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Manning focused on winning

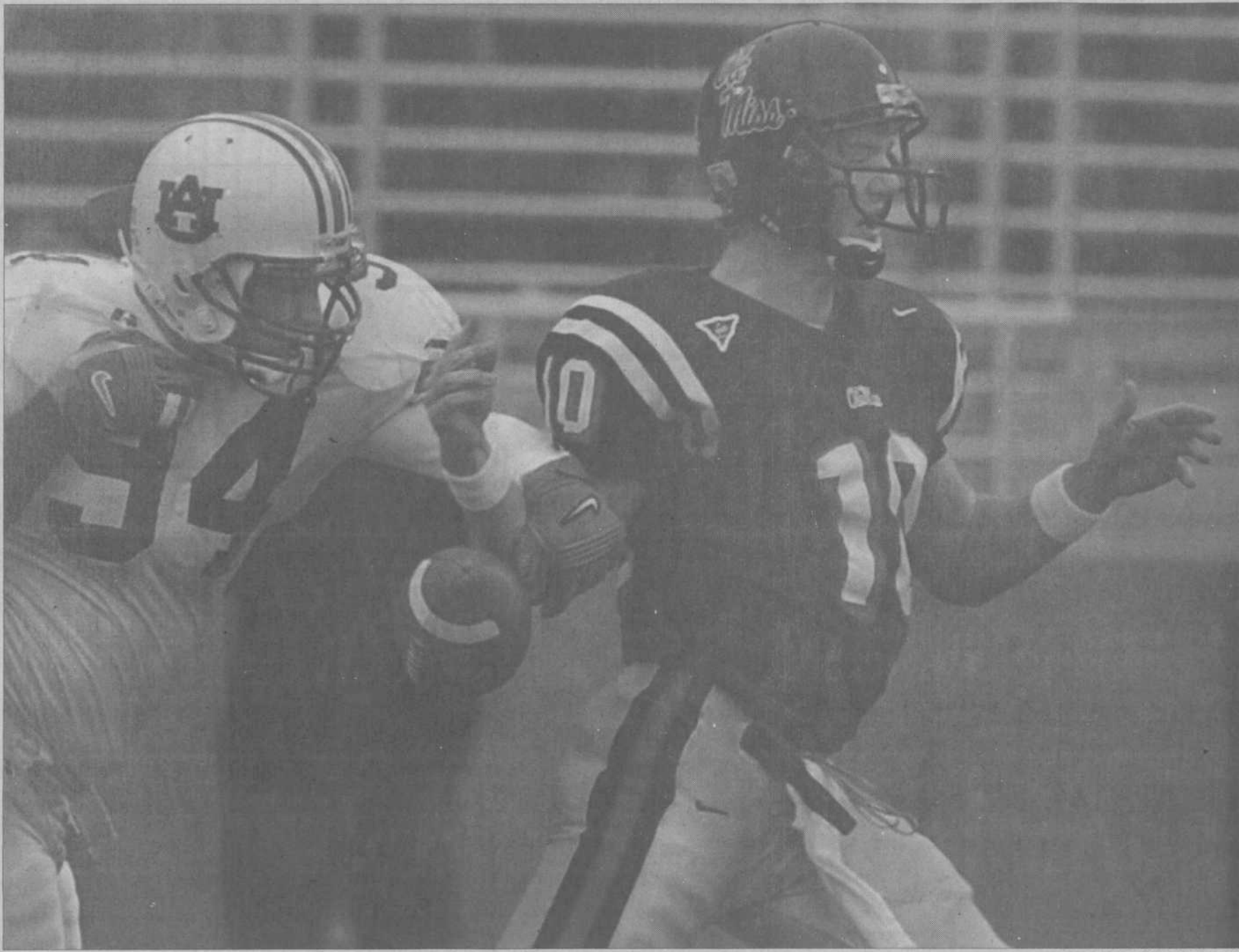


PHOTO COURTESY OF KRT CAMPUS

Ole Miss quarterback Eli Manning, right, has thrown for 8,791 yards and 70 touchdowns and looks to increase those numbers against USC on Saturday.

Manning has followed in family's footsteps into SEC's record books

BY BRAD SENKIW
 THE GAMECOCK

USC head coach Lou Holtz isn't just hyping up another opponent this time. The player that Holtz offered up so much praise to at Monday's press conference might just be deserved this season. Ole Miss quarterback Eli Manning is storming through the SEC and its record books, placing the Rebels at the top of the Western Division heading into Saturday's contest with the Gamecocks.

"He is the son of Archie and the brother of Peyton and looks just like them," Holtz said. "Eli is a great ball handler, carries out

his fakes well and is very smart and accurate."

Manning said he isn't going to let Holtz's good words divert his attention from the game.

"I don't read the papers much, so I don't even know if I'll see anything he says," Manning said. "I've known Coach Holtz's quotes, and he's always very complimentary. He's been doing that forever, and it's a great strategy, so I'll probably try not to read his quotes."

With quarterbacking blood running through his system, Manning has Heisman candidate written all over him. With his own Web site for the Heisman race and as a finalist for the

Johnny Unitas Golden Arm Award for the top quarterback in the country, he hasn't let the hype clutter his mind.

"I am not worried about the Heisman. I am worried about Ole Miss winning games, and we have been doing a good job of that," Manning said. "I think when you win games, everything becomes better. Your school gets on television more. I guess in that way it helps, but the biggest thing is winning games and playing smart football."

And winning is just what this Rebel team is doing. After knocking off Arkansas last week, Ole Miss became bowl-eligible for the seventh-consecutive season. Manning has been a major part of that over the past four years, and Rebel head coach David Cutcliffe said he "wouldn't trade Eli for anybody."

Cutcliffe has also been impressed with how Manning has handled himself on and off the field this season.

"Eli's got all the tools it takes," Cutcliffe said. "He's just a very gifted player mentally and physically. The way he practices and the way he leads on the practice and game field, he's been tremendous to this point."

With large shoes to fill because his father is a Rebel legend and his older brother sits atop several all-time SEC records, Eli hasn't allowed the shadows to keep him from getting his name in those same books. Although he probably won't catch Peyton for the all-time career passing-yards leader, Eli's 8,791 at this point in the season is comparable to Peyton's 11,201. However, the younger Manning will likely finish in the top five in nearly ev-

ery passing category in the SEC by the year's end. And statistics aren't the only places to compare the two.

"I think we're pretty similar quarterbacks," Manning said. "We are not known for running the ball; we like to stay in the pocket. We know what to do with the ball quick and not sit in the pocket and hold it a long time."

Eli also hasn't done a bad job passing his father, Archie, in the Ole Miss record books. The son holds 45 school records, including 70 touchdown passes and 1,197 passing attempts.

And he still has at least four more games to increase those numbers and contend for the conference championships.

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American Dream is alive in the NBA



TYLER JONES

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Pro basketball is full of young, exciting talent.

I have a confession to make. Don't worry, I'm not Catholic. And, no, I'm not going to say that I was impressed with Dondrial's play this past weekend — although I was. My confession is that I am a big-time NBA fan.

That's right, I am a worshiper of spoiled millionaires who are glorified thugs that smoke drugs, cheat on their wives and adorn their bodies with garish jewelry and equally absurd tattoos. In fact, I look up to them, both figuratively and literally. I sit on my couch and marvel at the physical prowess they possess — streaking through a forest of 7-footers before tossing up a backboard-kissing score — and think how much more I would want to score 50 points in an NBA game than run for 200 in an NFL game or hit three home runs against the Yankees.

Sure, I love the college game. Who can honestly say that March Madness isn't the most exciting sporting phenomenon in America? I, for one, can testify to some of my happiest moments being the first Thursday afternoon of March Madness with a bevy of beverages in the fridge and an absent check by my name when roll was called in class. But I digress.

The NBA is not an old man's game. There are a few old men who play it, but for the most part, the NBA is young, urban and aggressive. It is a game of individual talent, a place where the American Dream lingers on for poor, ghetto youth and a game that created the greatest sporting icon in the 20th century.

The problem is that Stern and the rest of the league seem irrefutably resolute that only one man can fill Michael Jordan's Nikes. First it was Kobe, now it is LeBron. The strength of the NBA is such that for the first time in decades there is a wealth of talent that, as a collective whole, rivals any other era in the history of professional basketball. Why, then, does the NBA not market its plethora of depth instead of remaining steadfast in its search for the next messiah?

You like a smooth swingman that can score at will? I give you Tracy McGrady, Vince Carter, Kobe Bryant, Paul Pierce, Latrell Sprewell, Ray Allen and Caron Butler. You say you want power and defense? Ben Wallace, Jermaine O'Neal. What about heart, guts and hustle, all in a body that barely hits 6 feet? My hero, Allen Iverson, fits that mold. What about an all-around player, a classic if you will? Tim Duncan, Chris Webber and Kevin Garnett come to mind.

The list can go on and on, but I still know what you're saying: "The NBA? Are you kidding me?"

Want more proof then? OK, I'll pull out the big guns. The NBA is better because it has the best announcers in sports. I'll take Bill Walton's acid-inspired ramblings over Dickie V's senile rants any day. And what about Charles Barkley's never ending opinion, or the derriere-biting wit of Marv Albert?

Damn this word limit! I need to talk about tattoos and weed. I need to talk about the Clippers and the Sixers. I need to talk about how Mark Cuban is the greatest owner in sports. I certainly need to talk about how I watched two games last night and I'll watch two more tonight and that my Halloween is wrecked because Iverson is playing Sacramento on Friday.

Jones is a graduate student in the College of Journalism and Information Studies.

SEC FOOTBALL NEWS AND NOTES

Week 10 features 2 important games

This Saturday, the SEC features three conference games and three nonconference games, while Alabama, Mississippi State and Vanderbilt are all getting a needed week off.

The star attraction of this weekend is The Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party, with No. 4 Georgia and No. 23 Florida butting heads in Jacksonville, Fla. Florida has won 12 of the past 13 games, including last year's 20-13 win in Jacksonville. Georgia's loss to Florida was its only loss of the season last year.

One interesting fact about the coaches who will face off at the game is that Florida head coach Ron Zook graduated from Miami University in Ohio, while Georgia head coach Mark Richt graduated from the University of Miami in Florida.

The game will be shown on CBS at 3:30 p.m.

USC travels to No. 20 Ole Miss to face quarterback Eli Manning and the Ole Miss offense at 12:30 p.m. Saturday.

The only other SEC intra-conference game is between Arkansas and Kentucky at Commonwealth Stadium in Lexington, Ky. In other action, UL-Monroe plays at Auburn, Duke goes to No. 19 Tennessee

and Louisiana Tech tries to upset No. 7 LSU in Baton Rouge, La.

Clausen, Lavalais and Abney honored

Tennessee quarterback Casey Clausen, LSU defensive tackle Chad Lavalais and Kentucky wide receiver Derek Abney were each honored as SEC Players of the Week on Monday.

Clausen was 23-of-43 for 283 yards and four touchdowns in Tennessee's 51-43 quintuple-overtime victory at Alabama. The Northridge, Calif., native also had a rushing touchdown

in the fifth overtime to give Tennessee the win.

Lavalais, in winning Defensive Player of the Week, had eight tackles, including three for loss and one sack in LSU's 31-7 thrashing of Auburn. The Tiger lineman also stopped Auburn running back Carnell Williams for a five-yard loss on a fourth-down play, which led to an LSU touchdown.

In Kentucky's victory of Mississippi State on Saturday, Abney ran back a punt return for 80 yards that culminated in a touchdown, and he won the Special Teams Player of the Week award. His punt-return touchdown was his eighth and ties an NCAA record.

Manning named a finalist for award

Ole Miss quarterback Eli Manning was named to the finalist list for the Johnny Unitas Golden Arm Award. The Unitas Award is annually given to the best senior quarterback in the nation. Other finalists include Texas Tech's B.J. Symons, Michigan's John Navarre, Oklahoma's Jason White, N.C. State's Philip Rivers, Tulane's J.P. Losman and Virginia's Matt Schaub.

The award is named after quarterback Johnny Unitas, an NFL Hall of Fame inductee who played football at Louisville.

Interested in taking The Gamecock's Sports Challenge?

If you can beat the editors, you'll win a free Gamecock T-Shirt. Send in your picks to gamecocksports@hotmail.com by 2 p.m. Thursday. We'll select ONE person at random to be our reader of the week, whose picks will appear in Friday's issue.

This week's games:

Arkansas at Kentucky	2 Miami at 10 Virginia Tech
Virginia at N.C. State	14 Oklahoma State at 1 Oklahoma
12 Nebraska at 16 Texas	4 Georgia at 23 Florida
11 Michigan at 9 Michigan State	Clemson at Wake Forest
6 Washington State at 3 Southern Cal	USC at 20 Ole Miss

Rankings are from
 The Associated Press.

♦ FOR TIE-BREAKING PURPOSES, PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR SCORE FOR THE USC-OLE MISS GAME. AND DON'T FORGET TO INCLUDE YOUR NAME!

CLUB CORNER

USC crew team

The USC crew team took medals at the 28th-annual Head of the Tennessee Regatta on the Tennessee River in Knoxville on Oct. 25. The men's club 4 finished in third place out of 22 collegiate entries with a time of 0:17:53 for 5000-meters.

The team finished ahead of in-state rival Clemson, which placed 12th. Rowing in the men's club 4 were Etai Eshel, Daniel Ungeheuer, Michael Pickard, Giampaolo Paggi and Jessica Greene. If interested in joining the team, check out <http://www.geocities.com/southcarolinagamecockcrew> for more information.

Send us your club info

Feel free to send at least 75 words about your club's happenings to gamecocksports@hotmail.com by 2 p.m. Wednesday.