

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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South Carolina Gamecocks Coach Shane Beamer

Press Conference

GREG SANKEY: As I was reviewing my notes, it dawned on me today is my wife's birthday. I'm here, she's not. I'm going to say happy birthday to my wife on the SEC Network, who doesn't have Twitter.

Shane Beamer has been at the University of South Carolina as head coach for one year, moving into his second year. He was there before as an assistant coach.

Shane was always one of the people who I met back when he was at Mississippi State, I'd see him at subsequent stops, he'd come up at games and say hello. I've always appreciated that relationship.

Last we saw Shane postgame, he was being knocked in the head by a five-gallon tub of Duke's Mayo. That's a reward for a successful season, improving the Gamecocks from the previous year when they went 2-8 to a 7-6 campaign, and a win over North Carolina, producing the dunking and the knock in the head.

He tied the school record at South Carolina for wins by a first-year head coach and surpassed the win total of the two previous seasons combined, earning him a share of the Steve Spurrier First Year Coach of the Year award presented by the Football Writers Association of America.

He's got three great kids, a wonderful wife. You've seen some of them on social media. In fact, I was disappointed he did not walk in with today's sunglasses, if you've seen Twitter, in the video. He's without the sunglasses today. But his son Hunter apparently evaluates his social media performances and his coaching performances via Twitter. Awesome family. Great to have Shane in the league. Great to have him smile after experiencing the Duke's Mayo bath.

University of South Carolina head football coach, Shane Beamer.

SHANE BEAMER: Thank you for that introduction. I told



Commissioner Sankey I was disappointed we didn't have Soulja Boy as a walk-up song when I came up here as well. Thanks for that great reminder of the fantastic day in Charlotte as well.

My second year at Media Days as the head football coach at the University of South Carolina. It's great to be back in Atlanta. I started my coaching career as a graduate assistant at Georgia Tech. Literally flew over my old apartment as we came into town today. Certainly have come a long way since then.

Excited to be here at the College Football Hall of Fame. This is a venue that my family and I love to visit. If you haven't had an opportunity, people that are watching, to visit this awesome venue, please do. It's a great reminder of what makes college football so special. Somewhere that we love to come. It's pretty cool to be down here on the main floor and to know that there's a Hall of Fame exhibit of my father literally one floor up that I was just looking at as we came down. Certainly no pressure from that standpoint as well.

Nothing like being here at Media Days. Nothing like being in the SEC, the premier conference in the nation. I was here last year on day one, had a great time. Left -- I think it was a Thursday I was at an Atlanta Braves game with my family, driving back after the game when the news broke about the University of Texas and University of Oklahoma joining this conference. So certainly that was an eventful week. That's just another statement about how attractive this league is and the teams and the universities that want to be a part of this conference.

Players want to play in this league. You see that in recruiting. Coaches certainly want to coach in this league as well.

Thankful for Commissioner Sankey and his leadership. As he mentioned, he's somebody that I've had a lot of respect for for a long time, but even more so now after being in this conference for a year. Thankful for his leadership in 2020, not just in this conference, I was in the Big 12 at the time, but his leadership across college football that allowed to us have a season in 2020.



Certainly there's a lot of uncertainty right now in college athletics. It's unprecedented some of the things that are going on. I know one thing, I'm glad he's leading us. I'm glad he's leading this conference. He's a tremendous leader as well.

Thanks for all you guys do to promote this game and the sacrifices you make as well, time away from your family also.

Excited about the three guys we have here today, Jovaughn Gwyn, Zacch Pickens, and Dakereon Joyner. Great examples of our program, what we want this place to be about. Two of the three, Dakereon and Jovaughn, are graduates of the University of South Carolina. Zacch will graduate in December. They're handling their business off the field as well.

All three are young men that did not have to come back; they chose to come back for another year at South Carolina. All, especially Zacch, could have been a high draft pick, chose to come back because they had goals that they hadn't accomplished yet as individuals, but more importantly they were not satisfied with just winning seven games last season at Carolina.

They're tough, dependable, competitive, everything we want this program to be about. Tried to recruit Dakereon when I was at the University of Georgia. Didn't get him, thankfully. Tried to recruit Zacch Pickens when I was at Georgia and Oklahoma at T.L. Hanna High School in South Carolina, and didn't get him. Thankful that we didn't.

Fired up for the upcoming season. Dakereon, just so valuable to our program in so many ways, as a quarterback, as a wide receiver, special teams. So unselfish. Was the MVP of our bowl game, as many of you know. What a great day for him. Showed he could play quarterback in that game.

Obviously, I was looking at it before I came over, just some of the awards he's won at South Carolina that were voted on by coaches since he's been here: Unselfish Teammate, Strength and Conditioning Award, Highest GPA, Spring Special Teams Player of the Year, Spring Offensive Player of the Year. Coming out of high school, he was Mr. Football in the state of South Carolina.

Zacch Pickens, very much the same story, a guy that was the No. 1 player in South Carolina coming out of T.L. Hanna High School, was Mr. Football in the state.

Two great examples as we continue to build this program of what has to happen, and that's keeping the best players

in the state of South Carolina at home. We did that when I was at South Carolina as an assistant coach with so many names that are stars of South Carolina football and Hall of Famers. We'll need to do that going forward as well.

Zacch and Dakereon are two guys that did that. Zacch could have been a high draft pick if he had chose to come back. He didn't. He came back to us, which we're thankful for, and if anything, he's gotten better. He was voted on by our coaching staff at the end of spring practice as our Most Outstanding Player on defense.

Jovaughn Gwyn, you talk about durable and dependable, that's Jovaughn Gwyn. 34 consecutive starts on the offensive line for us. He was voted a captain last year as a junior. To me there's no greater honor as a teammate than to be voted a captain. And he was voted a captain as a junior last year as well. Been on the SEC Academic Honor Roll all four years that he's been at Carolina. A highly decorated high school prospect out of Charlotte, North Carolina, which is a strong recruiting base for us, as you know.

Really like this 2022 group that we have. I love being their coach. I love coaching this team. The work ethic, the maturity, the hunger to improve has been evident since January when we came back after the bowl win.

We made great strides last season going from two wins to seven wins. A challenge for us is making sure our guys understand that going from seven to the next step, the next level, is going to take even more work. Everything that I've seen from our guys since they came back shows me that they understand that.

Last year I stood up here and there wasn't a single person in here that was talking about South Carolina football other than maybe our beat writers. No one was talking about any of the individuals in our football team across the country last year.

I think the most noise we made at SEC Media Days last year was when we reenacted the Coach Spurrier Arby's picture on the way back to the airport. But there was very little talk about our football team.

That's different this year. People are talking about us nationally, which is what we want. We have high expectations at South Carolina. People are talking about our players as individuals more nationally than what they were last year. There's more buzz about this program right now.

The key for us, the challenge for us, will be being mature enough to handle that the right way as a football team and



understand the work ethic that it's going to take to get back to what we did last season and understanding that the reason we had a lot of success that we did last year was how connected we became as a team.

Offensively, not going to go through every position, I'm sure you will ask me about it. Got a lot of personnel back. Certainly have to be more consistent than what we were last year. We have some impact freshmen coming in. Obviously some impact transfers that are joining our program as well.

Excited about some additions to our coaching staff. Jody Wright coming in from the NFL to coach tight ends. We've hired Freddie Kitchens, a name throughout the SEC that everyone knows, to come in as a senior analyst. Excited about what they'll bring to our staff along with the returning coaches, Marcus Satterfield, our offensive coordinator, fired up for what we'll be able to do as an offensive staff in year two, and the people around Marcus as well. There's no egos in that room. Everybody is working together to be the best offense we can be.

Defensively, we made some great improvements last year under Clayton White statistically. We've added Sterling Lucas, a new defensive ends/outside linebackers coach from the NFL as well. Sterling has done a great job.

We lost a lot of really great players off our defense last year, but especially some great leaders on our defense last year. "JJ" Enagbare was a captain. Jaylan Foster for us last year was a captain. It will be a challenge for us to replace them on the field, but the leadership off of that as well.

Pete Lembo in our special teams unit made some great strides last season as well. We have to replace the all-time leading scorer at South Carolina in Parker White, which will not be easy, but fortunate that we return Kai Kroeger, our punter, and the rest of the key specialists as well.

A lot of great things happening off the field as well. I talked about the three guys we have here today. They all have graduated or are on track to graduate. Right now as a football program we have the third highest graduation success rate in all the SEC. We've got 22 players on our team that will play this season as graduates of the University of South Carolina. Then, assuming we're at a bowl game in December, we'll have nine more guys that will graduate in December. If you're watching us play a bowl game in December or hopefully January, we'll have 31 players on our team that will have already graduated from the University of South Carolina. 25 of our guys made the dean's list last year.

Recruiting going well for us right now. A lot of excitement when the recruits and their families visit campus. The words that come up all the time are "real" and "genuine" when they talk about the coaches staff and the players in our program. It's easy to be real and genuine when you're recruiting to such a fantastic place like we are at the University of South Carolina. Awesome academics. Capital city in a fantastic state. Greatest fans in all of America. The facilities are second to none. Our staff that we have at Carolina, other championship sports, like Dawn Staley and our women's basketball program. We've shown you can win championships at South Carolina and we will continue to at the University of South Carolina.

So excited about the future. Like I mentioned, there's so much local but also national attention about our program right now, which I'm excited for our players to be able to experience that. People want to be a part of what we're doing. It was announced last week that ESPNU is going to be focusing on us with their "All-Access" series in the month of August and September. "Welcome Home: South Carolina Football" will air on ESPNU and other ESPN networks starting next month. That will be a great experience for our players, great way to showcase our program, as well.

Thankful that they chose us. This wasn't something that we outwardly tried to do. They came to us because of what we're doing in this program.

I spoke to so many sold-out Gamecock Club events in the month of May and June across the state of South Carolina as well. Seems like every one that I went to, more than one person came up to me and said they've never been more excited about South Carolina football. Our season ticket renewal rate is the highest that it's been in over 10 years. The improvements that we've made to our stadium. Williams-Brice Stadium was already one of if not the toughest venue to play in in all of college football. It will be even more exciting and electric this season because of the improvements we made to the stadium.

At the end of the day, it's all about the people that we have in our program. We got some special, special, special people in our program, players, coaches and staff. So grateful and blessed to be the head football coach here at South Carolina. We are just getting started with what we're doing.

With that, I hope I kept it under 17 minutes. I heard that was the rate today so far that I needed to keep it under. Hopefully I did. With that, I'll be glad to take any questions.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. Going back to last year, you had Zeb Noland coming off. You were trying to put him at the quarterback position because of depth. How much better is it this year? How much is it a relief for the coaching staff?

SHANE BEAMER: When I sat up here last year, I certainly didn't anticipate a month later having our graduate assistant be our starting quarterback. I certainly didn't envision starting four different quarterbacks throughout the season like we did last year because of injuries.

It certainly makes a difference. If anything, it's the experience and the depth that we now have in that room compared to last year. Going into last season, Luke Doty was our starting quarterback, and he'd only been on campus for a year. I think he started three games in 2020. He didn't have a lot of experience. Now you've got a guy like Spencer that's played a lot of football, has won a conference championship at Oklahoma.

And then you add guys like Luke who are a year older along with some impact freshmen that we've brought in. It's a different quarterback room. Certainly we have a lot of work to do, but certainly as a coach it makes you feel better about the situation going into the season.

Q. Hate to ask you another question about Spencer, but obviously he's the highest rated quarterback this program has ever signed. How much pressure this season is on his shoulders to make this offense flourish?

SHANE BEAMER: I don't know if there's pressure. I would say this. People forget, Spencer Rattler is the starting quarterback at Oklahoma. He had some pretty high amount of pressure replacing guy by the name of Baker Mayfield, Kyler Murray, and Jalen Hurts.

And then what does he do in his first two conference games at Oklahoma as the starting quarterback? We, not him, we lose to Kansas State at home, then we lose to Iowa State on the road. He's replacing all these guys, had a lot of pressure going into that season. Started out 0-2 in the conference. Never flinched.

The narrative I know was he got benched last year in the Texas game. He got sat down the year before, too. Then he came back in the second half, played his butt off, beat Texas in four overtimes and he never lost a game as a starting quarterback again, and still hasn't as a starting quarterback.

I don't worry about Spencer. There may be some outside pressure with him. He's been through the fire before. I

saw firsthand how he handled it when he was at Oklahoma and started out 0-2. Never flinched. Continued to get better. There will be some ups, certainly some downs this season. But I have no worry about him from that standpoint and being able to handle it.

We have to be great around Spencer, players and coaches, play well and help him. With Spencer, nobody is asking him to go out there and be Superman, just go be you, and confident that he will.

Q. Last year you talked about culture and being able to put your stamp on the program. You were very aggressive in the transfer portal, you got Spencer Rattler, Austin Stogner, Juice Wells, and then Devonn Reed. How do you bring these guys in and fit them in with your returnees in order to take the next step as a program and go from 7-6 to 9-3 or better?

SHANE BEAMER: Great question. Great point. I think that's a challenge that every coach in the country is dealing with right now with the transfer portal, is bringing new guys into the program, acclimating them to your program as quick as possible.

Kind of like I mentioned earlier, we were a really, really, really close-knit team last year. We started out 2-2, then we never lost two games in a row after that. If we lost a game, we were resilient and always came right back. That was because of how close and connected that team was.

We'll have to do that again this year. We're very intentional about that, building a team and doing as much as we can as a team from January up until the start of the season, really throughout the season to continue to build that closeness.

Last year some of these transfers we were bringing in I thought were pretty good players, but I don't know how many of you really knew who Carlins Platel from Assumption College was or Jason Brown or whoever. This year we've got obviously some impact guys, but the way we handle things, how intentional we are about building a team doesn't change.

Q. Obviously we're talking about transfer players. You grabbed a lot of guys from the portal. How do you go about balancing the recruiting class from guys in the portal and guys coming in from high school?

SHANE BEAMER: We always want to start with high school recruiting. There's great high school players and programs in the state of South Carolina. We're surrounded by great players. If you look at the history of South Carolina football, the great players we've been able to

bring from the state of Florida, guys like Melvin Ingram that came from North Carolina, or guys like Connor Shaw that came from here in Georgia. We're surrounded by some great high school football. We'll always start with high school recruiting.

But certainly you want to be able to build a competitive roster year in, year out. When there's a December signing period, as we go into December you kind of had a pretty good idea who you're going to sign in December. You realize if we need to sign two running backs, for example, which we needed to last year in high school recruiting, and we didn't, now we need to look to the portal, which is what we did, bringing in Christian Beal-Smith, Lovasea Carroll.

I think every year is different. If we could sign 25 guys from the high school ranks last year, we would. That's not always going to be feasible to win football games in the SEC, though.

Q. I heard you mention before about how you recruited Dakereon when you were at Georgia. I imagine you had to have another conversation recruiting him again when you arrived at South Carolina. What were those two conversations like?

SHANE BEAMER: Great question.

Yeah, I remember going to Fort Dorchester. Obviously what Dakereon did in high school speaks for itself. I was at Georgia at the time. Jim Chaney was our offensive coordinator. Part of me, I may have my years mixed up, I want to say that was the year that Justin Fields came out. I think. I may be a year off.

We were going back and forth on whether we were going to take two quarterbacks that year at Georgia or not. Dakereon was somebody that we really, really, really liked, and made multiple trips to Charleston to see him. He chose to come to South Carolina. It was a great decision for him.

There wasn't a whole lot of talking. When I got hired, he and I had a good relationship when I was trying to recruit him out of high school. Followed his career at South Carolina. I knew what kind of player he was.

With Dakereon, he's team-first all the way. I mentioned it early earlier, our first spring he's named by us as coaches as the most valuable special teams player and offensive player coming out of spring practice. He's a team guy. He showed that throughout the year, what he did in the bowl game. He wants what's best for South Carolina football.

Proud of Dakereon because he's shown that he is an

outstanding quarterback. He's shown that he's an outstanding receiver. He's an outstanding special teams player. Just an outstanding leader and person. I'm glad he's on our team.

Q. You're clearly a youthful coaching personality. I wanted to know how you use that to promote a fun culture on your team? What went into the planning and execution of the Soldier Boy video?

SHANE BEAMER: Appreciate you saying I'm youthful. I don't always feel youthful, but I like feeling that way.

It's one that we got a lot of great things going on in our program. We got some great people in our program. Don't get me wrong, I mean, we work really, really hard. It's not easy being a football player at South Carolina. It's very demanding. You're held accountable for everything that you do on and off the field.

There's also got to be some joy with what you do. This game's hard enough. We want our guys to have fun. I want this to be a program that when our players wake up each morning, they look forward to coming into our football facility each day. I don't know if that was always the case before I got there. They do now.

Anytime we get the opportunity to showcase our program, we want to. That came together very quickly. Justin King, who heads up everything for us, for our social media, creative design, is the best in the world at what he does. I learned a long time ago, like, when he tells me he has an idea, I don't need to ask what it is. I just tell him, What time do you want me there? What do I need to do? That's what it was this morning.

I knew it was big because normally he'll just text me or call me. He actually picked me up in the car because he wanted to present the idea to me.

Walked in, changed clothes, knocked it out in three takes. Had a lot of fun doing it as well. I was a little bit taken aback because one of our players thought I needed to hear the song so I knew what the song was and I knew what the words were. I'm not that old. I know who Soldier Boy is. I know some of the words to that song. It was an easy ask.

Q. Obviously you spent some time in the Big 12. Texas and OU will be joining the SEC. Your thoughts on those two programs? I know you recruit a lot in the Southeast. With having Texas come in, could that potentially open up some avenues for you to recruit in the state of Texas?

SHANE BEAMER: Yeah, great to see you, guys that were

in the Big 12 that I certainly followed for Big 12 news. Welcome to SEC Media Days. Looking forward to working with you.

Absolutely, spent three years at Oklahoma. Know the talent out there, as well. Understand the dynamics of those programs. The world is a lot smaller nowadays because of social media. We've got some coaches on our staff, besides me, that have ties out there. Our offensive coordinator spent time at Baylor with Matt Rhule. Justin Stepp, who was our wide receivers coach, coached at Arkansas, SMU. I think his wife is a Texas grad, if I'm not mistaken. We have a lot of people with ties out there.

We actually signed two players from the state of Texas in this year's recruiting class, Peyton Williams and Landon Samson, from Southlake Carroll. That will continue to be an area we can open up because of those schools being in the SEC.

There's a direct flight from class into Columbia, South Carolina, that recruits can certainly get on. We'll go with their players. We'll always start in South Carolina, but because of some of the things that we're doing on social media and here at our program, there's a lot of buzz and excitement about South Carolina football.

I mean, I can't tell you how many text messages I have on my phone right now about that video this morning, whether it be former players like Stephon Gilmore, or recruits in the 2023 and 2024 class that are commenting on it.

There's a lot of great things going on at Carolina. There's a lot of people that want to be a part of that.

Q. Unfortunately with the way that college sports is, you have to bring up NIL. Earlier today Nick Saban threw out fair, balanced, have and have not's. Where do you actually see the fairness of college football? How well is South Carolina set up to be a have and not a have not?

SHANE BEAMER: I think South Carolina is set up as well as anybody in the country, to be honest with you, from a name, image and likeness standpoint. We're in the capital city of South Carolina. We're the only show in town. We don't compete with other pro sports in our state at the high, high level.

South Carolina, the fan base, it's evident how powerful it is. You look at what our players have done, a lot of these guys that are here today, Dakereon, Zacch Pickens, Jovaughn, have been able to capitalize on their name, image and likeness and utilize it the right way, the way the law was intended when it was implemented for sure, that

those guys have been able to. You look at other student-athletes at our university, like Aliyah Boston on our basketball team, what she has been able to do from a name, image and likeness standpoint.

I tell recruits this all the time, it's not recruiting speak, when you talk about being well-positioned for name, image and likeness opportunities, I have a hard time finding somebody that's in a better situation than we are.

Q. As a former tight ends coach, what are your impressions of Georgia's tight ends coming this year?

SHANE BEAMER: Talented, deep. I was there with Jeb Blazevich, Jackson Harris, Charlie Warner, Isaac Nauta. That was a deep and talented group that all contributed to that 2017 SEC championship team. You have different skill sets with those guys right now as well.

I remember watching Brock Bowers' tape when I was at Oklahoma the first time I think from a seven-on-seven camp or something like that that he went to. Some of the catches he made in that.

He's freakishly talented. They complement each other well, got a deep skill set. They'll be a challenge.

You're right, I'm a tight end guy. I love utilizing the tight end. Feel like we've got some pretty special ones on our team, too, with Austin Stogner. When he got hurt at Oklahoma in 2020, he was playing as well as any tight end in the country. Jaheim Bell returns for us. Traevon Kenion. Added Nate Adkins to that group as well. I like our group as well.

Certainly Georgia's will be a challenge for any defense they go up against this year as well.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, thank you for your time.

SHANE BEAMER: Thank you, guys, and ladies, have a great week. Go Gamecocks.

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