

Go Gamecocks

[Previous Story](#)

[Next Story](#)

'It was amazing': Michael Washington takes life lessons to football field

By Brad Senkiw

Anderson Independent Mail October 20, 2014

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Google Plus](#) [Reddit](#) [E-mail](#) [Print](#)



South Carolina defensive end Michael Washington (95) started during the Gamecocks game against Furman at Williams-Brice stadium in Columbia, SC, Saturday. Washington is a 27 year-old marine veteran. 10/18/14.

TIM DOMINICK — tdominick@thestate.com

Michael Washington had the "BGs" – or "bubble guts," as he called them – before South Carolina's game against Furman last Saturday.

It's not like the 27-year-old junior defensive end hadn't been in pressure-packed situations where a lot was expected of him before in his life. After all, he spent four years in the Marines.

But in his first collegiate game, Washington didn't feel like he was playing for himself.

"I wasn't nervous to play. I was nervous because I didn't want to mess up for the guys," Washington said. "On defense, if one person's not in the gap, something big can happen."

That's an important life lesson he's learned during his long road to playing time for the Gamecocks.

Washington had a chance to play college ball right out of Allendale-Fairfax High School, where he had 95 tackles his junior year as a safety. He had offers from USC, Clemson and N.C. State, and he was prepared to be part of the Wolfpack. But then something changed his mind, and Washington instead enlisted to serve his country.

"To tell you the truth, I still don't know why I did it," Washington said.

It did him good, he said, to learn to work with others.

"It helped me to be more of a team player," Washington said about the Marines. "Coming out of high school, I was kind of all about me. Going into the military it was a lot of teamwork. It helped me out a lot."

That showed against the Paladins. Out of the Marines, he went to USC Aiken and planned on coming straight to USC, but the current walk-on spent last year on the practice squad after transferring in from S.C. State, where he never played a game but wanted to be with his cousin for a season.

Washington didn't play last Saturday because he's a four-star recruit or the next Jadeveon Clowney. The 6-foot-3 converted defensive back, who put on over 30 pounds in the Marines, played out of necessity.

"We're dropping like flies," USC defensive coordinator Lorenzo Ward said about the defensive line, which has been ravaged by injuries the last month.

Washington has been practicing well, USC coach Steve Spurrier said last week. He got his chance against Furman – and he didn't let his team down.

Right after a fumble by USC QB Dylan Thompson at the Gamecock 26-yard line, the Paladins looked poised to tie the game, or at least cut into South Carolina's 7-point lead in the first quarter.

But Phillip Dukes stripped Furman RB Hank McCloud at the USC 11, and there was Washington, right where he needed to be to recover the fumble and shift momentum back to the Gamecocks.

"On the play I had the quarterback. So when the running back went I just swiped for the ball, and the next thing I know it was on the ground so I just jumped on it," Washington said. "It was amazing."

Ward described Washington's day as "some good, some bad." And the former Marine even said himself that he missed a few assignments. Both thought he played OK.

But Washington made his impact on the Gamecocks long before he fell on the on that football in the 41-10 win over Furman – both as a teammate and as a Marine.

"He has been through a lot. I'm rooting for individuals like him," USC offensive line coach Shawn Elliott said. "He doesn't have to be out here doing this. It's the furthest thing he has to be doing. He could be getting his degree, carrying on with his life."

“Being in the military and coming out here to play football, putting in the time and effort, he has had some ups and downs. He certainly has, but the fight is in him. That’s what you want.”

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Google Plus](#) [Reddit](#) [E-mail](#) [Print](#)

Join The Conversation

Go Gamecocks is pleased to provide this opportunity to share information, experiences and observations about what's in the news. Some of the comments may be reprinted elsewhere in the site or in the newspaper. We encourage lively, open debate on the issues of the day, and ask that you refrain from profanity, hate speech, personal comments and remarks that are off point. Thank you for taking the time to offer your thoughts.

[Commenting FAQs](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

[Email Newsletters >](#)

[Manage newsletter subscriptions](#)

[Tablets >](#)

[Apps and services for tablet devices](#)

[Mobile >](#)

[Apps and services for your mobile phone](#)

[Social Media >](#)

[Get updates via Facebook and Twitter](#)

[e-Edition >](#)

[Your daily paper delivered to your computer](#)

[Home Delivery >](#)

[Manage your home delivery account](#)

[Digital Subscriptions >](#)

[Manage your online subscriptions](#)

careerbuilder **dealsaver** **FIND & SAVE**