



Physical play gets Gurley on the field

[John Del Bianco \(/User/John%20Del%20Bianco\)](#)

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The South Carolina defense as a whole has struggled for most of the 2014 season, but according to secondary coach **[Grady Brown \(http://247sports.com/Coach/Grady-Brown-1389\)](http://247sports.com/Coach/Grady-Brown-1389)**, there has always been physicality present in one of his players, junior safety **[T.J. Gurley \(http://247sports.com/Player/TJ-Gurley-8561\)](http://247sports.com/Player/TJ-Gurley-8561)**.



Junior safety T.J. Gurley

As the Gamecocks (6-5) prepare for their in-state rivalry game with Clemson, Brown thinks that the physicality Gurley has shown and the presence he is as a hard-hitter in the defensive backfield has helped the group play better as a whole.

"T.J. plays physical. He is probably the most physical defensive back we have there," Brown said. "He cares a lot, he plays hard, and he chases the ball. He's doing a good job."

Gurley, a Cairo, Georgia native, is tied for the team lead in tackles with 72. He does lead the team in unassisted tackles with 45 and also has three pass breakups, a tackle for a loss of three yards and an interception.

The 5-foot-10 strong safety has started at the position in nine of the team's 11 games this year. He's been behind senior safety/cornerback Brison Williams over the past two contests, but has still played a majority of the games and is slated to get the start at strong safety against Clemson on Saturday.

Gurley's physical play was on display in last weekend's 37-12 victory over South Alabama. A Jaguars receiver coming across the middle of the back of the defense caught a pass and took one step before getting shouldered to the ground by Gurley who came charging in from his right side, jarring the ball loose for an incomplete pass.

"It was good to see him make that hit when we were playing in the middle of the field against South Alabama," Brown said. "That's one area he and I would like to see him make more plays. It was good to see him make a play in that area."

More physicality will be needed by Gurley for the defense to play well in a hostile environment this weekend. He has shown to be able to find the ball well when in the hands of a receiver and seems to always be in makeup of a tackle play after play.

There were some bright spots against South Alabama. There was also some missed tackles. Again, that's kind of been our nemesis off and on this year. We have to do a better job of tackling in space. [Rico McWilliams \(http://247sports.com/Player/Rico-McWilliams-12085\)](http://247sports.com/Player/Rico-McWilliams-12085) did come up and make two physical tackles before his injury. There were some bright spots and things to definitely build on.

Talk about not really knowing which quarterback you'll face this weekend.

Well Clemson is Clemson. Regardless of who is at quarterback, they are going to do what they do on offense. They have a really good offense and they do a good job of scheming you. They run the ball well and they can throw the ball well. The quarterback part of it, I'm not sure how much that changes a whole lot. You just have to go out and be prepared to make adjustments, be prepared to contain explosive plays, passing or running and just go out there and play fast and match their intensity.

Is there another team that you've seen that helps that game plan or are they their own team?

I would like to think it helps, but I'm not sure. We'll have to wait until Saturday to see if it helps, but just with the guys that we have in the secondary, every play is an opportunity to get better. Playing against some of the team in the past, yes, it provides us an opportunity to play well this weekend. Clemson is Clemson. It's a big game for us this weekend and we have to execute.