belong on the level at which they are playing.

I think it's largely obvious who these teams are — the ones that are perennial, or almost perennial, losers. The list includes Rutgers, Temple, Duke, Army, Navy, SMU, Vanderbilt, Baylor and many more.

The NCAA should seriously investigate a new system, where underachieving teams are sent to Division I-AA until they prove they can succeed in Division I-A. There is no reason why these schools, whose golden years are well behind them, should be served up as fodder for stronger, better Division I-A programs.

It's a case, not necessarily of contraction, but for realignment, in a twisted sort of way.

Sure, there will be scheduling difficulties, especially on the conference level, but these teams can be reinstated into Division I-A when they become more competitive. In the meantime, they can choose to be I-AA independents or join a conference. Rivalries will surely be broken up, but I don't really consider them rivalries when one team dominates the other.

Such a plan would last four years so that one recruiting class can pass through a program. Under my arrangement, a team would have to win a certain number of conference

games, or a slightly larger amount of overall games, to stay in Division I-A. Independents would require more wins.

Already, the Big East Conference has shown Temple the door, with their token wins over the years coming against Rutgers, Pittsburgh and nonconference pushovers.

Why the Big East would boot the Owls and not Rutgers is beyond me. Certainly, the Scarlet Knights have given their fans no reason to hope for anything. After losing for the first time to a I-AA team (Villanova) and then to a team barely in I-A itself (Buffalo), a trivial 44-0 win over an awful Army squad might just be the high

point of this season.

Rutgers must rely on beating nonconference opponents because, with the possible exception of Temple, it stands little chance of beating another Big East team.

Case in point: The Scarlet Knights lost 80-7 recently to West Virginia and 64-6 against Miami.

I won't go too much more in-depth with my plan, but I do think it should at least receive some passing consideration. Granted, many athletics directors, conference presidents and probably even the NCAA won't warm themselves up to the idea. Even the worst schools know they have much to lose — namely thousands to millions of

dollars — by not playing national powerhouses. For some, the pay-off forms a huge part of their athletics department's budget, funding other less lucrative sports.

All I know is that I hope the pitiful years of Gamecock football are long gone and won't happen again for a very long time. Under my plan, USC would have been kicked out of Division I-A at the end of the 21-game losing streak.

Perhaps the recent winning has clouded my memories, but I cannot fathom what it must feel like to be at a major conference school whose football team doesn't win. Friends

◆ **ROTHENBERG, SEE PAGE 9**

Volleyball team to open SEC play versus Kentucky



Kentucky at USC

7 p.m. Friday
Volleyball Competition Facility

BY ROBIN NURRE
THE GAMECOCK

The USC volleyball team, coming off a pair of losses this past weekend, looks to get back on the winning track Friday when it returns home to open SEC play.

Kentucky invades the Volleyball Competition Facility Friday at 7 p.m. to try to down the Gamecocks (6-3) on their home turf. The Wildcats (6-3) are coming off a weekend where they went 2-1.

Carolina was ranked heading into last weekend's West Coast trip, but the Gamecocks dropped out of the polls when they lost 3-0 to San Diego and 3-1 to No. 5 Long Beach State.

"We really need to shake off last weekend and play like we can," senior middle blocker Sam Alban said.

Last season, the Gamecocks finished second in the SEC Eastern Division behind Florida, with a 10-4 conference record. The Wildcats went 6-8 in conference play and

finished fourth in the division.

In head-to-head matchups last season, Carolina beat Kentucky twice — by four games in Lexington and three games in Columbia. USC has won the past five meetings with the Wildcats.

"We will open SEC play against Kentucky, which is always a good match for us," USC head coach Kim Christopher said. "Kentucky has played us tough for years, and the rivalry will be no different this season."

Senior Cally Plummer has been a solid leader this year for USC. She's tops on the Gamecocks in kills per game (3.39) and in service aces per game (.57).

Another senior, setter Megan Hosp, has been dishing out assists left and right. She's averaging 12.22 assists per game to lead the Gamecocks.

"For us to win this weekend, we will need a lot of communication, a desire to win and go after all the balls and touch everything," Alban said.

Senior Kristen Batt is the one to watch for Kentucky. She leads the Wildcats in kills per game (3.54) and digs per game (2.82).

Both Kentucky and Carolina will play Oral Roberts following their match. The Wildcats will take on the Golden Eagles on Saturday, and USC will play them Sunday at 1:30 p.m. Both matches will be at the Competition Facility.

"Kentucky has played us tough for years, and the rivalry will be no different this season."

KIM CHRISTOPHER
USC VOLLEYBALL HEAD COACH

Oral Roberts (5-5) brings one of the nation's best liberos in Becky Dreher, who is ranked 12th nationally in digs per game. Patricia Meneses leads the Golden Eagles in kills per game, and Anna Mozeno leads the team in sets.

"We have played our toughest preseason schedule this year, and we'll close it out playing Oral Roberts," Christopher said. "They are a very good team that will be a challenge for us."

Students can get into both weekend games free with a student ID. Those who aren't students can get in to the Kentucky match for only \$1 if they bring a piece of blue clothing to donate to the Salvation Army. On Sunday, fans can bring their ticket stub from the USC/Temple football game to be admitted for \$1.

"We are excited about the weekend," Christopher said. "It will be nice to be at home for two weeks and get into a rhythm of playing Friday/Sunday."

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecocksports@hotmail.com



Senior Sam Alban and the USC volleyball team will play their SEC opener Friday against Kentucky. The Gamecocks have won five straight matches against the Wildcats.

SEC FOOTBALL

Florida, Tennessee to meet in Knoxville

KNOXVILLE, TENN. (AP) — Florida finds itself in a tough spot when it visits Tennessee on Saturday: Win or brace for a long season under new coach Ron Zook.

And it's only September. The 10th-ranked Gators (2-1) visit the fourth-ranked Volunteers (2-0) needing to prove they're still good enough to challenge for a championship without Steve Spurrier running the team.

Even Vols coach Philip Fulmer was defending the hated Gators this week.

"You can say what you want, or think what you want," Fulmer said, "but they're the No. 10 team coming in here with one loss, to the defending national champions. And they're very good."

They were good enough under Spurrier to win seven of 10 games against Fulmer's Vols. But Tennessee won in Gainesville last year for the first time since 1971.

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Zook