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Matulis out till October; Smith out for year

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Two days after suffering a serious left knee injury in South Carolina's second scrimmage of preseason camp, hard-luck redshirt junior Mike Matulis could be sidelined until mid-October.

Steve Spurrier speculated Matulis, slated to start at right guard, might be able to return around mid-season when he spoke with reporters following a 2-1/2 hour workout at the Proving Grounds.

"I think they did a MRI and they're going to try to treat him for a while and not operate," Spurrier said Monday night.

For the moment, Matulis has been diagnosed with a severely sprained left knee. He will be reevaluated in a couple of weeks, USC announced.

"We don't need anybody else hurt, that's for sure," Spurrier said. "Hopefully, Mike may have a chance to get back by mid-year. We'll just have to wait and see. They're going to try to treat him for a while and not operate.

Matulis missed the entire 2013 season after undergoing right shoulder surgery on August 9, taking his redshirt season the process. He injured his left shoulder during the 2012 season before season-ending surgery was required following the Florida game.

"Offensive linemen don't have to plant and cut and jump too much," Spurrier said. "If he can stay solid in there and he's got a pretty good range of motion, they can play offensive line without a real super knee. So we'll see if we can get him to that point."

Cody Waldrop and Cody Gibson could shift to right guard in order to fill the void, Spurrier said. Will Sport and D.J. Park were listed as the backups behind Matulis on the preseason depth chart.

In addition to Spurrier saying the USC medical staff would adopt a wait-and-see approach with Matulis, USC disclosed another piece of bad news Monday night - sophomore cornerback Jamari Smith suffered a broken left foot in Saturday's scrimmage and is sidelined for the 2014 season.

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Smith's injury leaves USC with four scholarship cornerbacks that are not true freshman - Brison Williams, Rico McWilliams, Ali Groves and Sidney Rhodes. As a result, secondary coach Grady Brown might have to look to the crop of incoming freshman more than he planned in 2014.

USC began preparations on Monday for Texas A&M, the opening game opponent in 10 days at Williams-Brice Stadium (6 p.m., ESPN), as the Gamecocks fielded a scout team for the first time during preseason camp.

"They're a very good team and they're going to be out to get us," Spurrier said. "They'll be fired up and pumped up and our fans need to treat them just like Clemson, Georgia and everybody else we play. They're coming to kick our tails and hopefully we're not going to let them do it. It won't be an easy one, that's for sure."

NOTES:

-- USC linebacker coach Kirk Botkin said T.J. Holloman (44 tackles in 2013) is playing with more physicality than a season ago. "He's always been great in pass coverage and always been a great cover guy, but he's taken that role and been a lot more physical day in and day out. Right now, he has the starting job and it's a close competition between everybody. We're 10 days out, so we'll see who's starting and who's not. We'll keep rolling people in."

-- Botkin said USC has been dividing practice time evenly between the 4-2-5 and 3-4.

-- Botkin on Texas A&M naming Kenny Hill as the starting QB: "He's an athletic kid. I've seen him play in a couple of games last year. He's a good player. We're going to have our hands full." Hill was one of the backup quarterbacks behind Johnny Manziel last season and played sparingly as a true freshman.

-- Botkin on Saturday's scrimmage: "We had a pretty good scrimmage. We started a little slow, but they finished up strong. We're competing and still working."

-- Defensive line coach Deke Adams said if he had to put four linemen out there tonight for a game, he would start Gerald Dixon and Darius English at defensive end and Gerald Dixon Jr. and J.T. Surratt at defensive tackle in the 4-3 alignment.

-- Adams on Kenny Hill: "We just found out yesterday (he would be the starting QB). We're going to start watching some film. I know he was the Gatorade Player of the Year (in 2012 in the state of Texas). For a guy coming in here in his first start, it will be a tough environment. We just need our fans to continue doing what they've been doing. We'll be prepared for whoever is lined up against us."

-- The Gamecocks return to the Proving Ground on Tuesday at 7:15 p.m. The practice is closed to fans and the media.

-- Spurrier will conduct his first call-in show of the 2014 season on Thursday at 7 p.m. from Wild Wings Cafe in the Vista. USC cheerleaders, the dance team and Cockey will be on hand for a pep rally.

If you have any questions about this feature or wish to discuss it, please visit [The Insiders Forum](#), Gamecock Central's members-only message board for Gamecock fans.

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