

There's nothing quite like rivalry week

■ Rivalries are more than just pigskins and trash talk — they run deep into our everyday lives

Everyone remembers their first crush, and I myself am no different. I was in the first grade at Wrights Mill Road Elementary School in Auburn, Ala. Her name was Shelly. She had green eyes and blond hair. I liked her so much I was terrified this girl would even see me looking at her, so the thought of actually speaking to her was way beyond the realm of possibility.

There came a day early on in the school year, as there does in every school in the state of Alabama, where you profess to your classmates allegiance to either Auburn or Alabama. Mine was to Auburn, and then I waited with a sense of nervous anxiety as it came to Shelly.

TODD GREEN

GRADUATE STUDENT IN SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT MANAGEMENT

My heart sank. I was never able to look at her the same way again. Our love never materialized, and I often think back to that day and wonder what might have been, had she had any sense.

Serious college football fan looks forward to this weekend with about as much anticipation as a child in the days before Christmas. When I sat down and began wondering how to put into words the significance of this weekend on the American sports landscape, I noticed someone looking over my shoulder.

Taqiy Muhammad, senior corner for the Gamecocks and a man about to play in his last Carolina-Clemson game, wanted to tell his fellow students just how much it means to play in a college football rivalry game.

"It's like that backyard football game on Thanksgiving. Or maybe it is like that intense game between two different neighborhoods. Any way that you look at it, it's going to be a big game. In this case, it is more than just a big game — it is a big week, and it is Rivalry Week. This is the week that teams have been waiting for the entire year. Sure, there are plenty of games that you play throughout a season, but all of them lead up to that one game at the end of the year. Whichever team was victorious the year before has the pleasure of holding all the bragging rights. The atmosphere

during rivalry week is something that I think everyone should get a chance to experience. This being my last one at Carolina, I want to make it the greatest rivalry game ever. I have played in two Clemson games previous to this one, and both times I came away defeated. I refuse to lose this game, and I seek redemption. In that redemption is a truckload of revenge that goes with it. This is the same feeling that my teammates have. This is one of the reasons people play football, so that some day they might have a chance to play in a game like this. This is definitely one of the main reasons why I like to play the game. Nothing is better than getting a chance the beat my rival team."

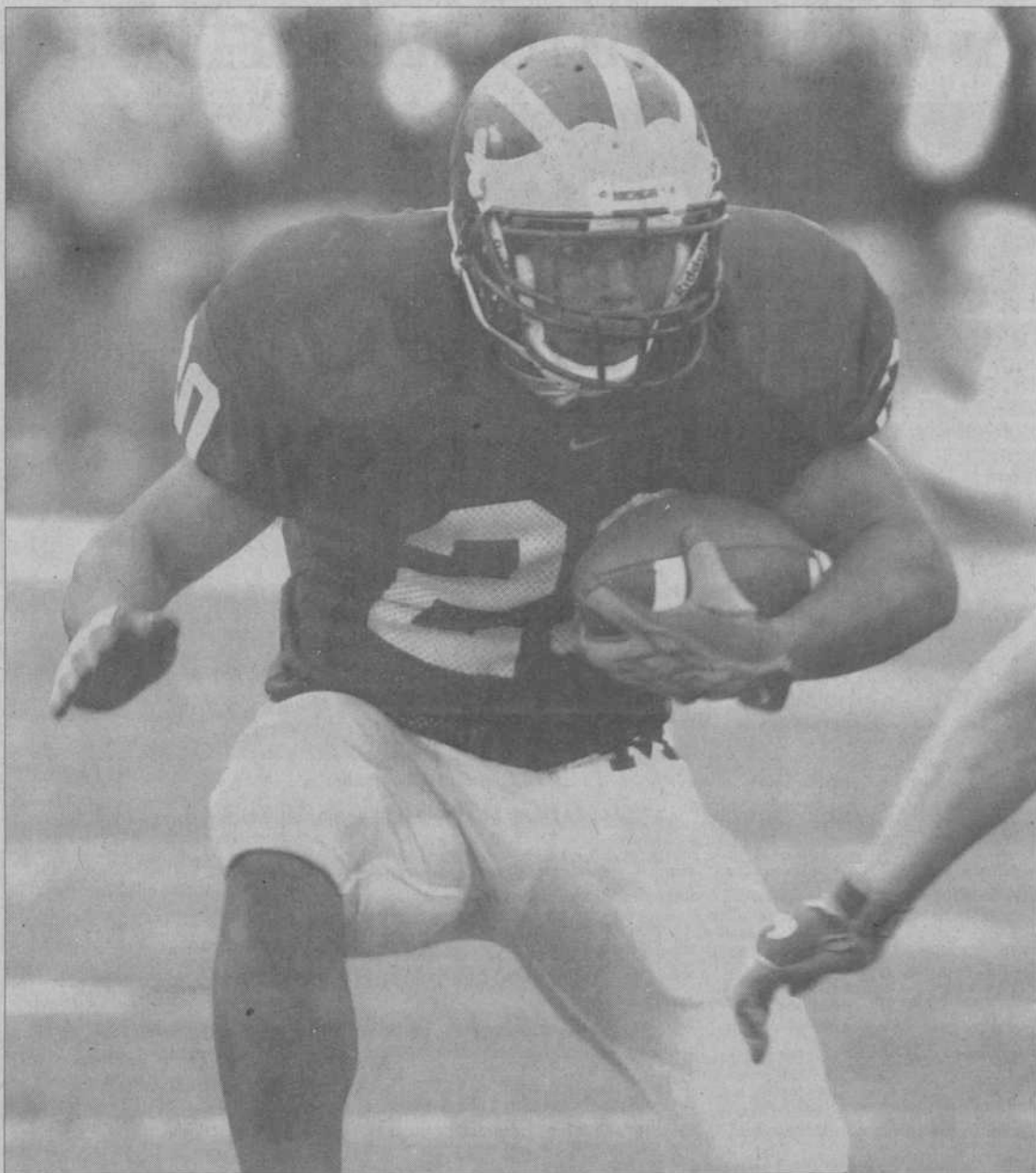
— Taqiy Muhammad, Wilmington N.C., senior cornerback

Carolina versus Clemson is one of many rival week games to be played this Saturday. Auburn-Alabama, Florida-Florida State and Michigan-Ohio State are the marquee rivalries that will keep many college football fans glued to their televisions this weekend.

One of the things that makes rivalry week so great is the colorful nicknames many of the games have. Auburn-Alabama is the Iron Bowl. West Virginia-Pittsburgh is the Backyard Brawl. Cal-Stanford stage the Big Game, Oregon-Oregon State has the Civil War and Washington-Washington State play the Apple Cup.

A rivalry game brings out the fiercest competition between the two teams. One team could be winless and the other undefeated, but you probably won't be able to tell the difference when they take the field. It is a battle of will, with neither team wanting to give an inch.

The memories from rivalry games last a lifetime to the players, coaches and fans. The in-state rivalry is particularly brutal. After a tough loss, kids don't want to go to school because they know they will



CARLOS OSORIO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Michigan freshman running back Michael Hart rushes against Iowa in Ann Arbor, Mich., in this Sept. 25 photo. Hart says standing just 5-foot-9-inches helps him when running the ball for the Wolverines.

"This is one of the reasons people play football, so that some day they might have a chance to play in a game like this."

TAQIY MUHAMMAD
SENIOR CORNERBACK

have to face the torment of their peers. Neighbors refuse to speak to neighbors. Relatives ignore relatives. At least with interstate rivals you can

mourn together with your fellow fans.

This weekend marks the return of the annual Florida-Florida State pre-game brawl. It will evoke the images of Woody Hayes and Bo Schembechler. The only possibilities are for total defeat or total victory, and there is no in-between. For one weekend, thousands of college football fans get to experience the same thrills of a gambler who has laid it all on the line. This is what makes rivalry weekend special.

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■ CLEMSON

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the opportunity to become bowl-eligible. Bowden noted that the magnitude of the rivalry would help his players to get over the Duke loss more quickly and return a proper focus.

One aspect Bowden will not be focusing on this week is job security. Entering last year's game there was speculation about Bowden's future. This year Bowden is comforted by a renewed contract with a \$4 million buyout clause.

USC head coach Lou Holtz said this week the Clemson is perhaps the most important in his career. Bowden, with this game having bigger implications bowl-wise for his team, relayed similar feelings.

"I don't know how (Holtz) can want it any more than I do," Bowden said. "I want to win this game as bad as he does."

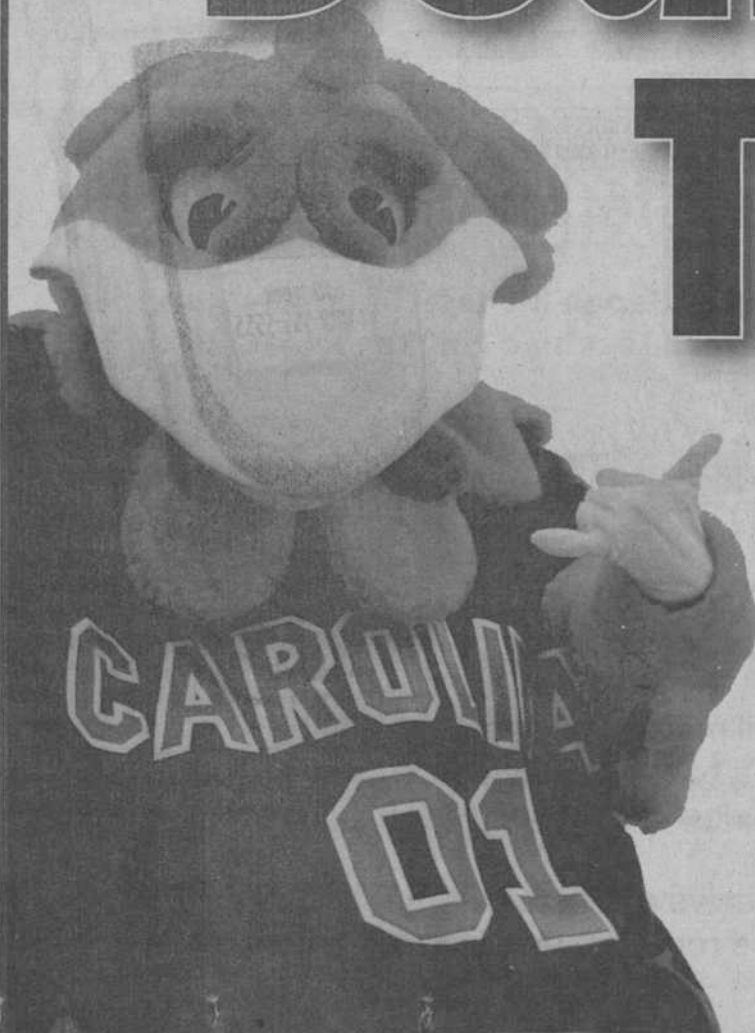
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"And we thought DUKE was a basketball school!"

See Ya in Death Valley, Tigers!



GO GAMECOCKS!
We are all behind you!