



SPORTS

GAME SCHEDULE

MEN'S BASKETBALL vs. Sakalai All-Stars,
7:30 p.m., Thursday
MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SWIMMING AND DIVING
vs. Florida, Saturday

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Holtz gives formula for upset

BY BRAD SENKIV
THE GAMECOCK

Last Saturday seemed to be one of those days when several of the top teams in the country fell to upsets. One that hit closest to home might have been Clemson's surprising defeat of then No. 3 Florida State. Although USC fans, coaches and players might not want to acknowledge the big win by their in-state rival, the Tigers might have laid a blueprint for upsetting a highly touted squad, which Carolina could use against Florida on Saturday.

"They got some help from Florida State," USC head coach Lou Holtz said about Clemson. "There were several pass-interference calls; there were some dropped passes. Let's not take

anything away from Clemson. They made plays on offense and on defense, and that's what you have to do."

At Monday's press conference, Holtz gave his formula to shake up the nation's best.

"So many things depend on what kind of start you get off to. You get off to a good start, and the other team may not be as sharp.

"If you play your very best, and they don't play very well, all of a sudden that thing goes. But if they play their very best and you play your very best, I'm going to tell you, it ain't going to happen," Holtz said.

Although the odds are stacked against USC, overcoming the Gators is something Holtz is preparing his team for. Holtz said in order to beat Ron Zook's No. 15

Gators, much depends on what Florida does.

"We have to have help from Florida," Holtz said. "They've got to make some mistakes, for example, penalties. We have to have some help in creating some turnovers. They haven't provided any help."

Holtz said the other key for a national upset will be the Gamecocks' ability, or lack thereof, to create big plays with the passing game.

"We have to make plays, not bad plays. We need some big plays by our quarterback and wide receivers. To beat a team like Florida, which we have never done, we'll need some help in both areas."

It's been well documented that Florida has great success against

Carolina, at both the Swamp and Williams-Brice Stadium, the site of Saturday's contest. The Gamecocks were dominated 28-7 at Florida last season, and two years ago, in the infamous "Blackout" game, the Gators romped through Columbia with a 54-17 victory.

As for this season's game, there will be several obstacles in USC's path to a shocker. First, the running game will have to go on without Demetris Summers, who suffered a concussion against Arkansas last Thursday. Summers will be held out until his headaches end and will be cleared to play seven days after that. Holtz said it was the trainers' decision, and the team will have to deal with it.

Also, although the Gamecocks

need Florida's help, Holtz doesn't expect any kind of emotional letdown.

"We aren't going to get any help from Florida emotionally," Holtz said. "With Charlie Strong coming back in here, with everything riding, with the momentum they have, we can't count on that. They aren't going to overlook us. However, all we can do is play our very best."

And Holtz said that having last year's defensive coordinator, Strong, on the other sideline won't help the Gamecock's cause.

"We don't know what they're thinking, but they know what we're thinking," Holtz said.

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

Here's my early wish list, Santa



TYLER JONES
GAMECOCKSPORTS@HOTMAIL.COM

Mall security has no love for a 26-year-old.

Walking home from the venerable Thomas Cooper Library the other night, my life and all of its inexorable gloom took an unforeseen turn. As I logged through the depressing sunset just before 6 in the evening, I noticed my neighbor placing a strand of green and red bulbs on his azalea shrubs.

"Merry Christmas," he said in what seemed to be a thick Eastern European accent.

"Christmas? Hell, it isn't even Thanksgiving yet," I replied with my usual venomous wit.

"No, Mr. Jones, it is Christmas. We are taking little Vladimir to see Santa Claus in the shopping mall tomorrow, and I would like to have the lights to make him excited."

Jeez, I thought to myself. This capitalism thing has really gone off without a hitch, hasn't it? Karl Marx must be rolling over in his velvet-lined casket right now. But what time did I have to worry? I was scheduled to meet with a voodoo doctor and a Republican shaman later that night to put a curse on Charlie Whitehurst and Chris Leak.

But maybe it is Christmas, and maybe good ol' Kris Kringle can save the day. So I hurried to my desk and whipped out a makeshift Christmas wish list that was going to change the sports world, especially the fate of the South Carolina athletic program.

Bright and early the next morning, I skipped my usual hygienic duties and sped off in my Japanese-engineered auto to the horrific display of modernity on Harbison Boulevard. Once inside the mall, I made a beeline to the line of toddlers and single-digit sycophants who waited with baited breath to talk with jolly St. Nick.

Surprisingly, no one seemed to question why a 26-year-old was standing in line to sit on Santa's lap. Perhaps they thought I was a parent or a big brother escorting one of the spoiled, Ritalin-addled snots, but regardless, I was next up.

Once I hopped up on Santa's lap, I heard him let out a deafening groan just before his leg began lurching in pain. But I was not to be denied.

"Santa, I've got a wish list for you. I know that I haven't been a good boy, but just this once, can't you make my wishes come true?"

He was writhing in pain and unable to speak, so I decided to quickly read out my wishes.

"First, can you turn Dondrial into Donovan McNabb of old? And while we're at it, can you heal Demetris? When I mean 'heal,' I mean 200-yards plus against Clemson. We also need healthy linebackers. In fact, turn Ricardo Hurlley into Michael Stonebreaker."

Security was encircling me, so I really had to hurry.

"Turn Ronaldo Howell into a poor man's Kevin Garnett and let the basketball team win at least 15 games. I know that is a stretch, but this is Christmas. And while we're here, how about a Roy Jones Jr. versus Mike Tyson bout on my birthday next year? Also, I want Duke basketball to lose every single game this year, and let's have Karl Malone excommunicated by the Pope."

Three rent-a-cops had me by the throat, but I kept on blurting out my list.

"We have to beat Clemson by two touchdowns, and Allen Iverson has to win the MVP of the NBA and a gold medal in Athens this summer."

Before I could ask for a reasonable bail, Santa was on a stretcher, and I was on my way to the Richland County Detention Center.

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

From playmaker to play caller

Former USC quarterback Todd Ellis is leaving his mark as the play-by-play man in his first year

BY HOLLI ARMSTRONG
THE GAMECOCK

The question is open: Would you rather be remembered as the Carolina quarterback who delivered a nationally televised touchdown pass to Robert Brooks, sealing a win against Georgia, or as the man behind the voice calling a last second Carolina touchdown drive? Todd Ellis does not have to choose.

"I knew that playing quarterback was very personal to the Gamecock fans, but I never realized how important the play-by-play announcer was to the public," Ellis said. "They are really inviting you into their homes, and you become a part of their Saturday tradition when they are taking their family to tailgate sports or traveling elsewhere."

Nobody understands the magnitude of the job quite like Bob Fulton, who served as the voice of the Gamecocks for 43 years.

Ellis knew Fulton would be an invaluable resource in helping him transition from sideline reporter to announcer.

"Unfortunately, I didn't have anyone help me," Fulton said. "I learned by listening to sports announcers and simulating football games. I would sit in the stadium and broadcast the game to myself. When I first started, I was nervous because I had told them I had experience when I didn't have any experience. I had a talent for it and was able to get away with it. But I never had anyone assist me at all."

This explains why Fulton took the time to construct a six-page instruction manual, as well as invite Ellis into his home to work on the fundamentals of play-by-play. Fulton was even with Ellis his first night in the booth.

"I asked him if he was nervous, and he said he wasn't, and I said that I was," Fulton said.

Ellis said he could hear

Fulton's voice running through this mind that night:

"Be a reporter more than an analyst ..."

"Give the score as often as possible ..."

"Try to be fair and realize there are two teams involved ..."

"Remember you are talking to one person out there ..."

"Be as descriptive as you can ..."

And Ellis was prepared for his first game, when the Gamecocks took on Louisiana-Lafayette on Aug. 30.

"The game had been coming for so long," Ellis said. "It was still a long day. I was never really nervous, just anxious."

The anxiety crept in an hour and a half before kickoff. Having agonized over the game summary, Ellis will never forget signing on and reading his first opening. "Afterward, my producer said, 'Well, you are no longer a virgin, you are ready to go.' And I was ready to go," Ellis said.

As a former Gamecock quarterback, Ellis, a local lawyer whose Gamecock career started

in 1985, has what a lot of announcers long for — instant credibility. Listeners cannot question Ellis' loyalty or enthusiasm for the game. Ellis realizes the window of acceptance is small, but the fans have been supportive.

"People come up to me now and say, 'I think I recognize your voice,' whereas after my playing career people recognized my face," Ellis said. "It is amazing the power of radio. People from all walks of life listen, know or follow the Gamecocks by listening to the Gamecock Sports Network. They have a great love and passion for the game of football."

Ellis also understands that some have been leery of him controlling such a coveted post.

"I think there was probably some hesitation to have a former player being a play-by-play guy because I wasn't a quote journalist or studied broadcaster," Ellis said. "It would have never been a problem if I was an analyst, but with play-by-play, I had to jump that hurdle with some people who

view play-by-play guys as being non-athletes."

So far, everything is as Ellis expected. The preparation is intense. Sleep is often sacrificed for responsibility. Stress is high. But come game day, it is all worth it.

"Once I get to the stadium and sit down in that seat, it's everything," Ellis said. "I remember traveling to Athens, Ga., and I was sitting there — Larry Munson was in his booth next to me, and Vern Lunquist was calling the game for CBS. It was surreal."

Moments like that make the grueling schedule worth it.

Not counting game day or any of the extra shows, Ellis logs about 12 hours a week preparing for Saturday's contest. But he has set up a solid routine.

On Monday, Ellis gets to his law office early so he can leave to attend Lou Holtz's weekly press conference. Ellis goes to listen to Holtz's comments and collect study material. Monday night is

♦ ELLIS, SEE PAGE 10