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usc notes

Notebook: K.J. Brent earns rotation spot

By DAVID CLONINGER

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Wide receiver K.J. Brent

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Steve Spurrier Jr. usually has picked a group of six receivers per game who have earned the right to play. He'll have nine ready to go, but as long as the top six don't get hurt or are doing well, he'll lean on them.

With the first game looming, redshirt junior K.J. Brent has locked up a top-six spot.

"I definitely feel this is my most confident year, so far, since I've been here," Brent said. "Anything coach

needs me to do, I'm going to do my best to do it and be the best that I can be.”

Brent is surrounded by Damiere Byrd, Nick Jones, Pharoh Cooper and Shaq Roland, and consideration might also be given to Shamier Jeffery, Carlton Heard, Kane Whitehurst and Tyshun “Deebo” Samuel. If he proves he can do well, he'll stay in the lineup.

“He's on special teams, which I admire about him,” Spurrier Jr. said. “He's ready to get on the field and do some things. He's just got to make the most of his opportunities once he gets in there. Certainly, first game, he'll be in there running around.”

Spurrier Jr. said that Byrd, Jones, Cooper and Roland are his top four, with Jeffery and Brent the next two and Heard and Whitehurst the two after that. The Gamecocks brought in touted receiver prospects – Shaq Davidson, Terry Googer and Samuel, who had a fine preseason camp – but they aren't likely to play.

“Right now, they are not ready to play, but they could be in two or three weeks,” Spurrier Jr. said. “They all provide something unique. I really do believe all of them are going to be excellent players. Whether they play this year or redshirt this year, we won't completely identify that until about week three or four.”

Images It's been a preseason of reflection for Steve Spurrier, the coach talking about how much has changed in his 10 years at South Carolina. He mentioned some of his old players – Kenny McKinley, Carlos Thomas – during one of his first media sessions of camp and brought up another at a recent banquet.

Asked what his most challenging season was, Spurrier picked his 1987 campaign at Duke. The Blue Devils went 5-6, the only losing season Spurrier has had as a college head coach.

“We lost a bunch of close games, and I thought I was on the hot seat,” Spurrier said. “And my athletic director said, ‘You've actually done pretty well, Steve.’ ”

Duke lost five of its six by seven points or less, including by one, two and three. The biggest loss was when Virginia flattened the Devils 42-17 in Spurrier's ACC debut.

“We were in every game but one,” Spurrier said.

Numbers USC has a chance to extend its nation-leading home winning streak to 19 games against Texas A&M. The Gamecocks have extended their school-record streak of being ranked to 65 weeks, which is fifth in the country behind Alabama, LSU, Oregon and Oklahoma.

USC's last senior class departed with a school-record 42 wins in four seasons. This year's class is sitting on 33.

It's here The Gamecocks began their regular game-week preparation on Saturday. Spurrier will hold his first weekly news conference at 1 p.m. Sunday to talk about Texas A&M.

Injury report As Shawn Elliott said he would, C Cody Waldrop practiced on Saturday after missing three days with an oblique strain. He should be fine for Texas A&M. DE Mason Harris also was back at practice after a similar oblique injury.

Players who did not practice or wore yellow jerseys were TE K.C. Crosby (right foot), DE Blake McClain (foot), OL Brock Stadnik (knee), DE Michael Washington (back), DE Devin Washington (hamstring), OL Mike Matulis (left knee), CB Jamari Smith (left foot) and OL Donell Stanley (wrist).

Next The Gamecocks will practice at 4:15 p.m. on Sunday. It is closed to the public.

Staff writer Josh Kendall contributed to this report

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