



ARKANSAS (3-5) 32 — SOUTH CAROLINA (6-3) 35



## GOING BOWLING



CHARLIE DAVENPORT/THE GAMECOCK

Junior wide receiver Troy Williamson sprints down the field on one of his six catches Saturday. Williamson was on the receiving end of a 14-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Syvelle Newton in the fourth quarter with just over a minute left in USC's 35-32 victory.

### Gamecocks defeat Razorbacks to secure elusive sixth victory

By ALEX RILEY  
THE GAMECOCK

Lou Holtz didn't enter Saturday's post-game press conference with a big grin. He didn't strut into the room and recant the tale of USC's 35-32 come-from-behind win over Arkansas.

Instead, Holtz cracked open his can of Diet Coke and acted like it was just another win.

"It was nice to win in November," Holtz remarked on his team's first win in the month in two seasons. "That was a great football game."

Bowl representatives from the Capital One, Outback, Independence and Peach were in attendance at Saturday's game as USC earned eligibility to play in one of those bowls by beating the Razorbacks.

The Gamecocks had no easy task to get to the sixth win that had eluded them the past two seasons. With Arkansas taking the early lead on an

interception return for a touchdown, USC had to find a way to come from behind and win another close SEC battle at home. Only this time they finished the deal.

The Gamecocks trailed the Hogs 17-14 at the half, before a 57-yard fumble return for a touchdown by Ko Simpson gave the Gamecocks their first lead of the day.

Syvelle Newton added to that lead when he scored from 5 yards out in the third period to give USC a 28-17 lead.

But Arkansas quarterback Matt Jones would not go down without a fight, as he threw a 13-yard touchdown pass to Marcus Monk and then led the Hogs on another drive that was capped by a De'Arrius Howard 7-yard touchdown run, putting the Hogs up 32-28 with 3:24 left in the game.

"I told everybody to calm down," USC offensive lineman Jabari Levey said. "We did it at the Kentucky game; we could do it this game."

Newton, who had replaced Dondrial Pinkins earlier in the game after Pinkins reinjured his shoulder, teamed up with fellow sophomore Noah Whiteside on two key passes for first downs, setting

Carolina up at the 14-yard line.

With time winding down, Newton hit Troy Williamson on a stop pattern and Williamson shed the tackler as he walked into the end zone for the game-winning touchdown with 1:09 left in the game.

The USC defense once again stepped up to seal the deal, as Ko Simpson picked off Jones at the 2-yard line to end Arkansas' chance of a comeback.

"I felt good knowing that we did what we had to do to win," Williamson said. "Now we're over (the hump) and we have to keep on pressing."

That hump involved the programs stretch of 10 straight losses in games that would have made them bowl eligible.

"It's really great to get that win, but I'm pleased with the way we got it," Holtz said. "I felt like we had a championship atmosphere in the locker room before the game. There wasn't one doubt in our players' minds that we would come back."

Holtz, who made it clear that he was tired and mentally exhausted, was presented with the game ball in the locker room. While rumors have been

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### STAT BOX GAME 9

4 of 4  
USC in red zone opportunities

5  
Interceptions for  
Ko Simpson in  
2004

7  
Receiving  
touchdowns for  
Troy Williamson  
in 2004

6  
Receiving  
touchdowns for  
Troy Williamson  
in his career prior  
to 2004

3  
Years since USC  
has been bowl  
eligible

### USC fans can finally take a long, deep breath

The monkey is officially off our back. We can play the final two games with a load off our shoulder. Whatever way you look at it, we are going bowling and it feels great.

In the most exciting ending since the 2001 Alabama game, the Gamecocks finally did something they have failed to do all year — finish. Even though it looked like the past there for a while, our offense stepped up and made the big plays when they had to.

What's different about this team than the previous two are the playmakers. Even when we don't play particularly well as a unit, we have

guys who step it up and make a big play when our team needs it. Saturday we just happened to make the big play last.

Two guys stand out in my mind and Saturday wasn't the first time they've stepped up for us. Troy Williamson and Ko Simpson are without a doubt our offensive and defensive MVPs, respectively.

Williamson had six catches for 73 yards, but what's not on paper was the move he put on the Arkansas cornerback. That juke allowed him to walk in to the end zone to put us up for good. Williamson not only makes big plays catching the ball, but also does the little things well like blocking up field.

Again, let me remind you that Simpson will be starting for us for another three years. If you're a Gamecock fan and that doesn't excite you, then I don't know what will. All year Simpson has made the big plays and has been in the right place at the right time.

Simpson's game-ending interception was magnificent. His vertical jump is so high, Pops won't hit that age for another 15 years. Simpson's fumble return was just another chance for him to show off his incredible speed. This guy is good.

I want to also give credit to a guy who did the little things on Saturday. Marque Hall played well and his forced fumble won't be his

◆ Please see CLARY, page 9

### IN HOT PURSUIT OF VICTORY



CHARLIE DAVENPORT/THE GAMECOCK

USC defensive end George Gause pursues Arkansas quarterback Matt Jones as the Razorbacks run the option.

## Freshman safety K.O.s opposing offenses



CHARLIE DAVENPORT/THE GAMECOCK

Freshman Ko Simpson tackles Arkansas receiver Marcus Monk on Saturday. Simpson recovered a fumble and intercepted a pass.

By STEPHEN DEMEDIS  
STAFF WRITER

According to USC head coach Lou Holtz, freshman safety Ko Simpson is not much of a talker. But since the first game, the defensive back's play has spoken volumes. The game against Arkansas was no different as Simpson came up with two turnovers and a crucial touchdown.

"Ko Simpson is unbelievable. You know, we were at the hotel last night and I said to Ko, 'Do you ever say anything,'" Holtz said. "He has never talked to me. He hasn't said two words to me since he has been here. Yes sir and no sir. But his play has been unbelievable."

Coming into the game, the Rock Hill native was listed as one of 11 Gamecocks on the list of All-SEC candidates and his play in the program's 500th win all but guaranteed his spot on the team.

In the third quarter, with Arkansas driving deep into Carolina's end of the field, Simpson changed the game by recovering a fumble forced by Marque Hall and going 57 yards for a touchdown, giving the Gamecocks their first lead of the game. After the ball hit the ground, both teams swarmed into a pile over the ball, which somehow found its way to Simpson.

"I saw our guy strip the ball and I thought Matt Jones recovered it. But then it went through his legs and all these Gamecocks were going after it," linebacker Rodrigues Wilson said. "So then I lost track of the ball and I was like 'Oh man, who's got the ball?' And then the next thing I know, Ko is running that way and once Ko is running that way, oh he is going to the house."

Simpson's touchdown came at a critical time for the Gamecocks. With the offense handicapped due to an injury to quarterback Dondrial Pinkins and the team already trailing by 3, the fumble shifted the momentum to Carolina and gave it the lead.

"We needed a big play and when we need a big play, we look to Ko. He is always there to catch the tipped ball or jump on a loose one. He came through again for us today," Pinkins said.

In addition to the fumble recovery, Simpson fittingly intercepted Jones to deliver the knockout punch with under a minute left, halting the Razorbacks' drive. The safety went up over his teammates and the Arkansas wideout to pull the ball down on the Carolina 2-yard line.

Earlier this season, Simpson jumped in front of a David Greene pass and ran 57 yards for a touchdown, giving USC a 16-0 lead over the Georgia Bulldogs.

Simpson also made a game-changing interception against Alabama when the Tide were in the red zone. On the year, Simpson has 50 tackles, five interceptions, three fumble recoveries, two touchdowns and six passes defended.

While both Carolina fans and coaches were surprised about Simpson's dynamic play so early in his career, Simpson was not taken back by his own success.

"When I came here, I knew that I could step in and make a difference," he said. "I think a lot of people thought that it would take time for me to start, but I knew that I could. I just make plays."

And now, the USC coaching staff is singing the praises. Defensive coordinator Rick Minter said, "Well, we said all along that he doesn't play like a freshman. But he just has it. Some players don't have it, some players search for it, but he has it. And it is that sense to go and play the football."

With so much success early in his career, it is easy to overlook the fact that Simpson has so much room to improve in several areas. Coaches hope their soft-spoken star will take more of a vocal role as a leader in years to come.

"I think we have quite a few guys like that on our team," Minter said. "They let their actions do their speaking rather

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KO SIMPSON  
FRESHMAN SAFETY

than their words. I hope there is a time when leadership and confidence begin to exude itself and he begins to take over because someday, he will be the senior of the group."

The Gamecock players have a different impression of their freshman teammate than do the coaches, but both parties share respect for Simpson.

"Ko and I are really close, so we talk a lot. He might not say much to the coaches, but around us he is different," cornerback Tremaine Tyler said. "I am honored to be his teammate."

Even after the Arkansas game, the biggest so far of his career, Simpson was content to let his actions speak for him.

"My goodness gracious. He came up to me after the game and hugged me," Holtz said. "He didn't say anything, but just hugged me and went on. He is a wonderful young man and is very highly thought of by this team."

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