



Juan Blas/THE GAMECOCK
USC coach Steve Spurrier reacts during USC's 48-7 loss to Auburn Saturday at Jordan Hare Stadium.

Spurrier stays patient

With three SEC losses, USC coach takes blame for rough start

Michael Aguilar
FOR THE GAMECOCK

After nine 10-win seasons as a head football coach, one would think that patience might not be a virtue for USC coach Steve Spurrier. But after the first three-game SEC losing streak of his career, patience is exactly what Spurrier is practicing.

"We've got some building to do," Spurrier said Tuesday. "But I've got nowhere else to go. I've got nothing else to do except coach football."

After a loss to Auburn on Saturday, Spurrier was quick to accept the blame for the way the team have been playing.

"(The coaches are) ultimately responsible for everything (the players) do," Spurrier said. "I believe that and always have. I've coached guys who play extremely well, and they said I was a good coach. If they said right now I was a bad coach and I deserve that because the other night we were all pretty bad coaches. It's as simple as that."

The defense has been less than advertised all season, especially against the run. Getting off the field has also been a problem. Auburn only punted the ball three times

Saturday — and only once in the first half. The Auburn offense converted 5-of-14 third downs, keeping the Gamecock defense on the field long enough for the Tigers to rack up 48 points on the unit that was supposed to be the strong suit of the USC team.

"Well, we all and even the local writers here thought the defense was going to be stronger," Spurrier said. "Our third-down conversion rate has been not very good, and the other team's has been very good. We are a bad third-down team." Despite poor rushing offense and some mediocre performances, Spurrier has been pleased with some of the numbers the passing offense has put up.

"If you look at what our guys have done actually throwing the ball, (it) has not been all that terrible, for receivers, quarterbacks who have not thrown the ball all that much for their career," Spurrier said.

The one thing Spurrier, and the team as a whole, has been worrying about is effort. Spurrier and some players have had frustrations with the effort of some of the team's members.

"Playing full speed is not natural to some of our guys," Spurrier said.

Spurrier's thoughts were reiterated by two team leaders; senior defensive end Orus Lambert and junior wide

receiver Syvelle Newton talked about the lack of effort the team has put forth.

"I think that if we just had more guys hustling to the ball or just playing with more intensity, that would stop a lot of big plays," Lambert said.

With an 0-3 record in the SEC, the importance of Saturday's game is obvious. With the goal of a bowl game in mind, and teams such as Tennessee, Florida and Clemson remaining on the schedule, wins could be at a premium, and some Gamecock fans' patience is running low.

Notes
Spurrier said Tuesday he expects sophomore quarterback Blake Mitchell to play Saturday. He has been walking easily and taking drop steps this week after having a stabilizing boot removed Monday. Mitchell described his ankle Monday as being at about 70 to 75 percent.

Saturday will see another new starting lineup on the Gamecock offensive line, as sophomore Jamon Meredith will start at right tackle. The move will send senior tackle Na'Shan Goddard inside to guard and will move senior Freddy Saint Preux to left guard, where he will replace the injured sophomore William Brown. Brown has a herniated disk in his back.

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

Manning brothers steal stage in week 4

Contenders, pretenders emerge as first month of season winds down

After week four of the NFL fantasy football season, your patience has paid off; if it hasn't by now, you should think about dropping whoever keeps disappointing you.

Vikings quarterback Dante Culpepper is probably one of those players. After having his first big week last week, he struggled again this week; he threw for 250 yards and one touchdown, but threw two

interceptions and also lost a fumble. If Culpepper is your starting quarterback, you might want to start looking elsewhere.

Kickers and team defenses can make a huge difference and should be good for at least 20 to 25 points a game. If you have quality players at these two positions, they could win you a few games. In a week where my team scored 100 points, the kicker and defense were responsible for 44 percent of those—scoring varies depending on what league you play in.

The second-highest score on my fantasy team this week was the Falcons' defense.

Against Minnesota, the Falcons had two interceptions, one fumble recovery and nine sacks.

The highest scoring player on my fantasy team was, surprise, a kicker. Neil Rackers hit all six field-goal attempts and added one point after touchdown. Owned in only 4.3



Brandon Newton
Fourth-year business student

percent of leagues on ESPN, he could be a great difference-maker down the stretch.

Rackers outscored Cincinnati receiver Chad Johnson and running back Rudi Johnson combined. Chad Johnson had a disappointing week against a not-so-good Houston defense totaling only 67 yards. Rudi was equally disappointing with only 88 yards.

Another receiver that had a disappointing week four was Brandon Lloyd; after scoring in the double digits last week, he had a mediocre 102 yards and a fumble. Lloyd should have been able to do more against Arizona's defense.

This week's top performers are not unfamiliar with leading fantasy football point totals. San Diego running back LaDainian Tomlinson had another stellar week. He rushed for 134 yards and two touchdowns against a New England Patriot defense that came off a good performance at Pittsburgh.

Colts quarterback Peyton Manning made a triumphant return to the top of the fantasy football mountain with 264 yards, four touchdowns and no interceptions. Peyton

FANTASY ● 15



Denis Poroy/The Associated Press
Giants quarterback Eli Manning.

After tough lockout, the puck starts here

Hockey begins anew with 15 fresh matchups to whet our appetites

Finally, after almost a year and a half of excruciating, black-hole-like void, the NHL is back. No, I'm not being sarcastic. I love hockey — far more than any man born, bred and raised in the Southeast ever should. This might have something to do with the fact that I bear an uncanny resemblance to Adam Banks from the "Mighty Ducks"

movies.

But I digress. Tonight I can actually sit at home in an easy chair and watch professional hockey on television, and it was almost worth having to put up with an entire winter of the NBA. Almost.

The NHL is back, and all 30 franchises are



A.J. Bemby
Third-year print journalism student

facing off in 15 games across the league to welcome the fans back, with the marquee game being the Philadelphia Flyers against the New York Rangers at 7 p.m. on OLN. Excitement for the season is tempered with questions, such as, will the Tampa Bay Lightning repeat as Stanley Cup champions? Will the fans come back? Will Barry Melrose bring back his mullet? So many questions, so little

BEMBRY ● 15

MEN'S SOCCER

Reece focused on winning, not individual accolades

Brent Greenberg
FOR THE GAMECOCK

During the past week, USC senior soccer defender and captain Greg Reece has heard nothing but praise from just about everyone. Over the weekend, he received accolades for his superb defensive play from Conference USA, along with Soccer America Magazine.

After guiding the Gamecocks to a win against No. 25 UNC-Wilmington with his steady defensive play, and with another stellar performance at Charlotte, Conference USA named Reece its Defensive Player of the Week. As if that wasn't enough, Soccer America selected Reece as one of 11 players from across the country to its National Team of the Week.

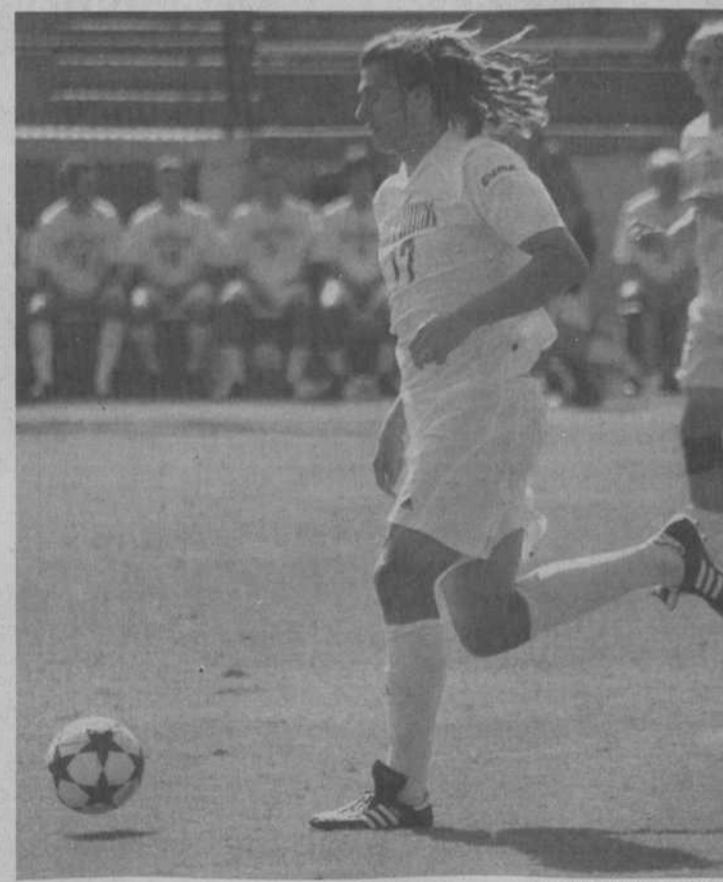
Yet despite all the extra attention, Reece has managed to keep everything in perspective.

"I was very pleased. I've never had an honor like that," Reece said. "Basically, I play hard for the team and give everything I've got out there. A lot of people don't think too much of us this year, but hopefully this will help."

With this being his last season with the Gamecocks, Reece has an important decision looming ahead of him come the end of the season. He is toying with the idea of becoming a professional soccer player.

"I'm just waiting to see what happens with playing soccer after college. If I could play, I would love to," Reece said.

Throughout his tenure with the Gamecocks, the Clemmons, N.C., native has taken everything with a grain of salt. Earlier in the year he was named to all-tournament teams for the North Carolina Nike



Juan Blas/THE GAMECOCK
Senior defender Greg Reece was named CUSA Defensive Player of the Week after USC's win against No. 25 UNC-Wilmington.

Soccer Classic and the Adidas South Carolina Gamecock Classic.

He appreciates the awards, but Reece knows there are more important things in life other than soccer — such as dental school.

Last year, Reece earned Academic All-South Region honors from the National Soccer Coaches' Association of America. He is a chemistry student with high aspirations once his undergraduate career is finished.

"I'm applying to dental school right now. I actually applied to MUSC, University of North Carolina, Texas Christian University and Louisville," Reece said.

You'd think that playing collegiate soccer, along with a

grueling schedule filled with organic chemistry and anatomy classes, would take its toll on Reece. Somehow, he still manages to be a normal college student.

"I play Frisbee golf from time to time, and shuffleboard. It's a lot of fun," Reece said.

Gamecock soccer fans should hope Reece can put braces on tough Conference USA opponents Memphis and UAB this weekend. With a couple more dominant defensive performances, Reece will have a tough decision to make. Whichever road he chooses to take, one thing is for sure: He will leave everything he has to give out on the field.

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