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## Who's No. 2? Connor Mitch in the lead ... for now

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Quarterback Connor Mitch

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Photo gallery and video from practice, plus post-practice video interviews with Steve Spurrier and Dylan Thompson

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As fabled as Connor Shaw was the past two years, South Carolina felt just as confident in his backup. When Shaw was banged up – a frequent occurrence, as Shaw fearlessly threw his body into whatever scrum was nearest – Dylan Thompson had the experience and the moxie to do what was needed to win.

A year later, there is no question that it's Thompson's year.

But the Gamecocks want to have two, if not three, quarterbacks ready, which has Steve Spurrier and G.A. Mangus spinning the carousel of backups throughout preseason camp.

"We have a bunch of guys who love football," Mangus said. "They love competing, but they love each other, too. That's hard to find in today's world. When it's their shot, you never know."

Redshirt freshman Connor Mitch, redshirt sophomore Brendan Nosovitch and sophomore Perry Orth are the top three candidates as Thompson's backup, with sophomore Pharoh Cooper available to check in as wildcat QB.

While Mitch entered fall as the No. 2 man on the depth chart, there's too much remaining in preseason camp to cement him into the role.

The chart read Mitch-Orth-Nosovitch as camp began, something that stung Nosovitch but also let him know there's plenty of time to rise. Despite Spurrier finding him a new role at tight end, and Nosovitch appreciating it, his mission hasn't changed.

"The main goal is to play quarterback here one day, but if I'm going to get some time on the field, that'd be great," said Nosovitch, who played in three games last year and scored one touchdown. "Obviously, (fourth is) not where I want to be. There's still three weeks left of camp, so I'm going to go out and prove myself."

Orth has drawn Spurrier's praise for throwing a tight spiral, and he won the Most Improved Quarterback award in the spring. While he has not played in a game, the walk-on has earned a look.

"If the team needs me to be on the sideline signaling plays, I'll do that," Orth said. "If they need me to be out there and be the second-team guy, I'll do that. I'm just trying to have fun and help the team win."

Mitch, the heir apparent after splitting first-team reps with Thompson in the first days of camp, had a fine spring and great summer. The 6-foot-3 North Carolinian toted a bag full of credentials with him to USC, but he isn't taking his position on the depth chart for granted.

"That's not up to me," he said. "That's up to the coaches to decide. I'm just going to try to get better each play and move the ball down the field."

The two-headed system of Shaw and Thompson was a perfect split – Shaw was a good passer and great runner, Thompson was vice versa. While Thompson has shown that he can run, who knows if he'll do it as often or as well as Shaw did. Will that affect USC's zone-read offense and the opposing defense, since it might not have to always assign a spy for the running QB?

Those are questions that have yet to be answered. The three backups are mobile, although not to Shaw's extent.

"Connor Shaw could do it all, but we don't have his kind of speed. We're all more pocket passers," Mitch said. "We can all make plays outside the pocket, but maybe it won't be running down the field."

Thus far in camp, Thompson and Mitch have taken the majority of the reps while Nosovitch and Orth have split

the rest. Mangus and Spurrier remind them that things can change in the air-mailing of a wide-open receiver – Nosovitch started the spring at No. 2 above Mitch, with Orth not listed.

“I guess somebody has to be listed somewhere,” Mangus said. “Over this next week or so, we’ll get some scrimmage time and kind of see where we go. It is nice to know we’ve got some guys that can go in there.”

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