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South Carolina's top 10 most important players: No. 4, J.T. Surratt



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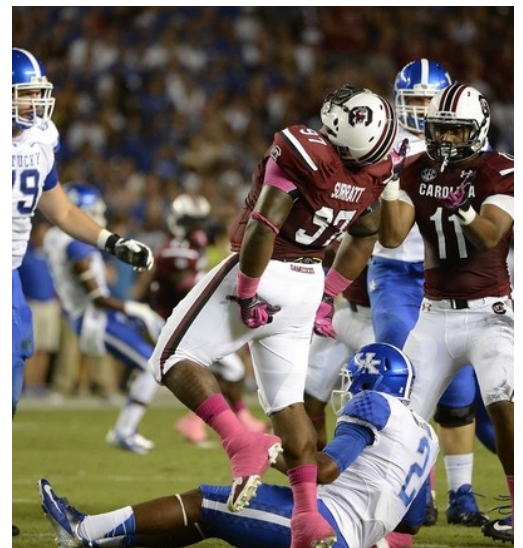
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To help get you through college football's slow days of early July -- before conference media days launch the preseason festivities -- we've counted down the 10 most important South Carolina Gamecocks and 10 most important Clemson Tigers for 2014. One Gamecock and one Tiger every day, so you can spend part of your summer studying the players who will make a difference for your team come autumn.

SOUTH CAROLINA'S NO. 4 - J.T. SURRATT, SENIOR, DEFENSIVE TACKLE

It was easy to overlook J.T. Surratt last season. Sharing the defensive line with Kelcy Quarles, Chaz Sutton and some guy named Jadeveon Clowney, his production was often overshadowed.



Surratt's reality has flipped on its head entering this fall.

South Carolina defensive end J.T. Surratt will shoulder the responsibility of being the Gamecocks lone returning starter on the defensive line.


He is the leader, the one who will dictate how the rest of South Carolina's defensive line plays. All eyes are on him, waiting to see what the fifth-year senior will do for his encore.

Perhaps, it could be argued, Surratt's junior season shouldn't have been overlooked. Yes, Clowney got the headlines, Quarles got the sacks, and Sutton was a valuable senior leader. But, next in line, Surratt was always solid.

As the featured member of the Gamecocks' defensive front, Surratt could emerge as a star this season in a program known for churning out talented defensive linemen. He is stout against the run, and athletic enough to penetrate up field on the pass rush.

His disruption inside will also be important protection for edge rushers like Gerald Dixon and Darius English. Surratt could demand extra blockers, freeing up his teammates.

South Carolina has plenty of holes to fill on its defensive line. It won't be easy replacing Clowney, Quarles and Sutton. Surratt, a proven talent, is one less thing defensive coordinator Lorenzo Ward and defensive line coach Deke Adams have to worry about. That peace of mind makes him invaluable.



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