

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN

SEC West proves why it has surpassed historic supremacy of SEC East



Alabama quarterback Brodie Croyle celebrates after last weekend's victory against Florida. Rob Carr / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Green's Top 10 College Football Picks

1. Southern California
2. Texas
3. Virginia Tech
4. Georgia
5. UCLA
6. Alabama
7. LSU
8. Miami
9. Penn State
10. Notre Dame

The momentum has since shifted.

Alabama's 1999 SEC championship season has proved to be a turning point in the balance of power between the two divisions. The western division has won four of the last six title games.

LSU shared a national championship in 2003 with USC. Auburn finished 2004 undefeated and No. 2 in the country, blowing out the SEC East champion Tennessee twice.

Georgia is the last best hope for the SEC East to salvage a win in Atlanta come December.

Give 'em hell, Tommy Auburn head coach Tommy Tuberville recently spoke to a group of fans at a luncheon in which he lambasted ESPN, including former USC football coach and current ESPN analyst Lou Holtz.

As reported by The Montgomery Advertiser, Tuberville had an issue with the apparent bias of ESPN and its influence over deciding who plays for the national championship and the lack of a playoff system in college football. "It's done," Tuberville said. "The national media, led by ESPN, wants to see Vince Young vs. Matt Leinart in the championship game. It's going to be those two teams unless Texas or USC get upset."

"Last year, they wanted to see the two Heisman Trophy quarterbacks, Jason White and Leinart. After six or seven

games, we were out of it.

"If four teams are undefeated at the end of the season, there should be a playoff. There should've been one last year. But it's decided already. I don't like it," he said.

Tuberville continued to vent his frustration.

"ESPN has gotten so much power lately, it's kinda scary," Tuberville said. "And most of their analysts are coaches who haven't won any games. That's why they're there. I think you know who I'm talking about."

"And Lou Holtz gets on there and talks about what a team has to do to win that game, and the guy couldn't beat anybody in our conference. These guys will come talk to you and look you straight in the eye and tell you something, then they'll get on the air and say something else," Tuberville said.

"ESPN, I'll tell you, I don't have much to do with them anymore."

Tuberville obviously felt slighted last year when his squad, which included two top-10 draft picks at running back, Ronnie Brown and Carnell Williams, were left out of the national championship game despite going undefeated and winning the SEC.

Tuberville raises interesting questions about ESPN.

Does the network have too much influence on the poll voters?

Do they blur the line between reporting and commentary in a system in which the network that owns them, ABC, has the broadcast rights to the BCS bowl games and the national championship game?

And finally, when are we going to end all this madness and come up with a playoff system?

The BCS poll this week actually had USC falling to No. 2, with Virginia Tech not far behind, despite USC having won 29 straight games and two national titles, and being ranked No. 1 in both polls.

And this is the second time

this has happened to USC.

The sheer fact that a computer can disagree, and that the computer actually has influence in determining who plays for the national championship, is ludicrous.

When, oh Lord, will this all end?

Week 8 matchups:

Boston College vs. Virginia Tech: Boston College has been a thorn in the side to the ACC since joining league play this year. This could be an upset in the making.

Prediction: Boston College 21, Virginia Tech 17

USC vs. Washington State: The Southern Cal train keeps on rolling.

Prediction: USC 57, Washington State 28

UCLA vs. Stanford: Another undefeated team will fall. You heard it here first.

Prediction: Stanford 34, UCLA 31

Georgia vs. Florida: The world's largest outdoor cocktail party. What a great name for a rivalry.

Prediction: Florida 17, Georgia 14

Michigan vs. Northwestern: Northwestern is the most exciting team that no one has paid attention to this season.

Prediction: Northwestern 27, Michigan 21

Last week: 4-1 Season, 26-10 overall

BCS continues to baffle even the greatest of college football minds

The 2005 season has proven that the SEC West is superior to the SEC East. Alabama, Auburn and LSU are all quality teams. These three schools combined have only lost one game against SEC East opponents this season. Tennessee and Florida are a

combined 5-5 in overall SEC play thus far.

The SEC became a 12-member conference in 1992 and began playing an SEC championship game that same year. Alabama won the



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conference in 1992, but it would be seven years before the SEC western division would produce another champion. From 1993 to 1998, the SEC East dominated the conference with either Tennessee or Florida winning the title in each of those years. The 1996 (Florida) and 1998 (Tennessee) campaigns were also national championship seasons for the two schools.

Green's Heisman Watch List

1. Reggie Bush Southern California Running back
2. Matt Leinart Southern California Quarterback
3. Vince Young Texas Quarterback
4. Maurice Drew UCLA Running back
5. LenDale White Southern California Running back

Laura-Joyce Gough / THE GAMECOCK

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Vols, Gamecocks suffer loss of key players before USC heads to Knoxville for face-off

Even after losing key offensive players, Rice still No. 1 in my book

1) Will Sidney Rice continue his streak of consecutive games with a touchdown reception?

Like I said last week, this question has officially reached superstition status. I honestly feel that if I don't include it and Sidney Rice fails to catch a touchdown pass, it will be my fault. Therefore I will continue to include this question until further notice.

Rice has accounted for 60 percent of Carolina's receiving touchdowns, and about 41 percent of Carolina's total offensive touchdowns.

And at this point, I think we should all agree to just stop talking about this so he doesn't get the attention of every defensive coach in the SEC. I like the idea of him getting single coverage in the red zone like last week. Move along. Nothing to see here.

2) Is Syvelle Newton the only featured player who will miss the game?

You know that face Will Ferrell made right after Jack Black punted Baxter off the bridge in "Anchorman"? I had that face for, like, two straight hours after I saw Newton go down last Saturday. It was not a good situation.

And, for once, Tennessee fans know that feeling. Last week, the Volunteers lost their starting tailback, Gerald Riggs Jr., for the rest of the season. This was one week after their



5 Questions with Jake Broom Third-year political science student

TENNESSEE

best defensive back, All-American Jason Allen, was lost for the year with a hip injury against Georgia. I bet Phillip Fulmer knows a little bit about the Ron Burgundy face.

3) Is Tennessee's offense really that bad?

Tennessee is ranked 94 out of 117 teams in total offense. They have as much talent on offense as anybody in the country outside of Southern California, a receiving corps that is second to none and two quarterbacks that could start at almost any college in America. And somehow they still rank ahead of only Ole Miss and Mississippi State in scoring offense in the SEC. I don't know how Randy Sanders, UT's offensive coordinator, picks his plays, but I wouldn't be surprised if a wheel of fortune, a top hat and a chimpanzee were prominently involved.

4) Will Jim Bob Cooter get any playing time? Last year, I wrote an entire

column about Jim Bob Cooter, one of Tennessee's backup quarterbacks. Normally, I'm pulling hard for my boy Jim Bob to get some playing time, but not against the Gamecocks. Why? Because like I said last year, you can't stop Cooter. You can only hope to contain him.

5) Will this game break the record for "Most Players with a Criminal Record Playing in a College Football Game at One Time?"

I have absolutely no idea how many of the players in the stadium Saturday will have criminal records, but I would suspect it would be in the mid-to-high 20s at least. This has got to be some sort of a record. The difference is that Carolina's legal problems seem to be a recent trend — and exception, not the rule. Tennessee has made a tradition out of it.

Even Tennessee's administration decided to get in on it in order to support the team. Charles L. Norman, vice chancellor and dean for Extension and Outreach at Tennessee, was arrested at the end of September and charged with indecent exposure while he visited a park in Nashville, Tenn. There are so many jokes that I should be using here, but I'll just let you use your imagination. Tennessee fans can continue to make fun of USC's legal troubles, but until Sorensen gets caught committing lewd acts on the Horseshoe, I think Carolina has this argument won.

Gamecock Challenge						
The Challenge: Every week, The Gamecock's readers and staff test their sports knowledge with game predictions. Want to be Reader of the Week? E-mail selections for next week's games to <a href="mailto:gamecocksports@gwm.sc.edu">gamecocksports@gwm.sc.edu</a> and see if you have the best knowledge of college football around the country.						
	Jonathan Hillyard Sports Editor (48-21)	Alex Riley Asst. Sports Editor (42-27)	Stephen Fastenau News Editor (48-21)	Michael LaForgia Editor in Chief (42-27)	Steven Van Haren Copy Desk Chief (42-27)	Ernest Stromman Reader of the Week (45-24)
Clemson at Ga. Tech	Georgia Tech	Georgia Tech	Clemson	Georgia Tech	Georgia Tech	Clemson
Oklahoma at Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska
4 Georgia at 16 Florida	Florida	Florida	Georgia	Georgia	Florida	Georgia
8 UCLA at Stanford	UCLA	UCLA	UCLA	UCLA	UCLA	UCLA
25 Michigan at 21 Northwestern	Michigan	Northwestern	Northwestern	Michigan	Michigan	Northwestern
Wake Forest at Duke	Wake Forest	Wake Forest	Wake Forest	Wake Forest	Wake Forest	Wake Forest
Purdue at Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.
12 Ohio St. at Minnesota	Minnesota	Minnesota	Ohio St.	Ohio St.	Ohio St.	Ohio St.
Mississippi at 19 Auburn	Auburn	Auburn	Auburn	Auburn	Auburn	Auburn
USC at 23 Tennessee	USC, 38-35	USC, 28-21	Tenn., 24-21	Tenn., 21-14	Tenn., 24-14	USC, 24-21