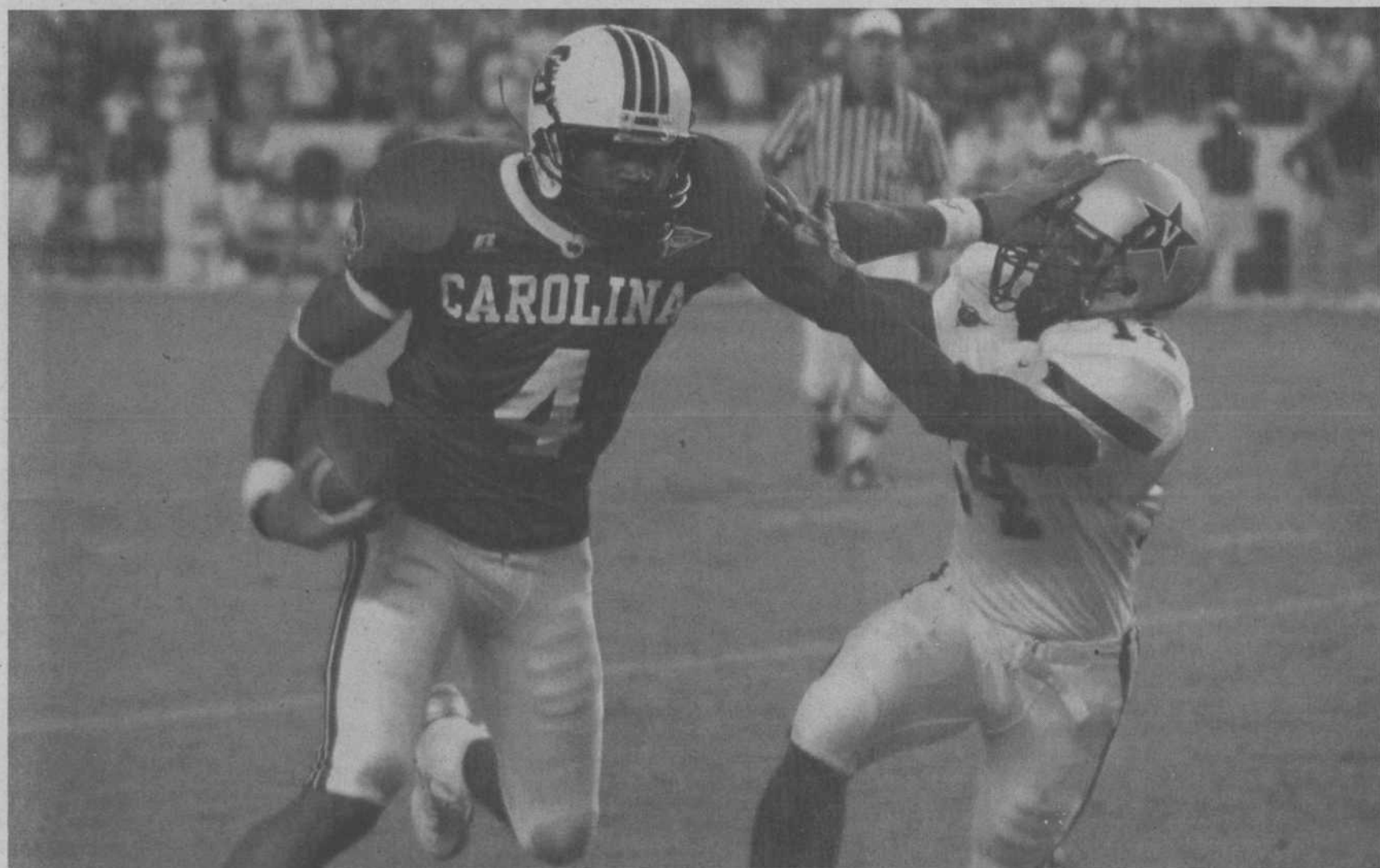


"The fans were wonderful. They were outstanding. I know they went a long time without a beer, but that's OK."

SOUTH CAROLINA (4-3) 35 — VANDERBILT (4-4) 28

Carolina offense overcomes loss to rally in game-winning drive



Juan Blas / THE GAMECOCK

USC freshman wide receiver Sidney Rice scored three touchdowns and broke a school record for consecutive games with a touchdown reception Saturday.



Juan Blas / THE GAMECOCK

Sophomore linebacker Dustin Lindsey recorded 10 tackles in his first start.

GAMECOCK DEFENSE SURVIVES LATE PUSH

USC stops Commodores when it counts to preserve crucial SEC victory

Alex Riley
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Playmakers: The events of USC's second-half victory



3RD QUARTER, 7:27
Gamecocks tie the game at 14 with pass from Syvelle Newton to Carson Askins



3RD QUARTER, 2:09
Newton hits Rice for 34-yard touchdown



4TH QUARTER, 11:01
Newton goes down with torn Achilles after running for another touchdown



4TH QUARTER, 1:41
Sidney Rice catches a Blake Mitchell pass to seal the victory

Photos by Katie Kirkland, Juan Blas / THE GAMECOCK

FOOTBALL

VANDERBILT AT CAROLINA

SCORE:
35-28
CAROLINA

WHEN:
Oct. 22, 2005

WHERE:
Williams-Brice Stadium
Columbia, SC

FOOTBALL • CONTINUED FROM I

makes people miss My heart dropped for him. I know how much he loves the game."

Carolina's offense sputtered in the first half, entering the locker room even with its opponent for the second consecutive week. Vanderbilt broke the 7-7 tie on the first drive of the second half, marching 72 yards in eight plays on the arm of quarterback Jay Cutler. Commodore running back Cassen Jackson-Garrison scampered 2 yards to punctuate the drive and put Vanderbilt up 14-7.

Enter Syvelle Newton. Spurrier

lined Newton up in a formation that sent quarterback Blake Mitchell out to a wideout spot, making Newton the active quarterback next to running back Daccus Turman. The Gamecocks ran plays out of the formation on numerous occasions during their first drive of the second half. Newton rushed for 30 yards on the drive and touched the ball on all but two of the nine plays on the drive. Finally, after Mitchell threw what looked to be a screen pass to Newton on the sideline, USC's triple-threat tossed a pass over the Commodore defense into the waiting arms of tight end Carson Askins, tying the score at 14 all.

Newton wasn't close to finished. After a defensive stop, Mitchell completed two passes before the offense returned to the formation with Newton under center. After scrambling for several seconds, Newton found Sidney Rice in the middle of the field, and the freshman standout sprinted to the corner of the end zone for his second of three touchdown catches on the day.

After USC cornerback Johnathan Joseph picked off a Cutler pass, Newton's touchdown run put the Gamecocks up by two touchdowns and another second-half rout seemed imminent. But Newton's injury seemed to suck the life out of Williams-Brice Stadium, and Cutler wasn't ready to call it a day just yet.

A quick four-play, 61-yard drive finished by a Cutler-to-Earl Bennett, 41-yard touchdown pass brought the

Commodores to within a touchdown, and the Newton-less Gamecocks would give the ball back to Vanderbilt with a little more than 7 minutes to play. Cutler again marched his troops down the field, this time in 13 plays, and Jackson-Garrison evened the score with a 6-yard touchdown scamper and the ensuing extra point.

A crowd of a little more than 75,000 witnessed one of the most exciting finishes of the season for Carolina. With 3:55 remaining on the game clock, Mitchell took the field without the run threat of Newton by his side. Instead it was Clark who cashed in on the opportunity, catching passes of 32 and 14 yards to bring Carolina to Vanderbilt's 31-yard line.

Rice took over, taking a screen pass 19 yards and finally catching a 3-yard touchdown on a slant pattern to push USC over the top for good.

"After they scored I told my teammates, 'Keep our head up, it's our turn,'" Rice said. "That's what we went out there and did. Everybody came out there with enthusiasm ready to play ball. And we drove the ball all the way down the field."

Mitchell completed 4-of-5 passes on the final drive and finished 15-of-27 for 221 yards and two touchdowns.

Rice continued to amaze his spectators with his three touchdown catches and eight receptions for 132 yards. His nine touchdowns are good enough to put him atop the SEC in scoring, averaging nine points per

game.

"I'm focused more on my team winning ball games," Rice said. "I'm gonna try to do my best to catch every pass I can, and if it's in the end zone, it's in the end zone."

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

After a dominating first half of defense, Jay Cutler showed Carolina's defense why he was ticketed as the preseason All-SEC quarterback, rallying the Commodores to a 35-28 near-win in front of USC's Homecoming crowd.

"That was a fun game," coach Steve Spurrier said. "I always sort of tell our guys it's going to be a tough physical game going into the fourth quarter, 'cause that's the way you want to mentally prepare your guys. And sure enough that's what happened today."

USC's defense came out strong in the first two quarters, allowing only 103 total yards with only 42 yards in rushing. The defense forced three consecutive punts to open the game, along with a turnover on downs on a misplayed punt. For the first time since Langston Moore in 2001, USC blocked a field-goal attempt as Fred Bennett blocked a 35-yard shot by Bryant Hahnfeldt.

After a Sidney Rice touchdown in the first quarter, the Commodores' only score would come on a Blake Mitchell interception that would be returned 13 yards for the score,

DEFENSE • 9

Stat Line

Carolina

- 6 Consecutive games Sidney Rice has caught a touchdown pass, a USC record
- 399 Total yards by Gamecock offense
- 132 Rushing yards by USC
- 3 Number of positions played by Syvelle Newton
- 204 Receiving yards by Commodore freshman Earl Bennett, a career high
- 339 Career high passing yards by quarterback Jay Cutler
- 10 Consecutive passing plays by Cutler during the final drive
- 3 of 5 Vanderbilt's conversion rate on fourth down