

Gamecocks win individual battles down the stretch; knock off rival Tigers fourth straight time

Written by Levi Johnson, Sports Editor
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CLEMSON - The game of football is an 11 on 11 competitive event.

However, the effectiveness of the game played on a 100 yards long by 50 yards wide field basically hinges on individual battles won during the course of play.

Winning the individual battles was the obvious strategy utilized by the coaches of South Carolina Saturday night (Nov. 24), during the 110th meeting opposite arch rival Clemson.

Clearly out-dueling Clemson in the final 30 minutes of play on both sides the ball, the visiting Gamecocks, after overcoming a four point (10-14) halftime deficit, fought back to defeat the host Tigers by 10 (27-17), at Clemson Memorial Stadium.

And in improving its record to 10-2, 11th rank South Carolina, for the first time in several decades, won its fourth consecutive game versus its arch enemy and state rival.

Clemson which fell to 15 in the AP poll now is 65-41-4 against South Carolina. However, in closing out regular season play at 10-2, the Tigers in spite of the most recent loss to the Gamecocks still have won 10 of the last 16 encounters in the storied series.

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Nonetheless Dabo Swinney was in no mood to celebrate the past on the heels of a second half showing by his team that he termed "disappointing".

"We couldn't get the ball in the third period. We couldn't stop them on third down. The third quarter was huge (in the outcome of the game), "lamented the fourth (full) year Tigers coach. "We had too many penalties; two many turnovers and South Carolina did a great job of controlling the ball.

"In the first quarter we got off to a good start; scoring two touchdowns but they started to control the ball

after that. Give them credit; they did a great job. Their ability to put pressure on Tajh (quarterback Tajh Boyd) was key. Give credit to South Carolina."

Tajh Boyd, citing missed opportunities; especially in second half action, refused to offer excuses for the setback, which likely eliminated Clemson from a BCS bowl bid.

"We had our chances but we just didn't play our game; especially in the second half," said the Tigers No.1 field general, who ended play with stats of 11-24-2, for 183 yards in the passing department and a net of 26 yards while running the ball 17 times.

"Going out in the second half, we believed we could continue to compete and get the win. But give them credit; South Carolina came back while we were hurting ourselves with penalties and play that wasn't going to help us win." During the game, which lasted three hours, 32 minutes, the Gamecocks ran 86 offensive plays, as opposed to 59 ran by the Tigers.

One game impacting individual battle was the one involving Jadeveon Clowney and most of the foes who tried to block him, on a night he recorded 4.5 sacks on his way to establishing a school single season mark.

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"I don't know how it feels to lose to Clemson," said Clowney, who hails from Rock Hill. "I'm not going to know how it feels either because we're not going to lose to them while I'm here." Clowney's total against Clemson upped his sum to a record 13 for the season.