

Brent rewarded for patience

Willie T. Smith III, wtsmith@greenvillenews.com 6:10 p.m. EDT September 11, 2014



(Photo: MYKAL McELDOWNEY, Staff)

COLUMBIA – Since arriving at South Carolina in 2011, wide receiver K. J. Brent has been patiently waiting his turn.

This past Saturday, with the Gamecocks holding a tenuous four-point lead over East Carolina with 8:36 remaining in the third quarter, quarterback Dylan Thompson passed to Brent wide open in the endzone for a 16-yard touchdown.

For Brent, who entered his junior season with five receptions and no touchdowns, it was the moment for which he had been waiting.

“K.J. played well out there,” USC coach Steve Spurrier said. “In fact, we gave him a game ball.”

“K.J. Brent, good for him,” said USC wide receivers coach Steve Spurrier Jr. “As a coach, you always want guys to play. But, when it’s tight, they’re never stressed, but you’re nervous for them.”

With sophomore Pharoh Cooper’s availability for Saturday’s game against No. 6 Georgia in doubt because of a foot injury, Brent could be looking at his first career start one week after his first touchdown.

Brent worked with the first team offense Wednesday in the No. 23 Gamecocks’ ‘Z’ receiver position and appears to be the front-runner to start there if Cooper can’t play.

“Everyone feels confident in him and he feels confident in himself,” Spurrier Jr. said. “There are a lot of positives there. Somebody’s got to play. We’ll see. But, yeah, he’s ready to play.”

For the time being, Brent is going with the flow and working hard in practice, putting him in position to see more action on the field.

“I felt a lot more confident about how I played this year,” Brent said. “It was the most confidence I’ve had since I’ve been here. Whenever they called my number, I was just ready. Whatever the coaches need me to do, I’ll do. It’s up to them, but we’ll see.”

Brent is confident Cooper will be healthy enough to play against the Bulldogs, but he is ready to play if he’s not.

“We were all getting in there -- all the receivers getting around, down one guy -- but, like I say, he should be back,” said Brent. “I don’t really know, but I don’t think it is too serious.”

Brent has accomplished at least one thing -- the coaching staff now has confidence he can deliver.

“We said he needed a few snaps,” said Spurrier Jr. “He got a few. Even when that touchdown was called, I knew Pharoh was on the bench. I said, let it go and see what happens.

“He played 11 or 12 snaps, but played well -- did a lot of good things and got a lot of momentum going into this game, which helps.”

SATURDAY’S GAME

No. 6 Georgia at No. 23 USC

3:30 p.m., Williams-Brice Stadium, WSPA

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