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## Time to see Connor Mitch

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No, that headline does not read that it is time to bench [Dylan Thompson](#) (<http://247sports.com/Player/Dylan-Thompson-2706>). It's just time to see what [Connor Mitch](#) (<http://247sports.com/Player/Connor-Mitch-12926>) can do on the field in a, you know, competitive game.



It may be time to see what No. 2 quarterback Connor Mitch can do.

Thompson has played pretty good football for the better part of the 2014 season. He's fifth in the SEC averaging 262.8 yards passing per game and has led the offense to 33 points or more on four occasions in the first six games. By contrast, Connor Shaw hit that point total in five games last season, including the bowl.

The offense is averaging 34.2 points per game, which is slightly ahead of last year's season average.

Assuming South Carolina makes it to a bowl game this season, a feat not assured at this point, Thompson is on pace to set the school's single-season record for yards passing. The mark is currently held by Todd Ellis, who threw for 3,206 yards in 1987.

Thompson's completion percentage is up this year as he's hitting at a 61.1 percent clip, an improvement from his 55 percent career average.

Overall, the offense has been successful, even though the Gamecocks (3-3, 2-3) are 11th in the Southeastern Conference in rushing. Much of the offense's success can be attributed to Thompson.

All starting quarterbacks, regardless of the level, receive too much blame in losses and likely too much credit in wins. Thompson has never been one to seek glory in victory and is always first to shoulder blame in defeat. He hasn't done anything to deserve being benched as the starting quarterback.

That doesn't mean [Connor Mitch \(http://247sports.com/Player/Connor-Mitch-12926\)](http://247sports.com/Player/Connor-Mitch-12926) shouldn't see the field. In fact, it's time to put him out there.

Let's leave stars and recruiting rankings completely out of the conversation. Mitch was the second quarterback that position coach [G.A. Mangus \(http://247sports.com/Coach/GA-Mangus-7\)](http://247sports.com/Coach/GA-Mangus-7) targeted as a part of the 2013 class with the first was Christian Hackenberg, a now two-year starter at Penn State and is 11-6 and likely first-round draft pick. Maybe it was a recruiting ploy or maybe it was how he really felt but head coach [Steve Spurrier \(http://247sports.com/Coach/Steve-Spurrier-4\)](http://247sports.com/Coach/Steve-Spurrier-4) sent a handwritten note to Mitch explaining how it would extend his coaching career if the rising senior were to sign with the Gamecocks.

Second in North Carolina High School Association history in four different passing categories for a career, Mitch enrolled early at South Carolina. He's been a part of the program for 22 months now and has had plenty of time to learn the offense.

Mitch caught the eye of Spurrier during the first fall practice of the year going out of his way to call the redshirt freshman "much-improved." He touted Mitch's decision-making and passing prowess. He liked what he saw from Mitch with regard to his physical ability.

What stood out to Mangus was how Mitch has developed off the field. While it's never been publicly stated what went wrong, Mitch found himself in Spurrier's doghouse in spring practice. There was never a suspension and he was never told to stay away from the practice field, but he had a day or two where he didn't receive his standard number of practice



Starting quarterback Dylan

two where he didn't receive his standard number of practice reps.

After being whacked with the newspaper for some sort of spring transgression, Mitch emerged from the coaches' doghouse for doing well on the field and off of it.

"He did well academically, he did well in workouts, in the weight room and all those things," Mangus said earlier this fall. "I think it's just maturity. He has a little bit better knowledge; he watched film and did things to get ready to play."

Any type of public praise of backup quarterbacks basically stopped after the first scrimmage. The message coming from the coaching staff has been is to quit obsessing over the backup quarterbacks, Thompson is the guy.

The Gamecocks have been focused on the season and winning the SEC East, which is a goal almost certainly out of reach. Thompson then and right now presents the best opportunity to win games. With a 3-3 record, it's time to give someone else some field time though.

Maybe Thompson isn't the only quarterback on the roster capable of winning football games. During his first three seasons, he had some big late-game moments, including the game-winning touchdown pass to beat Michigan in the Outback Bowl. He played his best football in the win against Clemson in 2012 late as well.

In the last two possessions the last two weeks, Thompson is 4-for-12 for 19 yards and two interceptions. Against Missouri, he was 2-for-7 netting zero yards while against Kentucky, he was able to notch just one first down in his two completions for 19 yards.

Having a bye week followed by an FCS opponent is the perfect time to get Mitch, or sophomore [Perry Orth \(http://247sports.com/Player/Perry-Orth-28143\)](http://247sports.com/Player/Perry-Orth-28143), some meaningful time on the field. Not a series of hand-offs at the end of a Coastal Carolina-like blowout, but some true, meaningful snaps in live game action with a first-team offensive line and receivers against a college defense that doesn't know what's coming.

It's not time to bench [Dylan Thompson \(http://247sports.com/Player/Dylan-Thompson-2706\)](http://247sports.com/Player/Dylan-Thompson-2706), but it's time to see [Connor Mitch \(http://247sports.com/Player/Connor-Mitch-12926\)](http://247sports.com/Player/Connor-Mitch-12926). It's not time to see what four stars looks like, but it is time to see what prompted Spurrier's note.

It's time to see what Mitch can do against Furman, then go from there.

Starting quarterback Dylan Thompson could very well end up setting the South Carolina record for passing yards in a season, set by Todd Ellis in 1987.

