

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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South Carolina Gamecocks Coach Shane Beamer

Press Conference

SHANE BEAMER: It's great to be back here for Media Day. I've been watching on SEC Network all week, so hope your week has gone well. You've made it to the final day so we are on the home stretch and certainly can finish this thing. Very grateful to be up here. I will never take for granted the position that I'm in as a head football coach in the Southeastern Conference. I used to watch on the SEC Network, so to be standing up here for the third year in a row is something I am extremely grateful for and like I said will never take for granted.

Big reason for that is because of how fantastic this league is. There's nothing like the Southeastern Conference, the premiere conference in the nation on the field. You look at the NFL Draft every single season, what we are doing off-season the field as well, players and coaches want to play in this league and want to coach in this league and I'm no different.

I love coming here and being able to see so many faces here at SEC Media Day each year. I love going to Destin in the month of May and being around so many other Hall of Fame coaches, not just football, but women's basketball and men's basketball. It's a great fraternity of coaches in this league and I'm happy to be part of it.

Very grateful for Commissioner Sankey and his leadership, something that he alluded to, someone that I've had great respect for as over the years as a coach coming up in the profession. And now being in this league and working with him day-in, day-out, my respect for him has only grown. There's great uncertainty in college athletics these days, no doubt about it. But to have his leading the way makes me feel a whole lot better as well. And congratulations to him on his new and well-deserved contract extension. And then thanks to all you do -- everything that you do for college athletics in promoting our great game.

My three children have not let me forget that I had the second-longest opening statement last summer, so they have been telling me for two weeks, don't be that guy



again. I didn't think I was long last year, but apparently I was, so I'll be much shorter this year or try to.

Excited about the three guys that I have with me here today, Spencer Rattler, Kai Kroeger, and Tonka Hemingway, three guys that are great examples of everything that's right about college athletics. You hear what's wrong with college athletics these days. Those guys embody what is right, guys that are tough, dependable, competitive and unbelievable ambassadors for our program.

Spencer and I already obviously together as Oklahoma. I've known him since 2018 when I got to Oklahoma and we were recruiting him. Fantastic career at Oklahoma. What a great season that he had down the stretch for us last season. So fired up that he's back as our quarterback for another year. Someone that came in and was voted a captain by his teammates last season as a junior and has an opportunity to be a two-time captain here at South Carolina.

Somebody that finished the season strong last season but has not slowed down. He was voted our most outstanding offensive player during spring practice and excited to see what he's going to do this upcoming year.

Tonka Hemingway, unselfish, unbelievable person and football player. A guy that played defensive tackle, but then in the Bowl game because of depth had to play defensive end in the Bowl game for us. Played every play. Never came off the field. Great play for us on special teams, as well. Someone from the State of South Carolina and that's where it's always going to start with us in recruiting is recruiting our own state. Tonka embodies that.

And Kai Kroeger, frankly he's the best punter in the nation. He was the best punter in the nation last year in my opinion and he's a weapon for us. Glad that he's back for another season. Outstanding student athlete. He was named our most outstanding student athlete academically in spring practice and a guy that not only is he a phenomenal punter, but he has three touchdown passes in his career on fake punts and fake field goals that we've ran over the last couple years and hope to add to that in 2023, also.



Really like this 2023 team that we have returning. It's a hungry group. They have shown they are not satisfied with just eight wins. They know that we have a higher ceiling here at Carolina and everything they have done since January embodies that. We have had a great summer in the weight room with Luke Day, our head strength coach and his staff. Like the way that these guys are working.

It's a big thing with us and a big message is no complacency. We can't assume that because things went well for us last season, because we won eight games and accomplished a lot of firsts, that it's just automatically going to go that way again because we have got returning players.

We have got 38 new guys on our football team and I know in today's college football, rosters turn over more than they ever have, but 38 is a really high number when you talk about incoming freshmen and transfers. So we have gone from two wins to seven wins to eight wins, but it's going to take that much more in every area.

Our challenge has been to be better in every single area of our program, every department than they were in 2022, and we are well on our way to doing that. We are going to be a young football team. We expect to play true freshmen at every single position this upcoming season. So we have to continue to grow up and get better in a hurry.

We have a lot of personnel back on the offensive side of the ball. We've hired a new offensive coordinator in Dowell Loggains. Could not be more excited about him as an addition to our program on and off the field. Some impact transfers and incoming freshmen we are excited to get to work with once we start practice next month.

Key for us offensively, we have just got to be a lot more consistent than what we have been. We have done some really good things offensively but we have been way too inconsistent to have a week last year where we didn't score an offensive touchdown against Florida, but come back the very next week and score 63 points in the next game. The inconsistencies and extremes we have to be better about.

Defensively year 3 with Clayton White, our defensive coordinator. Key for us there is going to continue to be an opportunistic defense, which is what we've been. We have led or been second in the SEC two years in a row in takeaways. We have got to continue to be that opportunistic group as well.

Really fired up. Our coaching staff stayed intact defensively except with the addition of Travian Robertson. The opportunity to bring Travian back home, a former

South Carolina player, highly recruited out of the State of North Carolina that decided to come to South Carolina. So we need more guys in that state to follow his lead and come across the border south.

He was a highly recruited guy, great player in college, good NFL career, and he's made an impact already. One of our defensive linemen pulled me aside a week after Travian had been on campus and said, you hired the right guy hiring that guy. He's made us better already.

So our defensive line group is better already with the addition of Travian Robertson and can't wait to see what he's going to do. We lost some major contributors on our defense, on all three levels. Great players and great leaders that we've got to do a great job replacing.

Special teams has been a weapon for us the last two seasons. It has won football games for us under the leadership of Pete Lembo. Have to continue to be that way also and confident we will be. Any time you return all of your key specialists you have a chance and we have returned our punter, our kicker, our long snapper, our kickoff returner. Question for us is going to be who our punt returner is going to be. But that needs to continue to be a weapon for us.

Really proud of what our players are doing off the field. We had great success on the field last season, accomplished a lot of firsts but this past semester, the spring semester, academically, our football team had the highest GPA in the history of South Carolina football. So the highest team grade point average last spring was the highest it's ever been, not since I've been at Carolina but in the history of Carolina Football. So proud of our guys and what they are doing.

We have 21 players that will be graduates of the University of South Carolina when we kickoff game 2 against North Carolina and that's following up on last year when we had 22 players that were graduates as well. We had eight players on our team last spring that had 4.0 GPAs. So the work that our guys are doing academically and athletically I'm really proud of.

We talk about competition as a core value in our program. Our guys love to compete in everything. As I mentioned some great things last season, a lot of firsts, but a lot of things that we have to be better at. You guys that follow us regularly know that I've said this, two years in a row our offense has been last in the SEC at turning the ball over. Nobody in this league has fumbled and thrown more interceptions than we have the last two seasons and that has to improve and that starts with me as the head football coach.



And obviously we have to be better at running the football and stopping the run as well. We have got a demanding schedule that we get to play, opening up with North Carolina and finishing up with Clemson, two teams that played the SEC Championship Game last season, not to mention the eight SEC games that we'll play between those guys as well.

Going to be a challenging year for us, but we are excited about getting started. Excited about where things are in recruiting. We just finished up the class of 2023. Highest-ranked class we've had at Carolina in over ten years. The 2024 class is on track to be better than that as well. Love where we're at and where we're going as a program without a doubt.

And I've said this before, it's an easy place to recruit to when you talk about the City of Columbia. The state of South Carolina, the unbelievable academics we have at Carolina, the amazing fan base, the facilities, and then the championship sports that we have in other sports, like Dawn Staley and our women's basketball program as well.

In closing, a ton of excitement about our program right now, locally and nationally, honored to be the head football coach at South Carolina. People want to be a part of what we are doing. This program is not for everybody but make no mistake about it, the culture in our football game has never been stronger since I took over as the head coach in 2020. So we have got sold-out Gamecock Club events that I've going to right now. Our season ticket sales are up 106 percent they were telling me the other day and that just is building off the momentum that our fan base showed when they took over the City of Jacksonville for the Gator Bowl back in December as well.

I love hearing from some of the transfers that we have brought into our program. Love hearing from them when they come into our program and they talk about our program and how different it is from other places as well. I take great pride in that as the head coach as well. We have made a lot of progress in two years, but the best days of South Carolina football are still from us, I'm convinced of that, and it's because of the people that we have in our program. You win with people.

We have great people in our program and we have great people at the University of South Carolina, great leadership and could not be more honored to be the head football coach at South Carolina.

So Sutton, Olivia, Hunter, my three children, hope I did better with the opening statement, and with that, be glad to take any questions you guys have.

Q. You are one of the only coaches in college football the last two seasons to have beaten three of the nation's five National Championship head coaches: Jimbo Fisher, Dabo Swinney, Mack Brown. What's the recipe in keeping this momentum going in Columbia as you said, facing one of the nation's toughest slates?

SHANE BEAMER: Yeah, my kids read that to me last night, and they made sure I realized that Kirby won a National Championship and I ain't beaten Kirby as well. And so they do a good job of keeping me humble as well.

Great people. Those great wins that we had over those fantastic Hall of Fame coaches that you're referring to took all three phases and everybody in our program as well. So for us, it's going to be to continue to can recruit great players and bring great people into our program.

In those games, North Carolina, Texas A&M and Clemson are the three you're referring to, you look at it, I mean, we had impactful plays in all those games on special teams, defense and offense. That's what it takes to beat a great team like that, great coaches and great programs. There are so many Hall of Fame coaches already in this league and future Hall of Fame coaches as well. That's what it's going to be. It's continuing to recruit great players and continue to develop the culture that we have at our place.

Q. I believe you and Coach Sam Pittman are the only two coaches in the conference without an extensive coordinating background, offense and defensively. As a football coach, what challenges does that present and what do you feel like you've had to overcome?

SHANE BEAMER: Certainly respect the question. But also people talk about, well, you have not been a coordinator.

Being a special teams coordinator is being a coordinator. Everybody talks about, well, that guy has not been an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator. Being a special teams coordinator prepared me better to be a head football coach than if I had been on the offensive side of the ball or the defensive side of the ball. And I say that because when you're the special teams coordinator, you're the only coach other than the coach that stands in front of the whole team and talks to the team because coaching special teams embodies -- takes the entire roster.

So you have got to have a relationship with every player on the team. You have to be able to motivate guys to play special teams. You have to be able to be detailed and organized because you might get 20 minutes in practice,



so you've got to be efficient at what you're doing in that time. So my time as a special teams coach really prepared me.

And then the fact that all along, I was coaching offense and defense. So I told Ray Tanner and Chance Miller when I interviewed for this job that, no, I have not been an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator, but I would not have changed my career path for anything because of how it did prepare me to be a head football coach as well.

You know, I like to think that I'm somewhat knowledgeable on the offensive side of the ball and defensive side of the ball as well, but it was a great experience for me and really beneficial.

Q. What attracted you to Dowell Loggains for offensive coordinator, and how might your offense look different this year? And secondly, Trey Knox transferred from Arkansas. We really like Trey there. What do you think of him?

SHANE BEAMER: I really like Trey in Columbia, so I get it.

Dowell has been fantastic. I've known Dowell for a long time. When he was in the NFL, I think I met him at Senior Bowl when I was an assistant coach at South Carolina previously. He was with the Tennessee Titans at the time. Met him as a Senior Bowl practice and we have always kept in touch. Wherever he was coaching, I would always try to go visit to pick his brain and watch practice. I went to Miami when he was in Miami. I went to Chicago when he was in Chicago. I went to Nashville when he was here with the Titans. So I knew what kind of person he was and how smart he was on the offensive side of the ball.

Then the other thing that attracted me to him was he's not a guy that's been in the NFL his entire career and is set on, this is how we have to do things because this is how we do it in the NFL. He spent two years in college and a few months on Penn State's staff where he saw, quote/unquote, the college-type offenses, how the college game is different, the hash marks and the field and whatnot.

So being able to attack it; being able to marry the NFL background with the college background really attracted me to him, not to mention the kind of person he is. And he's been better than I even imagined him being as a coach, as a recruiter, as a person. He has an awesome family, he and his wife, Beth, and could not be more excited about them being in Columbia.

Same thing with Trey Knox as well. I remember coaching against Trey last season when we played Arkansas in

Week 2 and what a problem he presented defenses because of his size and athleticism. Dowell was his position coach at Arkansas, helping develop him as a tight end. And excited about the leadership, the talent and the energy level that Trey has already brought to our football team.

Q. So like you said last year, you got a 63-point performance against a team that was 10-1, and then you followed that up by beating your in-state rival, Clemson, great final stretch to the season. Do you guys use that as a springboard to what you want to do this fall?

SHANE BEAMER: Yeah, those were two monumental wins for us. There's no question about it. I was telling somebody earlier, proud of the fact that coming off that win in Columbia against Tennessee, to not just go on the road the next week and win but to be down 14-0 on the road to Clemson and come back and win that game, that's what I'm so proud of. Because human nature would have been to say, well, it's just not our day. You know we had a great week, great game last week in Columbia, and we're down 14-0, but we got that win and we're good.

But our guys battled back, so to me the mental toughness and fortitude our guys showed that day was awesome. It absolutely has springboarded us in a lot of ways. The momentum that we took from the month of November into recruiting and into 2023 within our facility, but then outside the facility from a recruiting standpoint and just national narrative, without a doubt.

But also we understand, we have got a lot of work to do, too. Yes, we had those two great wins but we are also -- that's the same team that didn't score an offensive touchdown the week before against Florida as well. We have got to be more consistent, starting with me, but certainly there's a lot that you can take from those two games that will help us going forward.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Dakereon Joyner. I know your running game is going to be a big part of the development of this football team and you have four scholarship running backs. He's turned from a quarterback to a wide receiver and made plays for you and now is going to get a look at running back, kind of one of the great Gamecocks, Deebo Samuel. Talk about his unselfishness to move and how big of a part of the offense he could potentially be this year.

SHANE BEAMER: He's going to be a huge part of it. He embodies everything being a Gamecock is about and easily could have been here again today as well. He's a fantastic leader and representative of our program. He's

literally done everything on our team in his career. You know, going back, you watch him -- because we used him some last year in some wildcat quarterback situations. I think he had two rushing touchdowns against Tennessee if I'm not mistaken, but they were plays where he showed a skill set: Making somebody miss in space, lowering his shoulder and trying to get north, south, downhill on somebody. So he showed that he has ability as a running back.

So honestly, the conversation was before spring practice. In spring practice we only had two scholarship running backs on our entire team going into spring practice. So I met with Dakereon, and said, would you be open to us utilizing you at running back in spring, not wholesale change, but let's just dabble in it. Another way for you to get on the field and help your career after college as well potentially.

I think maybe he was a little reluctant but decided to do it, and couldn't be more excited that he did. I think he'll tell you the same thing. He showed great natural ability as a running back. He's going to help us there along with other areas on our team. He and I were actually at a charity event in Charleston the other night to raise money.

All the coaches in the State of South Carolina come together to raise money for charity, and Dakereon was there and they had a Q&A with the players where he came up on stage and the emcee introduced him as a receiver and he immediately got the microphone and told the whole room, "I'm a running back."

He has embodied it and can't wait to carry the football for us this year, along with our other running backs.

Q. You mentioned the hiring of Travian Robertson, defensive line coach. What are your indications of him in that spot and your front seven, you lose six of eight in regards to snap count from a season ago. Talk about that rush defense. Do you feel like maybe with new guys in there, you guys are ready to take the next step in regards to stopping the run this season?

SHANE BEAMER: Excited about Travian. He was a player when I was an assistant coach at Carolina, as well. So loves Carolina through and through. The process to hire him was very short and sweet because I knew how much I wanted him at Carolina and I knew how much he wanted to be at Carolina.

Obviously he's worked his way up through the coaching ranks. Did a great job at Tulane last season, a Cotton Bowl team last year that won a conference championship. So being able to take some of the things they did

defensively at Tulane and help us be better. He's a guy that has played the position and he's played the position at a high level. So what I mentioned a few minutes ago about our players pulling me aside after one week to say, you hired the right guy, that means a lot to me. He'll make our defense better.

Then from a defensive standpoint, certainly, we have got to be better at stopping the run. It's easy for people to say, okay, if you are not good enough on the run defense it's because of your defensive line. It takes all 11. It's the defensive line. It's the linebackers. It's the defensive backs that may be responsible for the C-gap. They better be in the C-gap and make a tackle. It takes all 11 to stop the run better. We have to stop the run and generate pressure on opposing quarterbacks.

And we have some good young players that it's time for them to step up, and we brought some transfers in as well and excited to see those guys. We are confident with a group effort we'll be better there.

Q. Thanks for remembering your Oklahoma guys, coach.

SHANE BEAMER: Could never forget.

Q. Can you talk about Austin Stoger's decision to go back to Oklahoma after one year at South Carolina, and what were things you saw Spencer do at Oklahoma and enhance at South Carolina in his first season playing for you?

SHANE BEAMER: As far as Austin Stoger leaving, you'd have to ask him. Glad he decided to come to Carolina for a year and he made the decision to move on.

And Spencer -- what was the question?

Q. Some of the things you saw in his seasons as Oklahoma and how he enhanced his play.

SHANE BEAMER: I think the biggest thing, one, is forget about what he did on the field. I knew what kind of person Spencer is. It wasn't like I was bringing in a guy to play quarterback that I didn't know. I spent two years with him at Oklahoma, a little bit longer if you count the recruiting process as well. He was committed when I got there, but I was with him in those two seasons. So I knew what kind of person he was.

You guys will remember this because you covered Oklahoma, but he had dealt with adversity before at Oklahoma. It wasn't like all of a sudden this year or last season, we had some tough losses and that was the first

time he went through stuff or that 2021 was the first time he went through stuff.

You guy also remember his first two games as a starting quarterback in the Big 12 as Oklahoma, we lost to Kansas State and Iowa State. You are not supposed to lose two conference games at Oklahoma. That doesn't happen, not to mention two games to start the season when you are replacing Kyler Murray -- or Baker Mayfield, Kyler Murray and Jalen Hurts as the quarterback.

So seeing Spencer handle Jalen Hurts, see him get benched in the Texas game in 2021 and come back in the second half and lead us to a four-overtime win, I believe, told me everything I needed to know about Spencer as far as a competitor, leader, kind of person he was.

He's made us better on and off the field. I saw enough. Forget about his talent level on the field because that speaks for itself, but the way he handled himself off the field during my two seasons there was really good for me to see. Not to mention his first year there was Jalen Hurts as the quarterback. So he got to see Jalen Hurts come in as a transfer quarterback. I don't want to speak for Spencer, but I would imagine that helped him seeing that when he made the transition to Columbia.

Q. I know one of your crossover games this year is Mississippi State and it's a program you and your wife have connections to. What will it be like playing them?

SHANE BEAMER: It will be big. My mother-in-law is already making the plans for all of the people from Starkville coming to the game. It will be a big challenge. Coach Arnett has a great team returning, a lot of returning production as well. We know that will be a battle as well, but that's exciting. I have great memories of my time in Starkville. Met my wife there. My in-laws still live there. My father-in-law is the sheriff of Oktibbeha County. We love to go to Starkville and visiting. And it's going to be pretty cool playing those guys as well.

My first year at Carolina was an assistant coach in 2007 and Mississippi State came and played in Columbia as well. So now it's pretty cool as the head coach that they are coming back, also.

Q. I wanted to ask you, there's a lot of talk in Norman about getting ready for the SEC. You saw that program. Are they ready for the SEC? What's that going to look like and how much are you looking forward to going back to Norman in 2024?

SHANE BEAMER: Yeah, I think they are certainly ready. You guys know more about the ins and outs of their

program right now. But this is a team that prior to this season had won five straight conference championships in the Big 12 going into 2021. And then in 2021, they won 10 games, 11 games, something like that. So they had a heck of a season in 2021 with Lincoln, so they are not very far off, that's for sure.

Certainly this league is different. Lines of scrimmage are different. Beyond the field, just the stadiums -- when I was talking about in my opening statement about this league, it's one thing I love about this conference, just the stadiums you get to go into every single Saturday. I saw a stat the other day where the SEC led the country in average attendance per game and it wasn't even close to the rest of the conferences.

So realizing every single stadium, you are going into a stadium with 70,000, 80,000, 90,000, 100,000 fans and that will be different for the teams coming in. Certainly great tradition at that place and excited about going back to Norman in 2024. We have a lot of football to play before then, but that's a proud program with great leadership under Joe Castiglione and excited about having OU and Texas in this awesome conference.

Q. In your introductory press conference, you referenced U.C. many times as home. What over the last two years has reinforced that feeling?

SHANE BEAMER: Just the people. It is home. You guys heard me say it before. I was born in Charleston. Columbia was the first place my wife and I lived after we got married. We got married in Starkville, and after that season we moved to Columbia. Two of our three children were born in Columbia, South Carolina.

So it's an awesome state, an amazing city. I knew that before I came back, but just the people. The friends we had when we were at South Carolina the first time that we still have, but then the number of friends that our family has made outside of coaching since we came back as well. It's just a fantastic community with great people. And love living in South Carolina, loving being the head football coach at South Carolina, and can't wait for the future in that role.

Thank you guys very much. Enjoy the rest of your week.

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