

April showers show fall powers

After near washout, offensive output rules in Garnet and Black game

Tom Benning
STAFF WRITER

A Gamecock quarterback put on a show at Saturday's Garnet and Black spring game, but to the surprise of a crowd of 10,210, it wasn't returning starter Blake Mitchell.

Instead, redshirt freshman Cade Thompson overcame the soggy conditions to go 10-of-13 for 136 yards and two touchdowns, leading the Garnet team to a dominating 35-7 victory. USC head coach Steve Spurrier had high praise for his young signal caller.

"Cade Thompson was 10-of-13 in these conditions," he said. "That's very encouraging. Certainly, he put himself into a position (of), 'Hey Coach, if you need me, put me in there. I'll be ready to play.'"

From the beginning, the game seemed set to be an offensive showdown, as the defenses were limited in their alignments and blitzing abilities. On the Garnet team's first play, Thompson hit tight end Robert Pavlovic for a 20-yard gain. The passing game allowed the Garnet team to

quickly march down the field, as Thompson showed vast improvement from earlier scrimmages, hitting five different receivers on the drive.

"Overall, I think I got better," Thompson said. "That's what I was looking to do. I wasn't trying to become the starting quarterback overnight. I really don't know what (Spurrier) thinks in terms of playing me right now. I just have to go out there and do the best I can."

The Garnet team capped the drive with receiver Freddie Brown playing the role of injured Sidney Rice. Lined up on the right side, Brown caught a six-yard touchdown on a quick slant route against starting corner Fred Bennett.

"Freddie played better than we thought," Spurrier said. "He beat Fred Bennett on the first touchdown. You'd think with a freshman wide receiver and a guy who started about three years, Fred would eat him up. But he gave him a little stick step, and Cade threw it in there." The Black team



Juan Blas / THE GAMECOCK

USC running back Cory Boyd makes a cut-off block during Saturday's spring game. Boyd, who sat out last season with off-the-field issues, rushed for a 71-yard touchdown, the longest play from scrimmage during the game.

SPRING • 14

Back in the box:
My day at the
spring scrimmage

Free food, wet weather, idiotic jokes permeate air in football press box

Since most of you probably weren't at the 2006 Garnet and Black game, I'll share my day with you.

Pre-game: It's been raining for the past five hours. I'm not sure if there is going to be food in the press box, so I'm eating the last scrap of food I have — a Totino's pizza and a Juicy Juice box of apple juice. Let's go watch some football. I'm psyched.

Kickoff: Turns out there was food in the press box: a hotdog, two boxes of popcorn, a bag of M&Ms, and a bag of Skittles. It's game time. I feel like John Popper from Blues Traveler, circa 1997.

Somehow, we at The Gamecock, ended up with six people sitting in the press box. We are all choosing which team we think will win the game and who the MVP will be. I pick the Black team to win, and Mike Davis to be the MVP. Sports Editor Stephen Fastenau picks the Garnet team to win, but picks Blake Mitchell, the quarterback of the Black team, to be the MVP. I am confused. Staff Writer A.J. Bemby picks Gurminder Thind to not only be the MVP, but to win the game even though he is playing for both teams. His final score prediction: Thind — 30. These are the people



JAKE BROOM
Third-year political science student

Lacking defense not a problem say coaches

A.J. Bemby
STAFF WRITER

For the 10,210 announced fans at Williams-Brice Stadium on a rainy Saturday afternoon for the Garnet and Black spring game, it was unclear if the offenses were really that good, or if the defenses were really that bad.

While the Garnet team won the game 35-7, both defenses were the true losers, as the two offensive squads combined for 638 total yards, 42 points and 31 first downs. The defenses were, however, hampered by what they were able to do, as only a few coverage formations were utilized and blitzing was not allowed. Still, despite the offensive production during the game, head coach Steve Spurrier remained realistic about the defensive outlook.

"The defense did a lot of good things this spring and some not so good things," he said. "We've got a long ways to go, there's no question about it. We haven't been overly



Juan Blas / THE GAMECOCK

Defensive back Fred Bennett makes a tackle on wide receiver Freddie Brown during Saturday's Garnet and Black game at Williams-Brice Stadium. Garnet won, 35-7.

impressive on defense, and I think our guys know that. We need to get stronger, faster and play harder."

Noticeably absent were Ko Simpson and Johnathan Joseph, the

stalwart defensive back tandem that anchored the Carolina defense during the 2005 season. Both players declared early for the NFL Draft in early January, and the Garnet

and Black defenses missed their presence, as their offensive counterparts both averaged close to 15 yards per completion. While that might be cause for concern for some, for others,

it's just another golden opportunity.

"The guys we've got replacing them (Simpson and Joseph), I think they're ready for the challenge," said senior corner back Fred Bennett. "I think this far through the spring they've showed that they can play. I felt they've done a great job. Losing those guys was a lot, but I think we've got some great replacements."

According to defensive coordinator Tyrone Nix it's going to be Bennett who will have to fill the void left by Simpson and Joseph.

"Fred's going to have to take on a leadership role from a standpoint of being consistent and being the guy that can make plays back there," Nix said. "He's going into his senior year and we expect for him to be one of our best cover guys and also be one of our smartest guys, so he's going to have to take on a big role in helping bring along some of the young guys."

Bennett said it's going to be exciting.

GARNET • 14

Tide roll to series win with sweep in Sunday double-header

Michael Aguilar
THE GAMECOCK

Coming into the weekend, the USC baseball team was ranked No. 1 in the nation. Aside from a tough loss to Clemson, the Gamecocks hadn't lost since March 19. That included a convincing sweep of SEC powers LSU and Florida.

Alabama came into the game, as the lead team in the SEC West, and when they left, not much had changed. The Crimson

Tide took the Gamecocks into 11 innings for a heart-stopping contest, which they lost 7-6, then won the second two games by a total run count of 14-7.

Carolina's pitching had been performing well prior to this weekend's series. Allowing only 8 runs in their last four wins, the pitching staff looked like it was what the team would be counting on against the Crimson Tide. However, Alabama began to hit the ball well, and when the dust

settled, the USC bullpen had allowed 21 runs in three games.

The first game lasted 11 innings and a packed Sarge Frye crowd got a show from two of the nation's best baseball teams. The game was scoreless until the fourth inning, when freshman infielder Reese Havens struck first on a single.

It did not take long for Alabama's bats to start talking back. They quickly took the lead in the top of

the fifth. Junior outfielder Emeel Salem, junior outfielder Brandon Belcher, and junior infielder Greg Paiml all singled for RBIs.

The Gamecocks fought back with single runs in the fifth and sixth innings. The score remained tied until the top of the eighth when Alabama took the lead off of a controversial line drive up the left field foul line. Carolina fought back in the bottom of the same inning to take a one-run lead off a pinch-hit double from

junior Drew Martin.

The teams battled back and forth to leave the game tied at the end of the ninth inning. No runs were scored until the bottom of the eleventh. Just as he had started the game off with an RBI, Havens finished it in the same fashion, knocking double down the left field line to score the winning run.

In the second game of the series, the Gamecocks

BASEBALL • 14

BROOM • 14