

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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South Carolina Gamecocks Coach Shane Beamer

Press Conference

SHANE BEAMER: Thank you, Commissioner Sankey. Great to be back here at SEC media days for my fifth season and excited to be here for day one to kick off the week.

I say it every year and I'll never stop. I'm grateful for the position I'm in as a head football coach in the Southeastern Conference. This league is the standard across all of college athletics, and I'm so blessed to be a part of it as well.

You see that every year on the field and you see that every April in the NFL draft as well. Players want to play in league, coaches want to coach in this league. All you have to do is look at the Netflix special that I know is coming out later this year. They chose this league to showcase as well. Obviously they had other conferences that would have loved to have been a part of it; they wanted us. I think that speaks volumes about the power of this league.

Thankful for Commissioner Sankey. Admired him from afar before I got into this conference in the role I'm in right now, and admire him even more that I've been in the league five years. Always will be grateful for his leadership back in 2020 that allowed us to have a college football season. Very glad that he is leading us in this new era of college athletics.

And then thanks to all of you for all you do to promote our game. I know you make a lot of sacrifices as well throughout the year, so grateful for you guys.

And thanks to the SEC staff for putting on such an awesome, awesome event every single year when we come here to this as well.

Real quickly, football-wise, just wanted to send my prayers to the family of Joe Monmonier. Joe was the athletic director at Hilton Head High School in Hilton Head, South Carolina that died last week tragically and unexpectedly. Has two beautiful daughters. Oldest daughter, Ava, just



graduated from South Carolina in May. As you can imagine, that family is going through a lot right now, and we're certainly thinking of them.

South Carolina is a special state. It's a small state, a very close-knit state. I know that Hilton Head High School community, I've been there for a football game on a Friday night, and it's a special community. Know they're hurting right now, so thankful for them.

See the sign over there, but I would be remiss if I didn't mention Bob Holt. I know every year I've been here at SEC Media Day I could always count on him sitting right there in the front row. Certainly miss having him here.

I was never a part of any team that he covered, but I know what he meant to the SEC and miss Bob as well.

You guys will learn more about our players, if you haven't already, but the three that are here with me today, LaNorris Sellers, DQ Smith, and Nick Barrett, embody everything that we want our program to be about. They embody everything that college athletics is about in my mind in 2025.

All had different stories, unique stories. None of them were your five-star recruits that everybody talks about that comes to the school and has a great career.

These are all guys that weren't maybe as highly recruited as they should've been, but they've come to South Carolina, they've developed, and they are leaders on our team. Their voices matter on our team, and that's why they're here today.

They love the University of South Carolina and putting on a Gamecock uniform means something to them without a doubt.

Nick Barrett is a North Carolina native. He was committed to the University of South Carolina when I got hired as the head coach. He stayed committed, he came, and he's unselfish. Last season would've been his last season, but he came to us early in the season and brought up the idea of redshirting, being able to play in four games.

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He knew we were loaded at defensive tackle last season and really wanted to maximize his last year at Carolina. Redshirted, we used him in select games. Now he's a back and a leader on that defensive line for us.

He is a great example of what we're trying to do from a recruiting standpoint. Early in my tenure at South Carolina we only had one player from the state of North Carolina on our team and it was Nick. That was ridiculous.

To be to be a border, so many players in the state of North Carolina that want to come across state lines and play SEC football. We knew we needed to attack the state of North Carolina harder in recruiting, and we absolutely have since then; guys on our team now and guys that have committed to come play for us next season as well.

Nick is doing right off the field. He's a four-time SEC academic honor role, and just graduated in May.

DQ Smith, Columbia, South Carolina native, high school quarterback. When people talk or when we talk to high school prospects they all say they want to be developed when they come to college. DQ is a guy that has been developed. He came to South Carolina. Wasn't highly recruited. I think we had to beat out Georgia Southern for him. He was a high school quarterback. Came here. By Game 3 he was starting for sure is a true freshman. High character guy and key player for us on defense and special teams. He will graduate in December.

And obviously LaNorris Sellers, returning captain as voted on by his teammates. Our returning MVP, as voted on by his teammates. Last season he was playing as well as any quarterback in the nation the last month of the season. Doing great off the field. Has been on the Dean's list twice. Currently doing a internship with contract construction in Columbia for his major as well. His best football is still in front of him.

When you look at our team offensively, have a new offensive coordinator in Mike Shula. That was an easy decision for me to promote Mike to be the coordinator. He was a part ever our program last year. He's literally been in the shoes that LaNorris is in as he was a starting quarterback in this conference, and he's been in the shoes I'm in as a head football coach in this conference as well.

He's already made us better as an offense on and off the field. When you look at us, we got to replace the interior of our offensive line and a lot of playmakers at the running back and tight end position. I'm excited about the potential of the guys roughening and how we take the next step as a offense under Coach Shula.

Defensively, it's year five with Clayton White as our defensive coordinator. He's done a remarkable job in the four seasons leading our defense. It's great to have him back and our entire defensive staff back around him as well.

We've got to continue to be opportunistic as a defense. We've led the SEC in takeaways since 2021 and got to continue to be that group. We played great defense last season, but we've lost a lot of production, particularly right up the middle of our defensive at defensive tackle, linebacker, and safety.

But the group we returned is very athletic and really excited about the potential of the next group of guys to make their impact on our defense.

And then in special teams, this will be my 26th year in coaching coming up. I don't believe I've ever been a part of a team that has to replace literally every key part of their special teams units like we do this season. We'll have a new punter, new place kick, new kickoff guy, new holder, new snapper, new punt returner, and new kickoff returner. So that is -- we've been very spoiled. Every punt we've punted the football at South Carolina since I've been the head coach, Kai Kroeger has punted the ball. The first time we punt, and that won't be anytime soon, we'll have a new punter are out there as well.

Those are guys that are young and talented, and excited to see what we do in year two under Joe DeCamillis as a special teams coordinator. We have to continue to be aggressive and opportunistic there. We've led the SEC in blocked kicks since 2021.

We have a strong culture in Columbia, on and off the field. That's evident with what we're doing academically with the No. 2 graduation success rate in the SEC. When we kickoff in 48 days in Atlanta we will have 19 players on our team that have already graduated from the University of South Carolina. When we play post-season football in December that number will be 31 players graduates of the University of South Carolina.

Last semester we had 31 players made the Dean's list, and the last two semesters have been the best semesters academically in the history of the South Carolina football program. Not since I've been the head coach. In the history of program. Last fall we set a record for our team GPA, and then our mantra as a team in 2025 is to take things farther on and off the field than we did in '24.

We did that by shattering the record we set in December. We shattered in this spring with the spring semester as



well. Recruiting has gone well in the last few years and going well right now.

A lot of expectations for 2025, and there should be. We're built for years to come and are going to continue to be good at South Carolina. We are not going anywhere. There is a lot of young talent and there is more coming. It's a great place to recruit to when you talk about the academics, Columbia, the beautiful campus, a capital city, a fantastic place to live, the best fan base in all of America, the upcoming stadium improvements to Williams-Brice Stadium that are going to take place.

We'll start on that after this upcoming season. We'll start on those improvements and that will be a three-year project to make what already is in my mind the best atmosphere in all of college football even better.

And then just the leadership that we have in our administration. Awesome president in Michael Amiridis. A great board chairman in Thad Westbrook. I would be remiss if I didn't thank Ray Tanner for all he did for the University of South Carolina and for me as our athletic director. Wish him well in retirement but really fired up for the future with our new athletic director Jeremiah Donati and then our deputy athletic director Jeff Crane, both of which were hired since the last time I was here last July.

Those guys are energetic, forward thinking, and demand to take South Carolina athletics to the next level. There is a lot of excitement in Columbia right now. Playing in this league you know every year the schedule will be tough. That's a great schedule that we get to play in this league. As competitor, you want to compete against the best, and that's what we do here in the Southeastern Conference.

It's great hearing from other players when transfer into our place and talk about how different our place is from where they came from in regards to the culture. You hear a lot of the negatives about college athletics right now; there is so many positives in college athletics, so many positives in college football, so many positives at South Carolina.

I used this expression last year and I'll use it again. There is a saying, if you can't have fun at work you got a bad job. Well, I absolutely love what I get to do every single day, and I have a great, great job in Columbia. There is no doubt about it. Top players, they didn't come to South Carolina, the top players on our team didn't come to South Carolina to be average. There is a championship mindset. Like I said a minute ago, our whole mantra in 2025 is to take things farther in 2025 than we did in '24.

I think the pride in Gamecock athletics is at an all-time high. The number of people that stop me on the street or

in an airport when I'm traveling and want to talk about South Carolina athletics is higher than it's ever been. Set a record this season for new season tickets sold at Williams -- Brice Stadium; booster club memberships to our Gamecock club, those memberships are on pace for an all-time high.

And then we have already doubled this year our previous record for philanthropic giving to the University of South Carolina Athletic Department.

48 days until we're back here in Atlanta. Cannot wait to kick things off against Virginia Tech in the Aflac Kickoff game. Anything that Gary Stokin and his team with the Peach Bowl touch is going to be first class. We could not be more fortunate to be playing in such a great event that they put on, the Aflac Kickoff game.

The expectation at our place is to compete for the playoff each and every year, not just be bowl eligible. That's what we're working towards each and every day. That's what the guys have done since January, is to take things farther in 2025 and eager to kick things off here soon when we crank things up.

Any questions?

Q. College football playoff has obviously been discussed quite a bit, and South Carolina was on the brink or maybe should've been in arguably. How important do you think is that the playoffs get expanded, and what are your thoughts about the eight-versus nine-game schedule considering your annual rivalry against Clemson?

SHANE BEAMER: I'm all for expansion to give more teams opportunities. I wanted to make sure -- we have the greatest regular season in any sport in college athletics in my opinion. Every regular season game means something.

You want to make sure that the regular season doesn't lose meaning, and confident that it won't, if we expand. It'll still make a lot more games meaningful in the month of November.

And then gives more teams opportunities to go compete for a championship, which is what everybody wants. We went into the last weekend last year against Clemson, Thanksgiving weekend, and not just us, but there were a lot of teams around the country that felt like they still had an opportunity to get into that 12-team playoff.

I'm all for it.



In regards to the eight and the nine game, competition is a core value of our program. I'm never going to shy away from competition. I just said we just have a schedule we get to play, but we also get to play Clemson every season as well.

That's a non-conference rival that we have that not every school in this league has. Florida plays a non-conference rival from another conference. Georgia does as well. Then Kentucky does.

But I think we're the only ones. I know everyone is going to play Power 4, Power 5 teams in the regular season typically, but in my mind we're always playing nine conference games. If we go to nine we're now playing ten conference games.

We've also got future schedules with Miami, Virginia Tech this year, North Carolina, North Carolina State. So I'm all for competition; I want to make sure that other teams in this league aren't the playing nine SEC games and playing three whatever you want to call them games that they should win. Because not very smart as the head coach of? South Carolina to be doing that if that's what the other teams in this league aren't doing.

Q. How are you doing today?

SHANE BEAMER: Doing well, Ryan. How are you?

Q. Good. You mentioned that your mantra this season is to move forward and continue going further than last year. You did that this offseason by producing another top 25 recruiting class. How are you guys going to put that into action on the field this year?

SHANE BEAMER: Yeah, just continue to develop. After every season, I'm no different than any other coach, you look back at the things you did well the previous season and the things you didn't do well and figure out how you're going to improve and be better.

We did a lot of good last season. There is a lot we need to be better at offensively, defensively, and special teams. We'll go to work at doing that. We'll go to work developing our roster.

And then just realizing that every year it's a brand new year, now more so than any other. Guys will be here this week at SEC Media Day representing their teams that have never played a game in the SEC. I'm not knocking them, but it's making the point that people's rosters are completely different every single season. We'll be picked higher this week than we were last year when ya'll did the picks in Dallas just because we've won nine games and we

bring back our quarterback.

Also understanding that none of that matters because every year is a new year. There are a lot of new faces all across the SEC. For is it's continue to work and try and get better and take this thing farther in '25.

Q. You alluded to do some of the changes in college sports now. When you look at just broadly around governance and the changes around NIL and the college sports commission and everything that is happening there, what is it that you want to see as this sort of iterates moving forward from governance, whether it's the NCAA, College Football Playoff, whoever is that is running this? What do you want to see broadly in that space as a coach?

SHANE BEAMER: That what we say is going to be enforced, is going to happen and be enforced. Because all the talk out there about what's new stuff and this and that, if there is no teeth to it, doesn't matter. It's just going to continue to be. What has been implemented with rev share and the clearinghouse and all that, I see other conferences talking about the negatives about it already.

Let's give this thing time to work and develop. Let's see what it is and not all of a sudden say it's not going to work. I was in DC earlier this year talking about the need to it for national legislation, so been talking a lot about this. But something uniform that has some teeth to it where it is what it's supposed to be, and if somebody is not doing what they're supposed to be doing, it's going to be enforced and there will be repercussions.

If you have that, not to take anything from the players, but let's just let this thing be what it's supposed to be and see what happens if that makes sense.

Q. When you coach an explosive playmaker, how do you find that fine line between saying, we want to you play within the system, play on time, and not limiting that playmaking ability that he naturally has?

SHANE BEAMER: Yeah, it's a fine line, but that's what makes him so good, is just that natural playmaking ability that he has.

I've never told him don't run or anything. Be smart. He's a smart guy. He knows when to get down and try to avoid contact. He'll be even better at that this year for sure.

The thing I would like to see is a lot of his long plays last year from a running standpoint or throws were because, one, protection broke down, or, two, he maybe didn't get rid of the ball as quickly as he should have.



So let's be better in 2025 about when to get rid of the ball, but also with protection so he's not getting hit by four people in the backfield against Clemson and somehow comes out and runs for 40 yards down the field. As cool as that is to watch, I would rather it be the other way.

It's one of those you try not to overcoach it. I'm not a quarterback guru, but I was in college with Michael Vick and I was at Oklahoma with Kyler Murray and Jalen Hurts, and being around those guys that are weapons with their feet, you want to have that as part your offense and also be smart, too, especially in this league with the defenses we play week in, week out.

Q. Saw a stat around the NFL draft that former three stars all ranked outside the top 500 nationally as recruits, turned those guys into three top 50 NFL draft picks. How does that story about development help make it easier to get more elite recruits, and also be able to tell that story to recruits moving forward?

SHANE BEAMER: Yeah, great question. Are you free on official visit weekends next year? No, it's something we pride ourselves on, the development. When we ask high school prospects or transfers, what are you looking for in a school, I know there are more factors at play now than ever, 90% of the time the word "development" is going to come out their mouth. Whether it's a transfer, they want to be developed, or a high school senior, they want to be developed. It's hard to argue that against our blueprint, if you will, because of what guys have done.

Whether it be Nick Emmanwori who was a three-star recruit coming out of high school and was an early second round pick this year, DQ Smith, high school quarterback and getting ready to be a four-year starter and have a chance to go on from the next level.

Or from a transfer standpoint, Demetrius Knight who transferred in from another school or had been at two previous schools and one of those school caught us and said, that guy can't play for you. Ends up being an all-conference type guy and being the first guy drafted from South Carolina.

So credit the young men and what they're about from a character standpoint. Also give some credit to our program, the culture, the people in our program, the whole development aspect. The weight room with Luke Day, the training room with Clint Haggard, nutrition with Yimy Rodriguez, character development with Derrick Moore.

We've got a great thing from all across our building that's into developing the total player and total student-athlete,

and those guys are great next examples of that as well. We're not perfect. I understand that. When you talk about the culture we have in place it's hard to argue with the results from a development standpoint.

Q. How do you balance trying to turn the page on last season's success while still trying to emulate some of those elements that you brought it?

SHANE BEAMER: Yeah, thanks for the question. You look back at last season and there is a lot of momentum going into this season because of what we did last year. There is no question about it. And we have a lot of guys coming back.

But I would say a few things. One, it's realizing that just because it happened last season doesn't mean it just automatically happens this year. I mentioned it upstairs with the electronic media. There are plenty of examples of teams across the country every year in college football that they're getting pumped up all summer long and then go out week one and get smacked in the face and never recover.

That happens every year. It's because just because it happened last year doesn't mean it happens this year. For our team it's making sure our guys realize all the work that went into 2024, it's going to take all that and more to go where we want to go in 2025.

So building on the things we did last season without a doubt, and then looking back at things we didn't do well and making sure we improve those. People want to talk about the close losses we had last season, the two-point loss to Alabama, three-point loss to LSU. I realize that. But nobody wants to talk about the four-point win against Old Dominion. Then we had a three-point win against Clemson and a four-point win against Missouri.

So understanding in this league every Saturday is a battle. It's a fine line between winning and losing and understanding we got to be doing ever detail, every small thing, even though they're not small things, to get where we want to go this year.

Q. To Ben's question, what is it -- do you expect other coaches, other programs, when an enforcement comes down from the college sports commission to actually do what's best for the sport as a whole and not just work in their own interest?

SHANE BEAMER: Yeah, I would hope so. Every coach standing up here this week and across the country would say obviously they want their program to be successful, but I think we all want college football and college athletics to be successful without a doubt, doing what's right for the



betterment of the sport.

All I meant to Ben's question was if there is rules in place that we all agree on and someone doesn't do what they're supposed to be doing, 20 years ago with NCAA rules or now with rev share and the clearinghouse and all that, there needs to be teeth to the enforcement otherwise nothing will change and we'll be right back to where we were.

Q. Used to work in college football recruiting personnel side. I think we briefly worked together at Georgia your first year. Majority of the misses in college football are on the personal football character side of things. You guys have a retention rate much higher than a lot of other teams. Is there specifically something there? Chris talked about development. Are you doing anything you feel like is cutting edge on the front end evaluating this kid, is he great teammate, or is it he's just coming in and he's by osmosis blending into your culture?

SHANE BEAMER: No, great question. It's a lot of that for sure. You want to make sure you're bringing the right people into your program. It's harder than ever to do that. The amount of time that we as coaches are allowed on the road recruiting, it's limited. Particularly for a transfer portal guy, guys goes in the portal, we may recruit a guy in high school for three years, guy goes in the transfer portal, you got about six hours to get him scheduled and get him on official visit because other people are.

So doing as much research as you can on guys, and then probably in a lot of ways, and I am talking portal specifically now, when a guy comes in on a visit, I've never coached in the NFL, but it's probably very much like a free agent visit in the NFL where you're trying to find out as much as you can about this while he's on your campus.

It's recruiting, don't get me wrong, but it's making sure he's a fit, a fit for and you you're a fit for him, without a doubt. There is no question about it.

I think it goes back, guys have to choose to come to South Carolina or whatever school for the right reasons. There is a money aspect involved now that hasn't been there before. I get that. If that's the only reason they're probably going to be in the portal or looking to go in the portal or looking to go in the portal every year. We have a lot of guys at Carolina, our retention rate is strong; appreciate you saying that. We've got a lot of guys that came here for the right reasons, because of the culture, the people that we have here.

But it's hard. We've not done great on some guys as well

that we brought in that didn't work out. I think if you just rely on bringing the right people into your program, being willing to walk away from guys that don't fit -- and I rely on our players a lot, too. We have had guys on our team that have come to me after we brought somebody on a visit and said, uh-uh, coach. He ain't going to fit what we're about. We've walked away from guys, being willing to do that.

Now more than ever in college football I think culture is more important than it's ever been. You screw that up, it can torpedo your entire team pretty quickly.

Q. What's been said and written about LaNorris in the offseason, what's been your perspective on seeing those conversations?

SHANE BEAMER: I think LaNorris, it's exciting to see that. You're talking about a guy that is very humble, very hard working, and has not changed. It is what it is. His life, his world has changed from last year at this time to right now because of what he did last season.

But he's got a great family around him. He came back in January knowing the things he needed to work on to get better at. He's done a great job of working hard and improving, all while staying grounded and staying the same person.

I think we're going to be better around LaNorris as well on the offense, more depth and competition at pretty much every position I feel like. That's going to help him. He doesn't have to be Superman for us. Just continue to be the person he is, the leader that he is, and the player that he is, and watch him continue to take the next step.

Certainly it's different for him. I think he's done a great job handling it and is continuing to focus on the things that are important for sure.

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