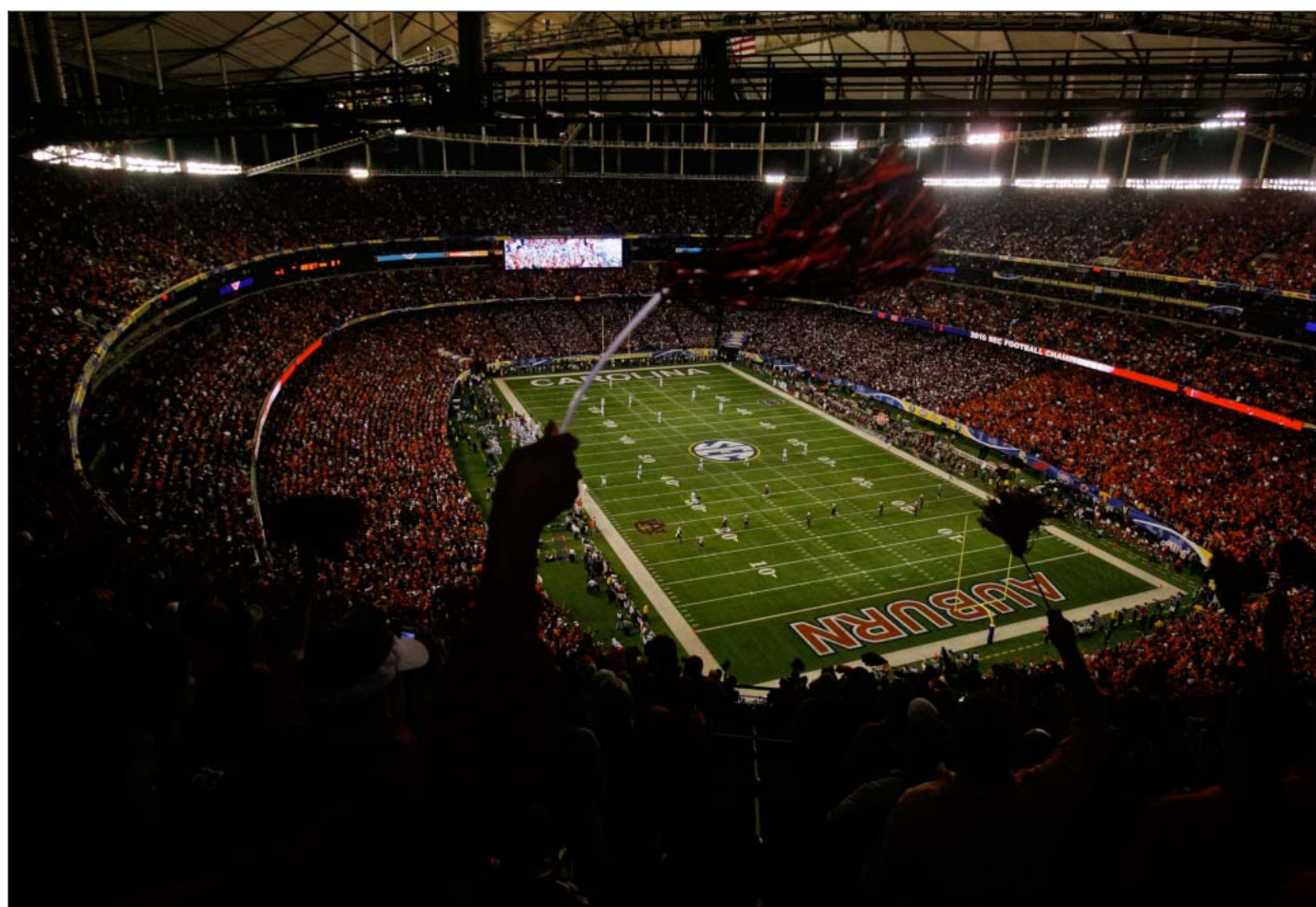


CHICK-FIL-A BOWL

Ten things to think about



TIM DOMINICK/TDOMINICK@THESTATE.COM

USC coach Steve Spurrier is eager for the Gamecocks to get as much experience as possible playing in the Georgia Dome, site of the SEC Championship Game each year.

Gamecocks return to Atlanta with much to gain

By JOSH KENDALL
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South Carolina's players and coaches will reconvene today after almost two weeks apart to prepare for the Dec. 31 Chick-fil-A Bowl against Florida State.

The Gamecocks have not practiced since losing to Auburn in the SEC Championship Game on Dec. 4, but they will be at the Bluff Road practice fields today.

The Gamecocks will hold seven practices in Columbia prior to breaking for Christmas. USC will begin bowl week practices in Atlanta on Dec. 27.

We've put together 10 things for South Carolina fans to think about during the Gamecocks' bowl preparations.

1. DOUBLE-DIGIT VICTORIES

USC has won more than nine games in a season once—the 1984 'Black Magic' team. That team won 10 games in 12 tries, but not many fans will complain if it takes this team 14 to get it done. The Gamecocks have notched one of three 9-win seasons in school history.



GERRY MELENDEZ/GMELENDEZ@THESTATE.COM

Patrick DiMarco is one of eight senior starters who will play their last game for USC in Atlanta.

2. BOUNCING BACK

The Gamecocks do not want their last memory of the season to be the SEC title game. Auburn, which will play for the BCS national championship next month, outscored South Carolina 35-3 in the second half and gained nearly 600 yards of offense.

CHICK-FIL-A BOWL

WHO: USC (9-4) vs. Florida State (9-4)

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Dec. 31

WHERE: Georgia Dome, Atlanta

TV: ESPN

RADIO: WNKT-FM 107.5

TICKETS: Gamecocksonline.com

GOGAMECOCKS.COM: Photo gallery and video from today's first bowl practice

3. FINISHING STRONG

The Gamecocks players are hoping for a strong performance if for no other reason than they will not have to hear anymore about their last bowl game, a 20-7 loss to Connecticut last season. Coach Steve Spurrier has not gotten ov-

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL BOWL GUIDE

The good, the bad and the ugly

How to navigate your way through bowl season, which begins with a dud Saturday

By JOHN MARSHALL
The Associated Press

The college football bowl season kicks off Saturday with a pair of 6-6 teams in the New Mexico Bowl.

Forgot about that one already? That's OK, with 35 bowls in 28 days, it's hard to keep track of them all.

This guide to the bowl-a-rama, filled with the clunkers, the handful of must-watchers and a few tidbits sprinkled in, should (hopefully) make it a little easier.

HEISMAN, NATIONAL CHAMP

Auburn's Cam Newton has one big trophy in his hand and is trying to join an elite list. This year's Heisman Trophy winner gets a shot at becoming the 14th player to win the Heisman and a nation-



GERRY MELENDEZ/GMELENDEZ@THESTATE.COM

Auburn's Cam Newton will try to become the 14th player to win a Heisman Trophy and national title in the same season.

al championship in the same season against Oregon on Jan. 10. It's happened five times since 1993, including Alabama's Mark Ingram last season.

TRAVELIN' MEN (SOMETIMES)

San Diego State earned a berth in the Poinsettia Bowl and Hawaii in the Hawaii Bowl, giving

those teams home-field advantage. SMU will face Army in the Armed Forces Bowl in their own stadium because TCU's is being renovated.

For long distances, Tulsa gets the nod for playing in Hawaii, close to 4,000 miles away.

The longest road trip on the

SEE BOWLS PAGE C4

BY THE NUMBERS

\$18 million. Payout for BCS bowls.

\$500,000. Payout for New Orleans Bowl, believed to be lowest among the bowls.

645. Combined yards rushing per game between Georgia Tech and Air Force, which meet in the Dec. 27 Independence Bowl.

100. Years since Missouri and Iowa, teams that are 250 miles apart, have played before the Insight Bowl on Dec. 28.

16. Years since Baylor, which faces Illinois in the Texas Bowl, last played in a bowl.

14. Years since Army's last bowl appearance. The Knights face SMU in the Dec. 30 Armed Forces Bowl.

Five. Consecutive BCS bowls Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops has lost.

Three. Number of teams from the Sun Belt to reach a bowl: Troy (New Orleans), Florida International (Little Caesars Pizza), and Middle Tennessee (GoDaddy.com).

SHRINE BOWL



TIM DOMINICK/TDOMINICK@THESTATE.COM

USC commitment Shon Carson, from Lake City, runs through a drill during Shrine Bowl practice.

S.C.'s Carson adapting to spread offense

Lake City standout learning to exercise patience as he prepares for USC career

By JOSH HOKE
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SPARTANBURG—Shon Carson looked like anything but a Shrine Bowler for the better part of Monday.

The tailback from Lake City, a USC commitment, was struggling to take handoffs. When he was able to take the exchange from quarterbacks Justin Worley and Everett Golson, he was often out of position or unable to find the proper running lanes.

He was frequently singled out by his offensive coaches, though they understood it might take him a few days to adjust. Lake City did not employ a spread offense, so the principles were foreign to him.

"He'll be fine," said Lake City coach Jim Rowell, whose team has been an I-formation, power running team the past three seasons. "We've run a little bit of one-back, but I'm sure the zone blocking will take him a couple of days. I'm sure he'll catch on."

This week has shown Carson the learning curve he faces as he makes the transition next season to South Carolina, which utilizes an offense similar to what the Sandlappers will employ Saturday.

INSIDE

Dukes moves from tackle to end for Shrine Bowl, **C4**

SEE CARSON PAGE C4

CLEMSON FOOTBALL

Barker says athletics key to success

University president espouses high standards for both academics and athletics

By ED MCGRANAHAN
The Greenville News

CLEMSON—Jim Barker reads and responds to each e-mail he receives, and judging from the tenor of the message boards and whine on radio talk shows, it's safe to assume the president of Clemson University receives his share of fire and rancor from alumni and fans unsettled by a disappointing football season.

"You can look back at the whole season. There were a hundred different plays where things could have gone a different way," Barker said Wednesday morning. "We were extremely competitive even in a 6-6 season, so I think we can overreact to that as well. That's why I think it's important for me to maintain a perspective that looks at all the issues."

It has been 19 years since Clemson's last conference championship and 29 since the na-

SEE CLEMSON PAGE C3

MEINEKE CAR CARE BOWL

WHO: Clemson (6-6) vs. South Florida (7-5)

WHEN: Noon Dec. 31

WHERE: Bank of America Stadium, Charlotte

TV: ESPN | **RADIO:** ESPN 93.1 FM

TICKETS: ClemsonTigers.com

INSIDE: Roster experiments possible, **C3**