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Practice report: Physical presence elevates T.J. Holloman at MLB

Corner battle between Al Harris Jr. and Rico McWilliams is close, Grady Brown says

By David Cloninger

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T.J. Holloman

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It's not that big of a surprise. T.J. Holloman started three games at linebacker last year and recorded 44 tackles.

Yet there were still some eyebrows raised when Sunday's depth chart was released and Holloman, not third-leading tackler Kaiwan Lewis, was listed as starting middle linebacker.

"He just brought a little more physical presence," South Carolina linebackers coach Kirk Botkin said on Sunday. "He's always been really good in pass coverage, has some great ball skills. He's just been a little more physical in his play, a little more consistent. It's still a close race."

Holloman and Lewis are battling for the role with four days before No. 21 Texas A&M visits for the season-opener. Lewis actually started more games than 2013 leading tackler Skai Moore last year while Holloman had

three in Lewis' place against Kentucky, Arkansas and Tennessee.

"Spread teams and stuff like that, we probably like (Holloman) a little bit better," Botkin said. "Kaiwan does a good job, too. It's just a slight lead right now. Kaiwan's still pushing."

McWilliams moving

Sophomore Rico McWilliams has been a pleasant surprise and is "very, very close" to freshman Al Harris at starting cornerback, secondary coach Grady Brown said. It's possible McWilliams could supplant Harris as the starter before Thursday. McWilliams, Harris and Brison Williams are the clear top three cornerbacks, but true freshmen Wesley Green and Chris Lammons will be ready if called on, Brown said. **NECK AND NECK**

The depth chart has Perry Orth or Connor Mitch as Dylan Thompson's backup. Orth has done well enough in preseason camp to pull into a tie with Mitch, who was thought to be the undisputed No. 2.

"We're hoping one of them will take a step forward and we can say, 'Hey, you're going in second if something happens,'" coach Steve Spurrier said during his Sunday press conference. "Who knows? We may not have to for a while."

GIANT HBC

USC hung an 85-foot banner of Spurrier on the west side of Williams-Brice Stadium on Saturday. Spurrier said he hadn't looked at it yet.

"(Ray Tanner) said, 'We're going to put a picture of you up there,'" Spurrier said. "I said, 'As long as it's your decision and not mine.' It wasn't my idea."

The banner mentions that Spurrier is USC's all-time winningest coach.

"Hopefully we can keep winning here at Williams-Brice," Spurrier said. "I don't want people coming by there throwing eggs at it. And that could happen. If we go bad, that could happen, as we all know."

Injury report

Players who did not practice or wore yellow jerseys were: TE K.C. Crosby (right foot), DE Blake McClain (foot), OL Brock Stadnik (knee), DE Devin Washington (hamstring), OL Mike Matulis (left knee), CB Jamari Smith (left foot) and OL Donell Stanley (wrist).

Next

The Gamecocks will practice at 6:15 p.m. on Monday. It is closed to the public.

Staff writer Josh Kendall contributed to this report

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