

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN

Gators and Vols face off in crucial SEC East battle as season heats up

This week's mind-boggling headline comes from ESPN.com, "Texas Tech safety to serve 30 days in jail, miss games." Vincent Meeks, the player in question, apparently has a strong, creative side of his personality to go along with his penchant for computer graphics.

Meeks, a second-year starter, was arrested in 2003 for trying to cash a \$475 check he had made on his computer. The state of Texas, known for its tough-on-crime legal system, is allowing Meeks to serve the jail term at his own convenience, so as not to fall behind in school, as long as he completes the term in the next six months. Meeks remains a member of Texas Tech's team.



Todd Green

Graduate student in sports and entertainment management

This past weekend's slate of college football games was thrilling, unless you are a Big Ten fan. The "big three" of the Big Ten — Michigan, Ohio State and Iowa — lost to non-conference opponents. "Our goal is

when Vince Young leaves here, he won't be a candidate for the Heisman," said Ohio State linebacker Bobby Carpenter to reporters in the week leading up to the Texas game.

The linebackers certainly did their part, limiting Young's lethal scrambling ability to 52 yards rushing and punishing him with a fierce hit every time he chose to run. Young, however, won the game with his arm, completing 18 of 29 passes for 279 yards and scoring two touchdowns. The final touchdown was a 24-yarder in the corner of the end zone that gave the Longhorns the lead, with a little more than two minutes left in the game.

Young remains atop the list of potential Heisman candidates.

Notre Dame embarrassed the Michigan faithful in a 17-10 win in Ann Arbor, Mich. Notre Dame won the game with a gritty defense that made the Michigan offense look anemic. The Irish now have two wins against quality opponents — both on the road — in a year when many prognosticators have said they might lose at least four of their first five games.

The marquee matchup for week three of college football comes when Tennessee travels to Florida. Every year these two teams battle for supremacy in the SEC East, with the winner looking down the schedule to Georgia as being their only hurdle on their way to a potential invitation to the SEC championship game in Atlanta.

This rivalry lost a little bit of its luster during the Ron Zook era but is firmly back into the epic category now that Urban Meyer has brought his famous shotgun spread-option offense to Florida.

This is the game that will prove whether Meyer's offense will thrive in a major conference such as the SEC,

where defenses are bigger, stronger and much faster.

Florida quarterback Chris Leak is one of the great passers in all of college football, but a collective groan will be heard by Gator fans the first time Leak runs an option keeper and takes a hit from one of Tennessee's talented linebackers.

Tennessee heads to the Swamp after announcing quarterback Rick Clausen will be the Vols' signal caller after a lackluster performance by sophomore Erik Ainge in the season opener against UAB.

The most exciting player to watch on the field is Tennessee's defensive lineman Jesse Mahelona. Mahelona, from the "Big Island" in Hawaii, plays with organized fanaticism. Leak will rely on his offensive line to protect him from Mahelona, and if they don't, Leak will be quite sore come Monday morning.

The key matchup here will be the teams' running games. Thirteen of the past 15 winners in this series have out-rushed the other team. This is much more than the two teams' running backs — it's about the big nasties, the big men, the guys that open those running lanes.

Nothing is more demeaning to a team than to see its defensive line and linebackers get manhandled by the opponent's offensive line all day long.

Prediction: Tennessee 34-Florida 33

The Miami Hurricanes head to Death Valley this Saturday for a game with the Clemson Tigers. Miami is the more desperate team here, having lost its opener to archrival Florida State.

Clemson has looked impressive, starting with two straight wins. In defeating Miami last year, 24-17, the Tigers were able to salvage their season. This time, they control their own destiny, and a win would propel them to the top of the ACC's Atlantic division.

The biggest surprise this year has been Clemson's running game. The tandem of talented freshman James Davis and redshirt junior Reggie Merriweather has led the Tigers to a 148.5 yards-per-game average. This has provided a balance to an offense lacking in years past.

I've picked Clemson to win the past two weeks, and they have. Lest anyone here at Carolina question my loyalty, hey, all I can say is that I would love to pick against the Tigers. But since they have come through

Green's TOP 10 College Football Picks

1. Southern California
2. Texas
3. Virginia Tech
4. Tennessee
5. Florida
6. Georgia
7. LSU
8. Florida State
9. Notre Dame
10. Ohio State

Graphic illustration by Laura-Joyce Gough / THE GAMECOCK

Green's Heisman Watch List

1. **Matt Leinart**
Southern California
Quarterback
2. **Reggie Bush**
Southern California
Running Back
3. **Vince Young**
Texas
Quarterback
4. **Adrian Peterson**
Oklahoma
Running Back
5. **Chris Leak**
Florida
Quarterback

Graphic illustration by Laura-Joyce Gough / THE GAMECOCK

for me twice in the past two weeks, as Roy McAvoy said in the movie "Tin Cup," "You ride 'er 'till she bucks ya or you don't ride at all."

Prediction: Clemson 21-Miami 14

Other notable games
Notre Dame vs Michigan State:
First home game for Charlie Weis and the Irish.

Notre Dame 35-Michigan State 13
Florida State vs Boston College:
Seminole head to Beantown to welcome BC to the ACC.

Prediction: FSU 14-BC 10
Georgia Tech vs Connecticut: The Yellow Jackets are riding high after wins against Auburn and UNC.

Upset Special: UCONN 27-Georgia Tech 21

I was a paltry 3-2 on predictions last week. Picking Southern Miss against Alabama was a stretch, but

they were leading at the half. Michigan really let me down last week. Still, a 9-2 overall record for the season puts me ahead of most of the so-called experts.

Read sports.



Alabama fans still living in denial, USC secondary searches for stick em'

Spurrier makes little Shula look like rookie, night games really suck

1. Do Alabama fans realize we have won the past two games against them?

Apparently not. Even after going to their stadium last year and beating them like they stole something (20-3 is a blowout by Lou Holtz standards), Tide fans still give Carolina no respect.

Fine, that's cool, but listen: You used to win 15 years ago, but this is 2005. You aren't scaring anybody. You have a very good defense, a mediocre offense and a coaching staff that couldn't out-scheme my intramural flag-football team. Alabama is a decent SEC team, but I've got news for you: You aren't as good as you think, the Gamecocks aren't as bad as you think and nobody has had a second thought about Alabama football since 1992.

Well, I know I feel better now.

2. Will USC's running game show up?

So far this season our running game is ranked 111th out of 116 Division I-A teams. To say that the running game has been unimpressive would be like saying Ralph Friedgen should cut back a little bit.

Blake Mitchell has impressed me with his toughness, but if we don't get some sort of running game going to slow

down the pass rush, he is going to pull a Patrick Ramsey and get clotheslined at the 50-yard line. This could end badly, so don't say I didn't warn you.

3. How many interceptions will USC's secondary drop this weekend?

If the object of football was to almost catch the other team's passes, but then somehow not, I'd be booking my flight to the Rose Bowl as we speak.

I don't mean to complain too much because obviously breaking up a pass is much better than allowing a completion, but if the USC secondary would have caught all the passes that hit our defensive backs in the hands, they'd still be putting points on the scoreboard in Athens.

Because Alabama quarterback Brodie Croyle has roughly the same top speed as that kid with the iPod that always chases the yellow shuttle in front of Gambrell, we won't have to worry about him running like we did against Georgia. Hopefully, this will mean Carolina's defense can take a few more risks and create a few more turnovers.

4. What's it going to take for us

to get a schedule of nothing but night games?

These 3:30 p.m. kickoffs for football games in the South kill me. There isn't enough time to properly tailgate, traffic is worse because everybody is trying to arrive in about a four-hour window instead of all day long, and if I wanted to be packed in between a bunch of sweaty dudes all day I would have gone to the Citadel.

5. What is the biggest mismatch of the game?

The biggest mismatch by far is Steve Spurrier versus Mike Shula, Alabama's coach. Mike Shula is to SEC coaches what Sporty Spice was to the Spice Girls. Sure he's there, but he's nobody's first choice.

Mike Shula is only a coach in the SEC because Mike DuBose and Dennis Franchione resigned

because Alabama kept getting caught cheating, and Mike Price was fired before he even coached a game.

Any time you get hired because the guy before you was caught taking three topless

In Brief

USC, Clemson game moved to Thanksgiving weekend

USC and Clemson officials reached an agreement this week to begin playing the annual in-state rivalry game on the weekend following the Thanksgiving holiday, effective next year.

"This move was predicated on the addition of the 12th

game to the schedule," USC Athletics Director Eric Hyman said. "Both schools agreed it was best to play the rivalry game on the final weekend to conclude the regular season."

The Gamecocks and Tigers have met 102 times on the gridiron, with consecutive meetings since 1909. The teams have played on the third Saturday in November for the past 20 years. Originally, the

game was played in Columbia during what became known as Big Thursday, part of State Fair festivities. USC and Clemson began the home-and-home series in 1959. Clemson holds the lead in the all-time series with a 62-36-4 record.

— Alex Riley

GAMECOCK CHALLENGE

THE CHALLENGE: Every week, The Gamecock's readers and staff test their sports knowledge with game predictions.

	Jonathan Hillyard Sports editor (8-2)	Alex Riley Asst. Sports editor (5-5)	Stephen Fastenau News editor (7-3)	Michael LaForgia Editor in chief (5-5)	Steven Van Haren Copy desk chief (6-4)	Ben McMillan Reader of the week (6-4)
Mississippi at Vanderbilt	Vandy	Vandy	Vandy	Miss	Vandy	Vandy
Wisconsin at North Carolina	UNC	Wis	Wis	Wis	Wis	Wis
8 Florida St at 17 BC	BC	BC	FSU	FSU	FSU	FSU
5 Tennessee at 6 Florida	UF	UF	UT	UF	UF	UT
12 Miami at 20 Clemson	Miami	Clemson	Miami	Miami	Miami	Miami
Mississippi St at Tulane	Miss St	Miss St	Miss St	Miss St	Miss St	Miss St
Arkansas at 1 Southern Cal	S Cal	S Cal	S Cal	S Cal	S Cal	S Cal
Michigan St at 10 Notre Dame	Mich St	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
Illinois at 15 California	Cal	Cal	Cal	Cal	Cal	Illinois
Alabama at South Carolina	USC	USC	USC	USC	USC	USC
	35-7	31-10	24-4	21-14	21-10	21-14

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