

Aggression familiar factor in rivalry game

Skirmishes among players, fans regular part of historic in-state battle

Tom Benning
FOR THE GAMECOCK

At every USC game, the kickoff is accompanied by the student section boisterously yelling, "Go, fight, win, kick ass!"

After last year's season-ending brawl in the closing minutes of the USC-Clemson game, it would not be out of the question for students to omit the "fight" and "kick ass" this time around. The brawl prevented both schools from going to bowl games and resulted in one-game suspensions for six players at each school.

Junior cornerback Fred Bennett echoed the sentiments of many by indicating that the fight would have no effect on this year's game.

"I think (the brawl) is behind us," he said. "I think everybody learned from the mistake they made. We are moving on."

The athletics departments of both schools have taken it a step further, and before the game, the teams will shake hands.

"I know I'm going to shake hands with their coaches," USC coach Steve Spurrier said. "I think after the ugly incident last year, it's very important. We should be able to compete in a healthy rivalry and go from there."

In reality, a friendly relationship has never been a viable option for the two schools. Former sports information director Don Barton said Clemson was founded in 1893 in protest of USC. At that time, Carolina had a poor agriculture school in a rural, farm-oriented state.

People complained that farmers' tax dollars were being used to educate lawyers.

When Benjamin Tillman became governor in 1890, he passed legislation to create a new agricultural school. Clemson opened its doors to 446 students, which reduced USC to college status with only 63 students.

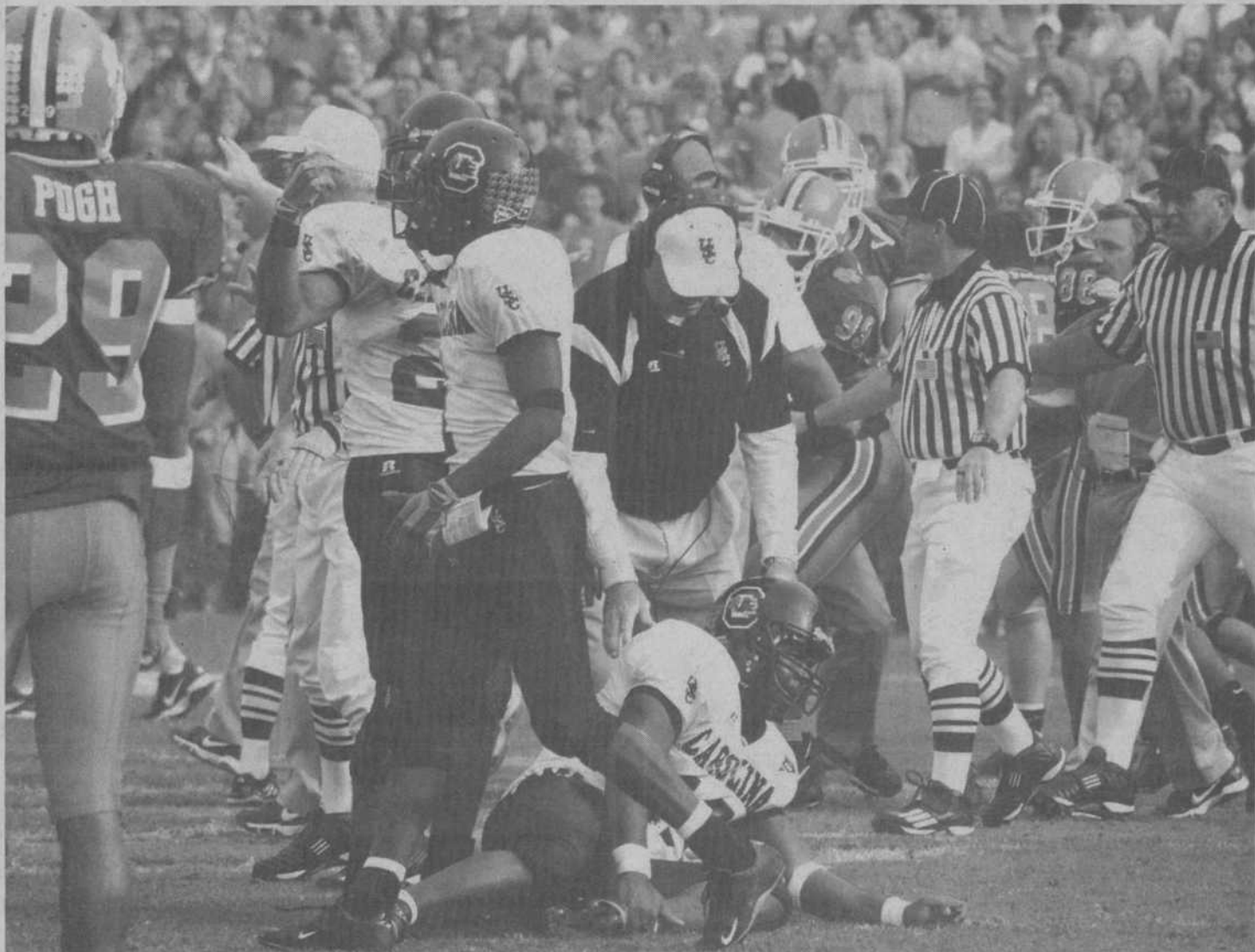
"There was a rivalry long before there was a football game," Barton said.

USC and Clemson first met on the gridiron in 1896 with Carolina winning the contest 12-6. USC did not record another victory until the infamous 12-6 upset of Clemson coach John Heisman in 1902. Barton said Carolina students paraded around a transparency of a Gamecock standing over a defeated Tiger. The parade roused anger in the Clemson student body, and the Tiger faithful proceeded to march on the Horseshoe with guns.

"According to legend," Barton said, "USC assistant coach Christie Benet stood up on a wall on Sumter Street and offered to fight any Clemson student. The crowd was eventually dispersed when the transparency was burned."

The rivalry was suspended until 1909 to prevent further hostilities, but it has continued uninterrupted for what will be the 97th straight year Saturday. Until 1958, the USC-Clemson game was played Thursday as the "Big Thursday" game and was held in Columbia during Fair Week until 1964. The schools have played on a home-and-home basis ever since.

In the 102 previous meetings, Clemson leads the



Katie Kirkland / THE GAMECOCK

USC and Clemson will meet for the 103rd time on the gridiron Saturday at Williams-Brice. Clemson leads the series 62-36-4.

series 62-36-4. Clemson's dominance over the years is not lost on Spurrier.

"We hope to beat Clemson," he said. "It will be one of our goals every year. They have beaten South Carolina a lot more than we have beaten them."

Regardless of the overall standings, the Gamecocks have had their bright moments in the rivalry. Barton listed 1941

and 1950 as key victories for USC.

In 1941, USC coach Rex Enright upset a previously undefeated Clemson team, 18-14. In 1950, Clemson came in unbeaten, untied and un-scored upon. USC running back Steve Wadiak propelled the Gamecocks to a 14-14 tie. The tie was part of a six-year stretch

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THE OLD TIMERS' TAKE

Former Carolina and Clemson players sound off about what the rivalry means to them

I used to think Army-Navy was big, but when I came down here I found out it was the greatest events, especially when we had Big Thursday. The people would take a holiday on Big Thursday. They would take a day off and go to the fair and go to the game. It's a very big important game. A lot of coaches lost their career on this game.

DOM FUSCI, USC 1942-43 & 1946

When you play as a player, you have friends you went to high school with and played against that went to Carolina. So you hate them during the game week, but throughout the year you root for them. You want them to win. You want both teams to come in 10-0. But now that I'm out working and around the true fans, I see it's a 365-day rivalry. It's bragging rights for the whole year. It's bigger than what we get credit for. It's what people live for.

TONY ELLIOT, CLEMSON 2000-03

It means more being a South Carolinian than being a South Carolina player. It's very simple — as soon as you can move, you're either a Carolina person or a Clemson person. It was an opportunity for me coming out of high school to play for the school I watched growing up and to be part of a rivalry that I had been in since that day I could crawl, walk and watch a football game.

REED MORTON, USC 1993-96

In all my 19 years of professional scouting, it's the best rivalry, year round, of any I've ever seen anywhere. Friends of mine, we go at each other 12 months a year, not just during football season. It's the best year-round rivalry I've seen anywhere in the country.

BILL HUDSON, CLEMSON 1954-56

I was recruited by both (USC and Clemson) and I wound up coming to South Carolina after they had a coaching change up at Clemson. And you really didn't know where it was going until you ran out there on that field, and it's a feeling like you've never had before. It's just a game where you can throw out the X's and O's. This rivalry's going to continue for forever, and ever and ever.

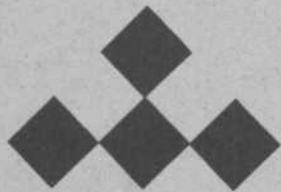
WILLIE SCOTT, USC 1977-80

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