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# Gamecocks hope Dixon brothers - Gerald and Gerald - spell double trouble for opposing teams

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COLUMBIA - The invisible line dividing their school districts in York County might as well have been a moat.

Gerald Dixon played on one side, lining up next to Jadeveon Clowney at South Pointe High School. Gerald Dixon Jr. played on the other, as part of a Northwestern High School team that would go undefeated his senior year. Born just over four months apart, living a few miles apart, the half-brothers started together only as tykes or in special events like the Shrine Bowl -

until Thursday night, when South Carolina opens its season

No. 9 USC vs. No. 21 Texas  
A&M

Where: Williams-Brice  
Stadium, Columbia

When: 6 p.m., Thursday

TV: SEC Network

The loss of three starters on the defensive line has opened the door for a family affair, with Dixon and Dixon Jr. - known to teammates and each other as "G" and "Junior," respectively - both

slated to start for the ninth-ranked Gamecocks. Dixon Jr. is a junior defensive tackle, Dixon a sophomore defensive end. Together with fellow new starter Darius English at defensive end, they comprise the successors to departed standouts Chaz Sutton, Kelcy Quarles, and Clowney, the latter the No. 1 selection in the most recent NFL draft.

For the Dixons, though, there is a personal element to this game that's been a long time in coming, seeing as how the half-brothers haven't played together with any regularity since they won a state championship in elementary school rec league ball.

Their father, Gerald Dixon Sr., played linebacker at South Carolina in 1990-91 before going on to a 10-year NFL career, and is now an assistant coach at Rock Hill High School. G and Junior have been lobbying teammates in an attempt to augment their own personal allotments of four tickets apiece, expecting a strong family contingent at Williams-Brice Stadium on Thursday night.

"We've been running around the locker room trying to get more," said Dixon Jr., who is the



Gerald Dixon (left) and his brother Gerald Dixon Jr. (right) with their father, former USC linebacker Gerald Dixon. They are pictured at the elder Dixon's home where a portrait of him in his San Diego Chargers uniform hangs on the wall of the workout room. This photo was taken when the boys were seniors in high school. (Renee Ittner-McManus/rimphotography.com)

older of the two. "But it's the first game of the season, and everyone's kind of got their family coming. I think I got two extras."

Although Dixon Jr. started last season's opener against North Carolina, he ultimately yielded that position to Quarles for the remainder of the season. Dixon also started once, later in the year against Coastal Carolina. But as far as being on the field at the same time, as starters - well, you have to go back to rec league ball.

In high school, they ended up anchoring the defensive lines of separate Rock Hill powerhouses - Dixon on the South Pointe team featuring Clowney, and Dixon Jr. on a Northwestern squad which went 15-0 to win the state title. When it came to choosing colleges, the plan all along was to play together.

"Before we committed, we said we wanted to get back together," said Dixon Jr., 6-3 and 323 pounds. "Because it's been a while since me and him were right beside each other on the same team. We won the (rec) league all-star state championship together. And we want to do it all over again."

While South Carolina has had brothers on the roster before - there are actually two sets on the squad this year, the Dixons and twins Brock and Clayton Stadnik, both redshirt sophomore offensive linemen - having two start on the same line is a first for head coach Steve Spurrier.

"I don't know if that has ever happened here before," he said. "I don't know if I've ever had two brothers starting on the defensive line the way we do now, or even two offensive line as far as that goes. But they are two good players, and they both have earned their way to be starters there."

Of course, this isn't just a feel-good story. Given that senior defensive tackle J.T. Surratt is the lone returning starter on the defensive line for the Gamecocks, both Dixons will be counted on to perform.

"We lost some great players, but at the same time, we're all going to be a team in the end, and we're all going to put in the work," said Dixon, who is 6-2 and 274 pounds. "Hopefully, it pays off at the end."

Still, brothers will be brothers. Some of their season goals include trying to one-up the other in

terms of tackles or sacks per game. By nature of their relationship, they know they can chastise one another over mistakes, and neither will take it personally.

"Just trying to make one another better," Dixon Jr. said.

The brothers combined for 18 solo and 35 total tackles in their supporting roles last season, and this year they step into a spotlight vacated in large part by a No. 1 overall draft pick. But for the first time in a long time, they'll be doing it together.

"We were waiting this whole summer. Out here during summer workouts and camp, we thought it would never come. But finally it's here, and we're ready," Junior said.

"We realized we were going to end up starting beside each other one day," G added. "The day has come. We've got to prove ourselves to the world."

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