

Lifelong Gamecock fan boosts team involvement

Avoiding the spotlight, volunteer coordinator sets up player appearances

Michael Aguilar
FOR THE GAMECOCK

Collin Crick is just a regular man. The Gamecocks are just a regular football team. The football on Crick's desk is just a regular football. Or, at least, that's what one would think at first glance. Crick began his journey as a Gamecock fan the second he was

born. He was raised in South Carolina and enrolled at USC in 1993. He finished his undergraduate and graduate degrees at USC. He then began the work that led him to where he is now — USC's CHAMPS coordinator.

Crick works closely with most Carolina athletic teams, striving to help all student-athletes in the five areas that CHAMPS — Challenging Athletes' Minds for Personal Success — represents: athletic excellence, academic excellence, personal development, career development and community service. Crick works closest with the community service side of CHAMPS.

"Every student-athlete is encouraged to do 10 hours of community service a year," Crick said. "Normally they do a good bit more than that, because they'll do 10 hours in team projects where the team does something together. So, in addition to those team projects, most students tend to get involved elsewhere." Crick does whatever he can to facilitate student-athletes in their never-ending

quests to find a way to help out in the community. Crick has a list of organizations always looking for help and support from student-athletes.

One such organization is the D.A.R.E. graduation program, where a Gamecock player speaks at a local school and encourages students to lead drug-free lives. One of the events many football players look forward to is Camp Chemo, a summer camp for children with cancer undergoing chemotherapy treatments.

"Once the guys have done it once, they always want to go back and do it again," Crick said. "A lot of times things are mandatory in the athletics department. You've got to go to practice, you've got to go to class, you've got to do all these things, but with community service, it's all volunteerism. Whenever I call a student about a project, they're more than willing to work it into their schedule."

In the era of 9-to-5 jobs, commuter traffic and movies such as "Office Space," Crick is a man who is doing what he loves. Crick has dedicated his life to helping student-athletes develop into people who can enter the working world with experiences that give them a great perspective on life. He has worked at USC since he earned his graduate degree; he started out as an academic adviser and worked his way up to where he is now.

The community service aspect of Gamecock football is not something many people talk about. That's because men such as Crick and students such as those on the football

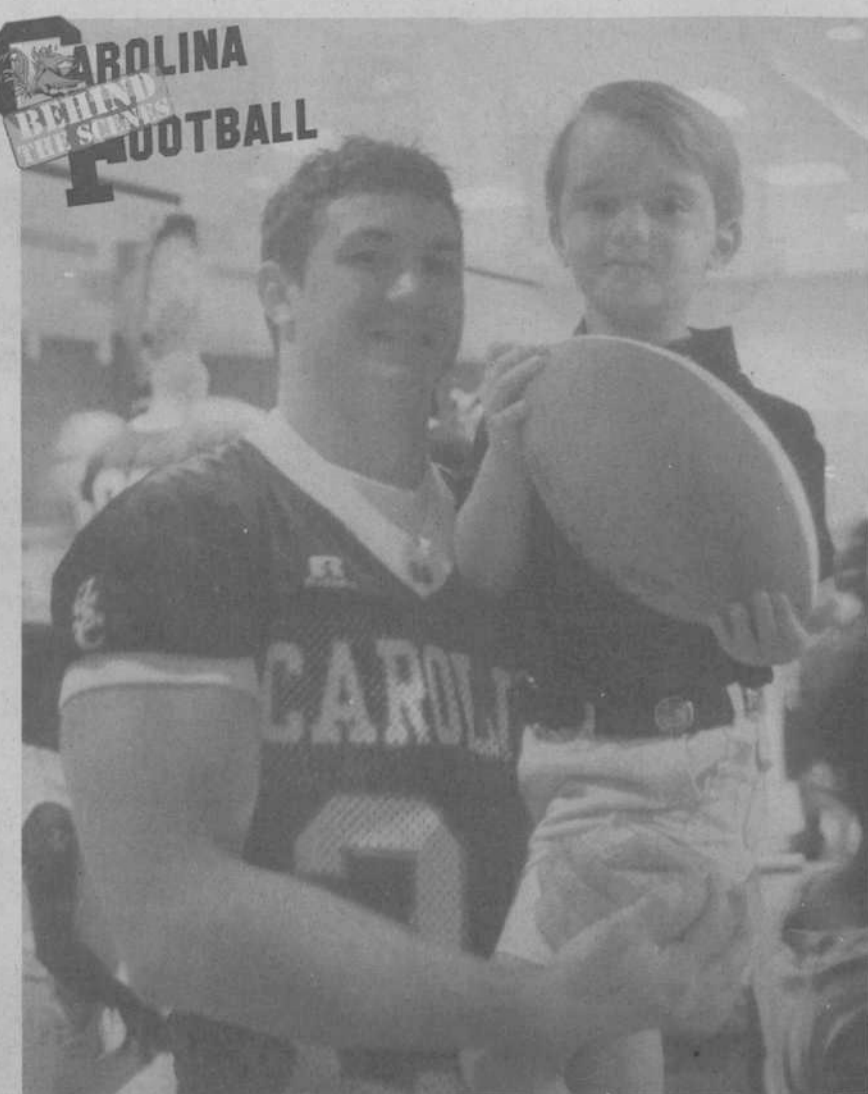


Photo Courtesy of the USC Athletics Department

Gamecocks linebacker Cody Wells poses for a picture while helping out in Columbia. All athletes are required to complete 10 hours of community work.

team aren't about to blab about it. To them, it is just something that they should be doing.

"I think that the experiences (student-athletes) get working with young people, serving as a positive role model, is very helpful for them," Crick said. "You know, the student-athletes get as much out of it as the people they are working with. I think that's very rewarding to see."

Crick is more than just your regular 9-to-5-er. He's a man doing his part to make a difference.

The Gamecock football team is

more than just that. Many of its student-athletes try to use their position to make a positive impact on those who look up to them as heroes.

As for that football on Crick's desk, after a couple football players come into his office, sign the ball and personally deliver it to a sick boy in the local children's hospital, it's going to be much more than just a regular football.

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecocksports@gwm.sc.edu

Who is
Collin Crick

- ✓ USC's CHAMPS (Challenging Athletes' Minds for Personal Success) Coordinator
- ✓ He is in charge of organizing efforts that CHAMPS represents, including athletic excellence, academic excellence, personal development, career development and community service
- ✓ Graduated from USC and has been an academic advisor before working his way to his current position

Graphic illustration by Laura-Joyce Gough / THE GAMECOCK

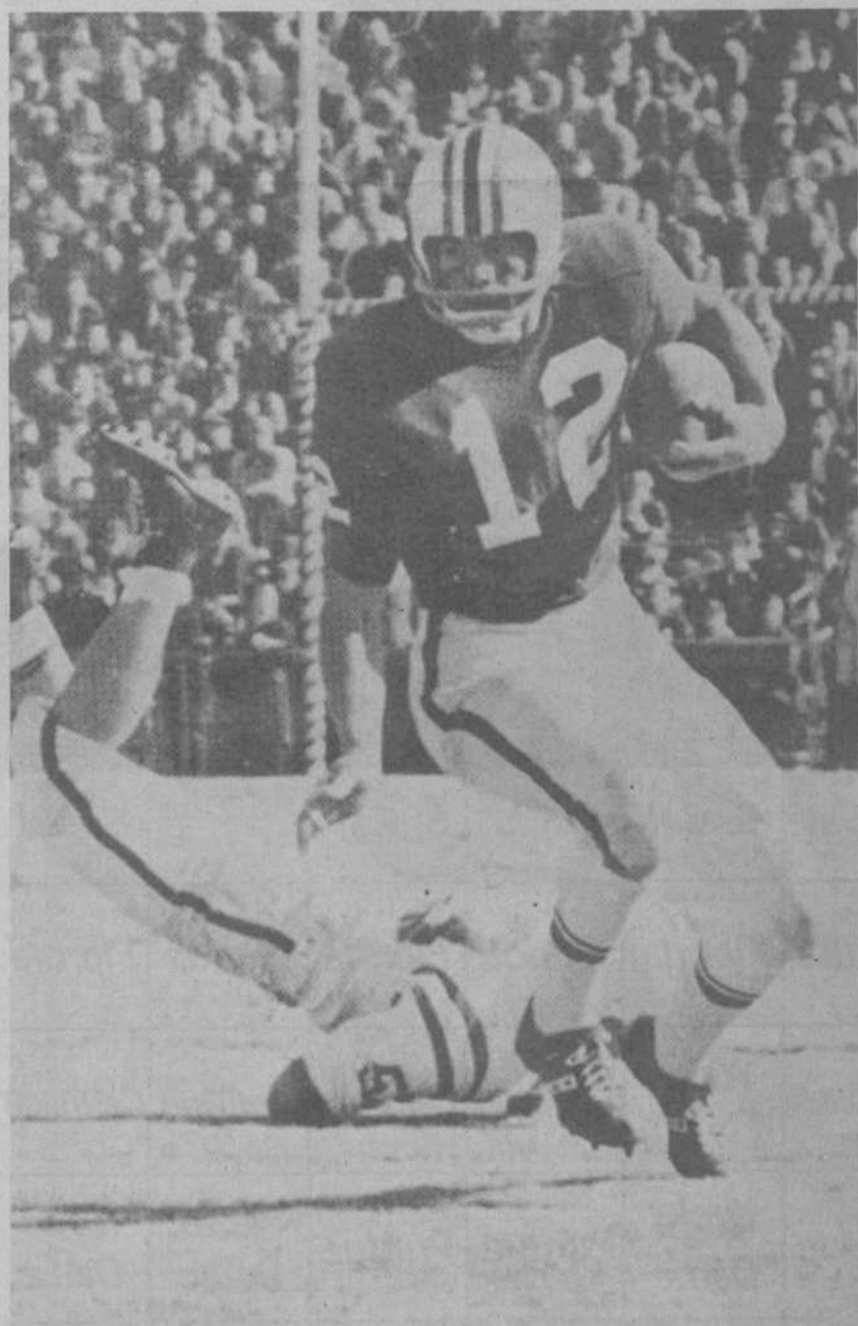


Photo courtesy of Mike Safran
"Deacon" Dan Reeves ruled the roost at quarterback during his time at Carolina.

GAMECOCK

greats

Successful start at USC propelled Reeves to Hall of Fame career

Alex Riley
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

The career and professional success of Dan Reeves, arguably one of the most successful coaches in NFL history, got its roots in Columbia when he was a USC quarterback from 1962 to 1964.

"Really and truly, (USC) was the only school that offered me a football scholarship at the time," Reeves said. "I had gone through my senior year and had missed four games with a broken collarbone about the middle of the season. So I didn't get many inquiries as far as football was concerned. I got the opportunity to play in the Georgia all-star game. From that I was voted MVP. But I just felt like the university wanted me when nobody else wanted me. I felt like that was the place I wanted to go."

Even though he wasn't a highly touted player out of Americus High School in Georgia, then-coach Marvin Bass told Reeves that the best player would be the one under center for the Gamecocks, a promise Reeves knew would stand true coming from Bass.

"After I played in that Georgia

High School all-star game, I had gone to several schools, and they promise you all kinds of things. They're kind of guaranteeing you things that you knew were kind of questionable if they would live up to them," Reeves said. "When I met with Coach Bass, he was very honest about it. He said, 'Look, we've got four or five quarterbacks coming in and if you play for us, it's going to be because you're the best one we've got.' And that's exactly what I wanted to hear."

Bass would later become part of Reeves' coaching staff in Denver as well as in Atlanta.

"He was the first coach that I wanted to hire," Reeves said. "Typical of coach Bass, he was coaching in the Canadian league. I offered him a job with the Denver Broncos, and he said 'I'd love to come, but I promised these people here I'd coach for them this year and I'm going to fulfill that obligation.' That shows how honest he was, because most coaches would have dropped the job in Canada in a heartbeat to come to the NFL."

When he took over USC's offense, Reeves had a plethora of talent to back him up, including ACC Player of the Year Billy Gambrell and NFL star J.R. Wilburn.

"Playing with great players is what makes you that much better, too," Reeves said. "We had some good players there. You've just got to be fortunate to have the opportunity and the chance to play with a lot of good athletes."

Though he only compiled an 8-21-4 record during his time under center, Reeves managed to leave the program with some memorable performances, including wins against Clemson, Wake Forest and Virginia.

"In college, I started my first game up at Northwestern," Reeves said. "Just the excitement of being a starting quarterback, I think I was 17 years old at the time. Just being a starting quarterback in college, I'll remember that for a long, long time."

Reeves' most impressive statistical game came against Nebraska in 1964, when he threw for a career-high 240 yards in a 28-6 loss in Lincoln.

When Reeves finished his career at USC, he left as the leading passer in Gamecock history, tallying 2,561 yards through the air to go along with 16 touchdowns. Today he sits 12th on the all-time yardage list. His three games with 100 yards or more rushing ties him for the eighth most in Gamecock history, with his career high of 124 coming against N.C. State in 1962.

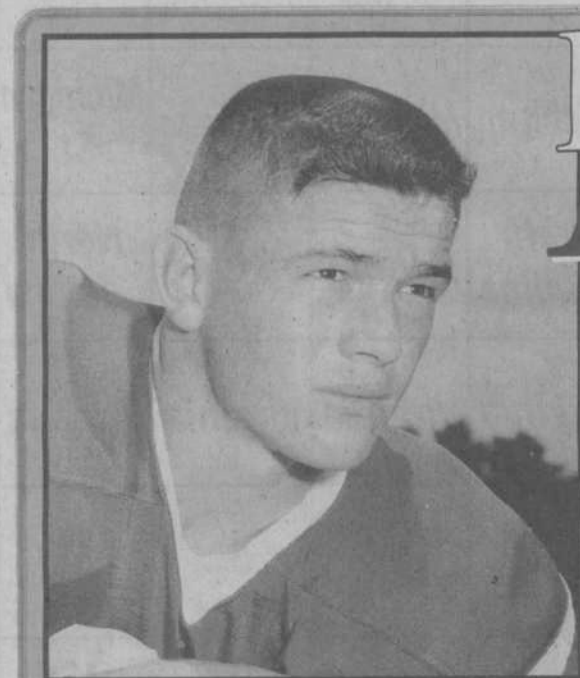
"It was a thrill for me to be able to play college football," Reeves said.

When he left Carolina after his senior season, Reeves was in almost an identical situation to the one he had been in leaving high school. The NFL draft had passed him by, leaving him as a member of the free-agent market. Eventually, Reeves became a running back for the Dallas Cowboys under coach Tom Landry.

"The Dallas Cowboys really signed me as a safety," Reeves said. "I ended up playing running back because we had a bunch of injuries in a scrimmage one day. I kind of got to that position by accident. Until I tore my knee up in 1968, I was the starter there."

After his rookie season, Reeves became the starter for the Cowboys, posting back-to-back seasons with more than 600 yards, including a 757-yard campaign in 1966 during Dallas' run to an appearance in the NFL championship game against Green Bay. That knee injury hampered Reeves the remainder of his playing career, but it would start what would make him into one of the NFL's greatest coaches.

"I was very fortunate to get into coaching. Because of a knee injury, coach (Tom) Landry ended up asking me to be a player-coach," Reeves said. "I ended up getting to do that for three years. Up until a couple of years ago, I was the last one to do that. So, I got started kind of by accident. I got involved into coaching and found out it was something I really enjoyed doing. I kind of thank coach Landry for giving me that opportunity. I learned a lot of things from him that helped build me a foundation of what



Dan Reeves

- + Passed for 2,561 yards and 16 touchdowns while quarterback at USC from 1962-1964
- + Played running back for the Dallas Cowboys from 1965-1972
- + Participated in eight Super Bowls, four as a player and four as a coach in the NFL

Graphic illustration by Laura-Joyce Gough / THE GAMECOCK