

NEWS CONFERENCE

Holtz optimistic about team progress

By STEPHEN DEMEDIS
THE GAMECOCK

USC head coach Lou Holtz held his first press conference of the season Monday, five days before the USC football season opens against Vanderbilt. The coach addressed several issues including injuries, position match-ups and team morale.

Entering his sixth year at Carolina, Holtz is optimistic about the team and how it has adjusted to the massive overhaul the program underwent in the offseason, but knows that the team will still have to adjust to the live-game experiences.

"I think it's been a good fall camp," Holtz said. "I think we made a lot of progress this fall. We've scrimmaged an awful lot, but an opening game's mistakes are always scary."

Coach Holtz said he is also confident that his team is up for the challenge of opening against an experienced SEC opponent.

"I think we are ready to play," Holtz said. "I think we could practice three more weeks and not be anymore ready than we are at the present time. Sometimes you just have to go play and see where you are and go from there."

While much attention has been



KATIE KIRKLAND/THE GAMECOCK

Head coach Lou Holtz speaks at the USC preseason media day in early August. His sixth season at USC, Holtz said he is optimistic about the season.

paid to whether USC has the skill at positions such as quarterback and in the secondary, Holtz said he feels that the bigger issue is how well his team responds to adversity.

"The biggest question I have is not whether we're going to play well or not, but how well we'll react when things go against us, particularly on the road," Holtz said. "There's no doubt that a football game has the ups and the downs and things along that line." Holtz said he sees Vanderbilt as

a quality opponent that has a strong passing attack and noted that preseason polls have selected the Commodores to finish ahead of Carolina in the standings.

"We do need to take a complete team to Vanderbilt," Holtz said. "By a complete team, I mean we have to play well on offense, defense and in the kicking game, but I expect us to do that."

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CLEMSON

Bowden says team isn't focused on vengeance

By PETE IACOBELLI
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CLEMSON — Clemson coach Tommy Bowden wants his 15th-ranked Tigers focused on several things heading into this week's opener with Wake Forest. Revenge is not among them.

One of Bowden's most demoralizing losses came at the hands of the Demon Deacons last season, 45-17. It also touched off the most tense, drama-filled month in the history of Clemson football or Bowden. With some fans calling for Bowden's job, the Tigers began a remarkable four-game journey of success, defeating Florida State, Duke, South Carolina and, in the Peach Bowl, Tennessee.

The turnaround lifted Clemson (9-4 a year ago) into the national rankings, gave Bowden a new, longer contract and set expectations soaring into this season.

About the only thing left undone is showing Wake Forest what-for when the teams open the season Saturday at Death Valley, right?

Not so, Bowden said. "When you're out there on the field, coaching a sport, there are so many other things other than the revenge factor," Bowden said Tuesday. "At that age, I just think it's going to be natural to associate that word with what happened last year. But to accomplish any of the

things a good team wants to accomplish, you just can't finish fast, you've got to start fast. Those are the things we haven't done since I've been here."

The players, for now, are following their coach's lead.

When the Tigers leave the locker room Saturday and line up for the traditional run down the hill at their Death Valley entrance, there's sure to be some calls of "Get 'em," said center Tommy Sharpe. But once the game starts, "if you're thinking about that, you're not concentrating on the stuff you need to do right," he said.

Against Wake Forest last year that was about everything.

The Tigers went on drives of 14 and 13 plays to start the game. Not only didn't they get any points, they trailed 21-0. By the time Clemson finally got on the board, the Demon Deacons were ahead 45-0 and on their way to their first victory over the Tigers in five years.

"Believe me, (Wake Forest coach Jim Grobe) was kind," Bowden said. "It could've been worse."

There were chants from the stands for Bowden's job after the game. In the locker room, Bowden told his players not to show up for practice Monday if they "don't intend on beating Florida State" the following week.

"We put that in the past," Sharpe said. "We haven't even

looked" at last year's Wake Forest game.

The streak started with a 26-10 win over the Seminoles, at No. 3 the highest ranked team Clemson's ever beaten.

"Maybe we needed the wake-up call," offensive lineman Roman Fry said. "I hope we don't need one this year."

Still, scars from last year's beating remain.

Wake Forest's option attack rushed for 321 yards. The Deacons scored touchdowns on an interception return and a fumble recovery.

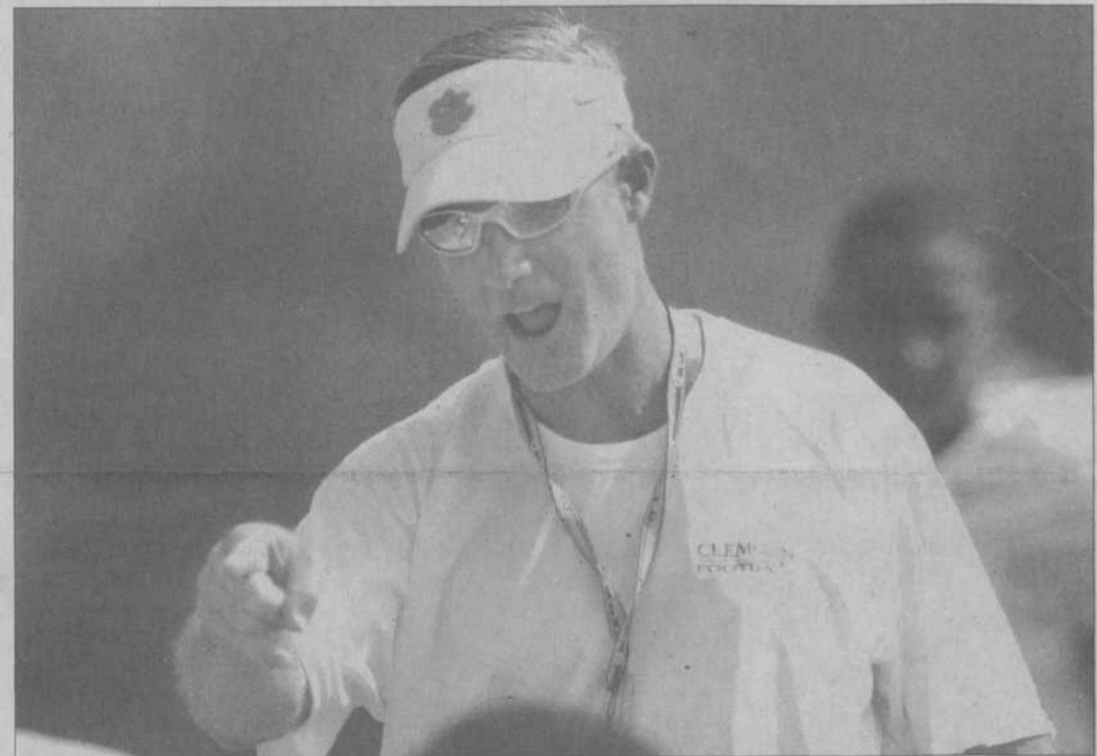
"It's just a bad game," defensive coordinator John Lovett said. "It wasn't just the linebackers. That game stunk."

Bowden's job security, a topic through much of the season, became a flash point for Tiger fans, some of which turned up the heat for athletic director Terry Don Phillips to make a change.

Bowden said he doesn't attach emotions to that loss, just one humbling moment in a very humbling profession.

The Tigers, though, want to be the ones doing the humbling this time around.

"I'm sure," Clemson quarterback Charlie Whitehurst said, "there are going to be feelings of, 'Let's show them we're not the same team we were last year.'"



MARY ANN CHASTAIN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tommy Bowden talks to his players before the start of practice Thursday. Bowden will lead the No. 15 Tigers into battle Saturday against the Wake Forest Demon Deacons, a team they lost to 45-17 in 2003.

■ SOCCER

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cancerous tumor. Thomas' first game back came the day after he was medically cleared to play full-contact soccer. He assisted the Tribe's only goal less than a minute

after entering the game, resulting in a 1-1 tie with then-sixth-ranked Old Dominion. Scherder had 11 goals last season, and junior Andreas Nydal returns from an ACL injury that cut into his training time before last season. Nydal scored four goals last year after a rookie season in which he scored

eight goals. The Tribe and its first-year head coach Chris Norris will start off the season against the Gamecocks in Columbia. The game starts at 7 p.m. today at Eugene E. Stone III Stadium.

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This week's games:

- USC at Vanderbilt
- Oregon State at 4 LSU
- Kentucky at Louisville
- Middle Tennessee State at 11 Florida
- Colorado State at Colorado
- UNLV at 14 Tennessee
- Oklahoma State at UCLA
- Wake Forest at 15 Clemson
- Pittsburgh at South Florida
- 5 Florida State at 6 Miami



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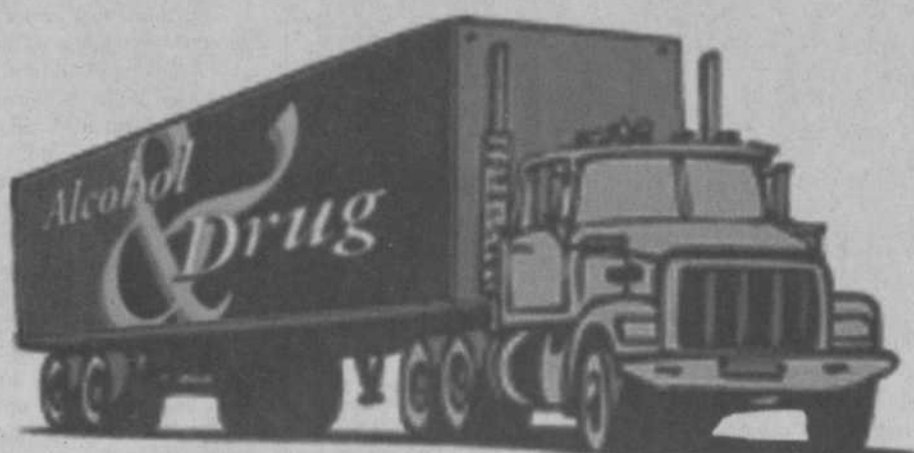
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