



## FRIDAY FOOTBALL PREVIEW

### Razorbacks, USC seek to save seasons

By **STEPHEN DEMEDIS**  
STAFF WRITER

Saturday's game between USC (5-3, 3-3 SEC) and Arkansas (3-4, 1-3 SEC) will feature two teams trying to rebound after tough losses to ranked opponents. Despite starting the season off on high notes, both teams have fallen from prominence and need an in-conference win to get their seasons back on track.

The Razorbacks came into the season returning just one starter, quarterback Matt Jones, but made a huge statement by trouncing New Mexico State, 63-13.

Head coach Houston Nutt's Razorbacks also defeated Alabama early in the season. But since those early wins, Arkansas has skidded to four losses to ranked opponents, never losing by more than two scores.

On national television, the

Razorbacks came up just short of upsetting No. 7 Texas and No. 6 Georgia at home. Against Florida, the team rallied to pull within one score of the Gators before the home team pulled away on an interception.

Auburn, ranked fourth in the country, handed the Razorbacks their worst loss of the season two weeks ago, 38-20.

Arkansas has only been held to less than 20 points once this season in the Georgia game and is coming into Columbia after two weeks rest. Carolina's three losses have all come at home this year.

After playing No. 3 Georgia down to the wire in a 16-20 loss, the Gamecocks earned respect in the national rankings, and a road win over Alabama put USC in the top 25. Since earning that recognition, Carolina lost

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DAVID STAGG/THE GAMECOCK

Sophomore running back Demetris Summers tries to break through the Tennessee defense Saturday in the 43-29 loss. Summers, who ran for 95 yards against UT, and the Gamecocks will try to avoid moving to 0-11 in three seasons when trying to become bowl eligible.

### USC bowl chances hinge on Arkansas

By **ALEX RILEY**  
THE GAMECOCK

Forget all the talk of Demetris Summers not getting enough carries. Disregard anything involving Dondrial Pinkins or Syvelle Newton's inadequacy. Set aside the three losses to teams USC should have beaten. It all means nothing, nada, zip, zilch.

Everything comes down to Saturday.

In USC's final home stand of the 2004 season, the team is looking to knock off an Arkansas team that is a mere 3-4 and returns only one big starter in senior quarterback Matt Jones. The win won't give Carolina the SEC East or any big bragging rights. All it does is give USC win number six, and that's all the Gamecocks need.

"This is a tough stretch, but we have to find a way to rise above it," USC head coach Lou Holtz said.

That tough stretch goes all the way back to 2002, when the Gamecocks were riding an emotional high. After coming off back-to-back winning trips to the Outback Bowl, the USC football program looked like it was ready to continue its rise to the top.

However, Carolina hit a slump and hasn't been the same since. Over the past two years, USC has gone 5-7 both



KATIE KIRKLAND/THE GAMECOCK

Dondrial Pinkins and 23 other seniors will play their final home game Saturday.

seasons and are 0-10 in games where a win would have given them bowl eligibility.

But with the remaining schedule of Florida and Clemson, both on the road, the Gamecocks' chances of securing a

bowl bid grow somewhat dimmer if they don't secure that sixth win at home this weekend. The last time the Gamecocks defeated the Razorbacks was in 2000, when USC won 27-7 in Columbia.

"(Arkansas has) a very solid team," Holtz said. "Matt Jones gives you a lot of problems at quarterback. He may be the MVP of this league."

The Hogs roll into Columbia after a bye week, while USC is still recovering from its second-half meltdown against Tennessee.

Besides bowl eligibility, Carolina will look to send its seniors out on a high note, as Saturday is Senior Day and the final home game for the Gamecocks. This group of outgoing seniors hasn't been to a bowl since the 2002 Outback

win, so a win Saturday would give the 2004 seniors a postseason appearance to close out on. This is also the seniors' last chance to beat Arkansas, something they

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### Carolina needs one complete game

■ Both sides of the ball need to show up to gain pre-Clemson momentum



**JONATHAN HILLYARD**

SECOND-YEAR ELECTRONIC JOURNALISM STUDENT

boys in black.

Need another example? Let's look at the Alabama and Ole Miss games. Against the Crimson Tide, the USC defense played impeccably, intercepting Bama quarterbacks four times. The offense looked nearly nonexistent in the match in Tuscaloosa. However, at home against Ole Miss the next week, the offense looked strong, scoring 28 points. On cue, the defense laid an egg, giving up 31 points to the 11th-rated offense in the SEC.

Georgia serves as another great example. USC's defense held the UGA offense in check in the first half, only to see the Gamecock offense squander red-zone opportunities in the second half.

The truth is that no matter what any player says, these struggles are all in their minds. But all it takes to alleviate this "curse" is one win, just

minutes of the game against Tennessee. The USC offense could not have played better for the last 10 minutes of the game. Put those two units together for 60 minutes and you have a blowout in favor of the

one win, to push the team to that sixth win and who knows what else. I would love to see this team, which has yet to be proven inferior to anyone, play without pressure for just a few games.

A win against an Arkansas team that has dominated the Gamecocks recently could be just the start. There would be no pressure in Gainesville, Fla., as the Gamecocks would face a Gator team trying to overcome a "lame duck" coach.

Finally, a win before the Clemson game is crucial. The Tigers will — that's right, I said will — be 5-5 heading into this game. It is imperative for USC not to be 5-5. This would give the Gamecocks a chance to reverse the favor the Tigers have been so kind in delivering the past two seasons — sending their rivals home for the holidays.

So when you all enter Williams-Brice Stadium on Saturday, look for one thing — a complete effort. Look for the Gamecocks to pound a weak Razorback secondary like they did against the Vols last week. Look for a swarming defense to stop the runs that might have cost them a shot at an SEC title a week ago. Finally, look for Josh Brown to continue to shock us with solid field goal kicking.

A complete, dominant game is the one thing the team has lacked all season, and a home game against a struggling Arkansas team might be the Gamecocks' last chance to prove that it's possible.

### Hogs hopeful after October meltdown

By **KYLE PARKINSON**  
ARKANSAS TRAVELER (U. ARKANSAS)

(U-WIRE) FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. — USC head-coach Lou Holtz once said, "How you respond to the challenge in the second half will determine what you become after the game, whether you are a winner or a loser."

That statement has held true for the Gamecocks in the second half of their past two seasons. USC is 0-10 the past two seasons with bowl eligibility on the line.

Carolina will seek that bowl-qualifying sixth win Saturday, while Arkansas will look to get back to .500 on its way to bowl eligibility.

Arkansas is coming off a bye and was back on the indoor practice field Tuesday afternoon.

"Our guys moved around real good," Arkansas head coach Houston Nutt said. "Coach Holtz runs different formations with four wide outs, five wide outs, three wide outs. I know him very well. I know he wants to run the ball. He uses a lot of formations, and he's throwing the ball probably more than we thought he would. He'll try to keep you off balance with a reverse or a

trick play."

Nutt and his team are not solely concentrating on the Gamecocks, but themselves as well.

"We're trying to be physical and know who to block and come off the ball," Nutt said. "We have to control the ball. We can't have three and outs. We have to be able to stay on the field, keep our defense on the sideline and have a good kicking game. It's no secret it's about the same thing each week. This is a critical week for us, and I think our players know that and understand it and we've had two really good work days."

This is a critical week for Arkansas after a winless October that left the Hogs 3-4 overall and 1-3 in the SEC.

"It's a critical week because it's November," Nutt said. "It's been a long time since this team has won a ballgame. They really want to, they're anxious and it's critical that everybody gets better. We've got to play good as a team. You just can't have a good defensive quarter, a good offensive quarter. It's got to be all four quarters."

Arkansas senior quarterback Matt Jones practiced at full speed for the

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**HOUSTON NUTT**  
ARKANSAS HEAD COACH

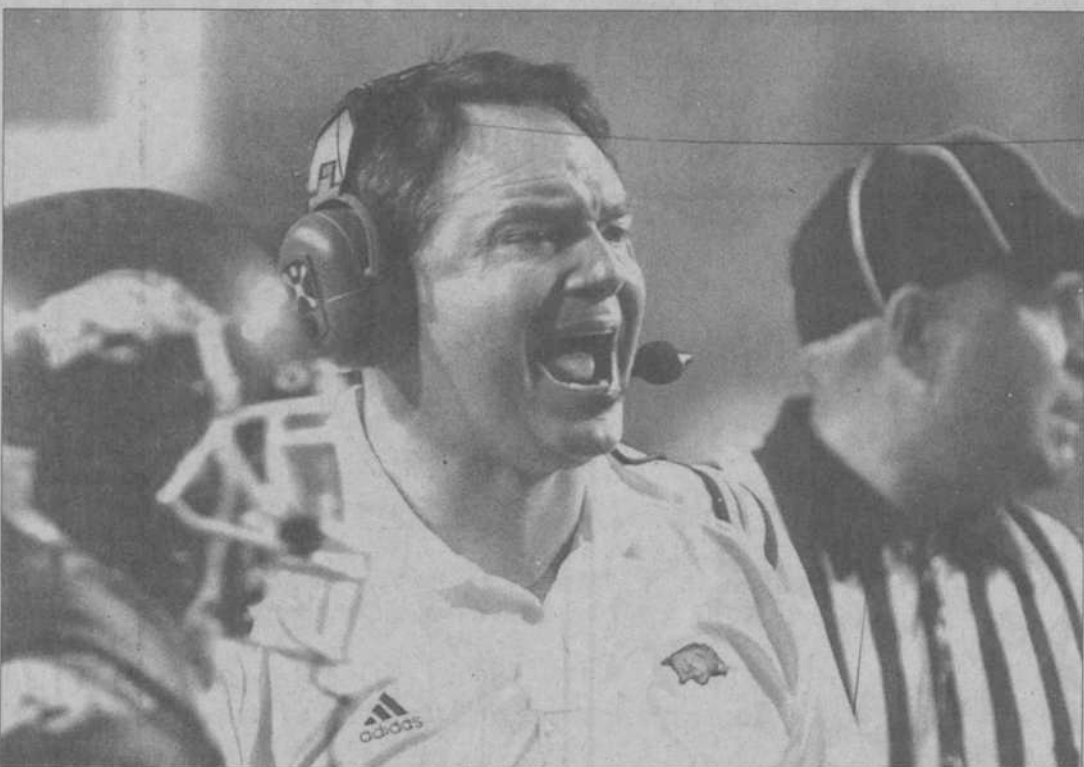
first time since before the Auburn game. The senior has been receiving treatment for leg injuries, including a pulled groin and hamstring suffered against Auburn and Georgia in consecutive weeks.

"He looked good," Nutt said. "It's good to have him back."

Senior defensive end Jeb Huckeba broke a bone in his right hand last week during practice, but is expected to play.

"It's gotten a lot better over the past week," Huckeba said. "I feel like by Saturday it will have improved a lot more, plus adrenaline. I feel like that will take over, and I probably won't even

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DANNY JOHNSTON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Arkansas coach Houston Nutt shouts to his team Oct. 23 during the second quarter against Georgia in Fayetteville, Ark. Nutt and the Razorbacks are 3-4 on the season with losses to two top-10 teams.