MISSOURI'S AWARD-WINNING PUNTER WOULDN'T HAVE PLAYED FOOTBALL IF IT WASN'T FOR HIS MOTHER. PAGE 8

COLUMBIA WILL BE THE EPICENTER OF AN OFFENSIVE SHOWDOWN SATURDAY. PAGE 6
DEPTH CHART

MISSOURI OFFENSE VS. SOUTH CAROLINA DEFENSE

16 DAMAREA CROCKETT
3 DREW LOCK
19 Tucker McCann

SOUTH CAROLINA OFFENSE VS. MISSOURI DEFENSE

5 RICO DOWDLE
19 JAKE BENTLEY
17 DE MARKUS ACY

DEFENSE
Kicker: 19 Tucker McCann
Punter: 26 Corey Fatony
Long Snapper: 86 James Workman
SCHEDULE
09/02 vs. Missouri State 72-43
09/09 vs. South Carolina 6 p.m.
09/16 vs. Purdue 3 p.m.
09/23 vs. Auburn
10/07 at Kentucky
10/14 at Georgia
10/21 vs. Idaho
10/28 at Connecticut
11/04 vs. Florida
11/11 vs. Tennessee
11/18 at Vanderbilt
11/24 at Arkansas 1:30 p.m.

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TODDLERS TO TIGERS
Freshman linebacker Jamal Brooks played soccer, baseball and basketball before his parents allowed him to start playing football at age 10.

The Impossible Quiz
As Missouri opens SEC play against South Carolina on Saturday, the Missourian’s Impossible Quiz returns to test your knowledge of all things Gamecocks.

TODDLERS TO TIGERS
Redshirt freshman offensive lineman Trystan Castillo talks snacks, movies and Adele.

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As Missouri opens SEC play against South Carolina at 6 p.m. Saturday at Memorial Stadium, the Missourian’s Impossible Quiz returns to test your knowledge of all things Gamecocks. From a state law on where a citizen can’t keep his or her horse to what sport Hootie & The Blowfish drummer Jim Sonefeld played while attending South Carolina and where the Gamecocks’ Williams-Brice Stadium ranks nationally in terms of college football stadium size, our quiz will hopefully teach you a thing or two about The Palmetto State.

So how well do you know South Carolina?

1. **GAMECOCKS COACH WILL MUSCHAMP SPENT ONE SEASON (2005) AS AN ASSISTANT HEAD COACH/DEFENSE IN THE NFL. WHICH TEAM DID HE COACH FOR?**
   - A. Tennessee Titans
   - B. Oakland Raiders
   - C. Miami Dolphins
   - D. Atlanta Falcons

2. **WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MOVIES WASN’T FILMED IN SOUTH CAROLINA?**
   - A. The Blind Side
   - B. The Big Chill
   - C. Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls
   - D. The Notebook

3. **ACCORDING TO SOUTH CAROLINA STATE LAW, HORSES MAY NOT BE KEPT WHERE?**
   - A. Garages
   - B. Kitchens
   - C. Front yards
   - D. Bathtubs

   - A. 1994
   - B. 1990
   - C. 1998
   - D. 1989

5. **HOOTIE AND THE BLOWFISH DRUMMER JIM SONEFELD PLAYED ON WHICH SOUTH CAROLINA SPORTS TEAM?**
   - A. Tennis
   - B. Football
   - C. Soccer
   - D. Baseball

6. **WHICH FOOTBALL COACH RECEIVED A MASTER’S DEGREE FROM SOUTH CAROLINA?**
   - A. Kevin Sumlin
   - B. Lou Holtz
   - C. Bret Bielema
   - D. Charlie Weis

7. **WHICH FORMER SOUTH CAROLINA PLAYER HAD THE DISTINCTION OF BEING MR. IRRELEVANT AT THE 2009 NFL DRAFT?**
   - A. Cliff Matthews (DE)
   - B. Ryan Succop (K)
   - C. Ko Simpson (S)
   - D. Trevelle Wharton (OL)

8. **BRAD GUZAN (GK) PLAYED SOCCER AT SOUTH CAROLINA FROM 2003-04. HOW MANY APPEARANCES DID HE MAKE IN EIGHT SEASONS (2008-16) WITH EPL CLUB ASTON VILLA?**
   - A. 50
   - B. 100
   - C. 75
   - D. 144

9. **WILLIAMS-BRICE STADIUM SEATS 80,250 PEOPLE. WHERE DOES IT RANK NATIONALLY IN TERMS OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL STADIUM SIZE?**
   - A. 13th
   - B. 24th
   - C. 30th
   - D. 35th

10. **WHICH FAMOUS ATHLETE WASN’T BORN IN SOUTH CAROLINA?**
    - A. Jermaine O’Neal
    - B. Joe Frazier
    - C. Jim “Catfish” Hunter
    - D. “Shoeless” Joe Jackson

**KEY:** 1 (C); 2 (A); 3 (D); 4 (A); 5 (C); 6 (D); 7 (B); 8 (D); 9 (B); 10 (C)


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- M - W 11am - 10pm
- Th - Sa 11am - 10:30pm
- Sunday 11am - 8pm

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- M - W 11am - Midnight
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- Sunday 11am - 8pm

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South Carolina

Explosive Offenses Collide

After a shaky Week 1 against Missouri State, Missouri’s defense faces an even bigger challenge.

Take the over. Never mind that the over/under is 74 — take the over.

Columbia will be the epicenter of a showdown between two high-flying offenses Saturday when South Carolina squares off against Missouri. The two teams have been part of numerous close games in past years, but this game will be different because of the offensive firepower of which each side is capable.

Unlike Missouri, South Carolina did not put up ridiculous numbers in its first game. The Gamecocks ran only 50 plays for 246 total yards. However, they were still able to put up 35 points against N.C. State and came out on top despite being doubled in nearly every offensive category by the Wolfpack.

Twenty-eight of those points came by way of sophomore quarterback Jake Bentley, redshirt junior receiver Deebo Samuel ... or some combination of the two. Bentley threw for three touchdowns, two of which went to Samuel, while South Carolina’s star receiver also added a 97-yard kickoff return to open up the game.

Samuel’s dominance is to be expected. Ben Breiner, the South Carolina football beat writer for The State in Columbia, South Carolina, believes Samuel has an intangible factor that makes him a tough assignment for opposing defensive backs.

“He’s straight-line speed is good, but it’s not unbelievable,” Breiner said. “But he plays faster than that. He’s not the biggest dude, but he wins a lot of jump balls. He just sort of has these subtle ‘it’ factors.”

Breiner says Samuel is reminiscent of former South Carolina receiver Pharoh Cooper, who now plays for the Los Angeles Rams. The only difference between the two is Samuel has a highly talented quarterback throwing him the ball in what could be his final season for the Gamecocks.

“Their offense is explosive,” Odom said. “They’ve got playmakers all over the field. … Obviously, the quarterback makes them go, but I think Deebo Samuel is one of the best guys in the country.”

BARRY ODOM, Missouri coach, about South Carolina’s offense

Bentley left high school early to become South Carolina’s signal-caller. Midway through what should have been his senior year at Opelika High School in Opelika, Alabama, Bentley took over as the Gamecocks’ starting quarterback, eventually leading them to a 31-21 victory over Missouri.

Now, heading into his second season, Bentley has grown into his role and looked like a bona fide starter in South Carolina’s opening game. He was able to compensate for the Gamecocks’ lackluster running game with three touchdown passes and only one interception.

“There were a couple of plays that were just absurd,” Breiner said. “He’s capable of some really high-level stuff.”

The combination of Bentley and Samuel became even more concerning to Missouri coach Barry Odom after Saturday’s 72-43 win over Missouri State. The Tigers’ defensive backs were subject to multiple blown coverages, missed assignments and missed tackles, and the Bears were able to take the lead five times during the first half.

“(I was) very impressed with (Bentley),” Odom said during Monday’s teleconference. “They’ve got playmakers all over the field. … Obviously, the quarterback makes them go, but I think Deebo Samuel is one of the best guys in the country.”

Samuel torched the Tigers with nine receptions for 125 yards the Gamecocks’ 2016

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victory. He could post an even bigger stat line on Saturday if Missouri’s secondary doesn’t improve from its efforts in the Missouri State game.

On the other side of the ball, South Carolina is still unsure what to expect. Like the Tigers, the Gamecocks are led by a defensive-minded head coach in Will Muschamp, but they are not expected to be strong defensively in 2017.

“They have a lot of new guys that they are trying to work in at a whole bunch of different positions,” Breiner said. “It’s pretty heavily ‘bend but don’t break.’ They make teams work down the field; they don’t give up big plays. It’s unclear if that’s the identity that they want or just the identity they have to have because the talent isn’t there.”

The bend-but-don’t-break mentality showed during the Gamecocks’ win over N.C. State. South Carolina gave up more than 500 yards of total offense but only allowed four touchdowns and broke up a pass that would have resulted in the game-tying touchdown with only seconds remaining in the game.

Something will have to give Saturday, as Missouri’s offense showcased its big-play potential numerous times against Missouri State. Five of Missouri’s touchdowns came from passes longer than 20 yards, and Damarea Crockett also had what would have been a 75-yard touchdown run wiped out because of excessive celebration.

“The corners were a big test for us a year ago and were competitive to the ball,” Missouri offensive coordinator Josh Heupel said during Monday’s teleconference. “They have quality players on all three levels — first-, second- and third-level players — and it’s going to be competitive in all facets of the game because of that.”

Missouri will have its work cut out when it takes the field against South Carolina. The Tigers will need to put up points — a lot of them. But, if they want to have a chance at winning, the defense will need to be able to find some way to make Bentley and the Gamecocks’ offense one-dimensional.

“It’s a tough ask,” Breiner said of stopping the South Carolina offense. “Even though the USC run game had its share of issues, I think it’s got some potential. So I’ll be interested to see if Mizzou, like N.C. State, can keep a cap on that.”

Supervising editors are Brooks Holton and Pete Bland.
Missouri punter Corey Fatony developed his leg playing soccer in Florida as a kid. MARTA PAYNE/Missourian

THE FATONY FILES

STORY BY PETER BAUGH

Corey Fatony was shaped by the perseverance of his mother, who overcame a difficult childhood to raise Missouri’s punter

Corey Fatony sat quietly in his mother’s car, watching unfamiliar streets flash past the passenger window.

A month earlier, his family had moved to Tennessee from Jacksonville, Florida. School had not yet started, so Fatony had not made friends in his new home. And, worst of all for the seventh-grader, his mother was forcing him to play football for the first time.

Cylina Meredith, Fatony’s mother, was convinced that sports were the best way for her son to meet friends in Tennessee. Fatony had played soccer in Florida, and Meredith knew he had a strong leg. She had seen him boot a soccer ball over a tree taller than their Jacksonville house, and she thought her son could find his niche on his middle school’s football team.

As Meredith pulled into the school for a summer practice, Fatony broke the nervous silence and made a final plea to his mother. He begged Meredith not to make him leave the car. He didn’t want to play a new sport.

Meredith looked into her son’s fearful eyes, and she told him to get out of the car. Go kick some footballs, she said. He would be the best kicker the coach ever saw.

“Mothers do know best,” said Fatony, now a junior and third-year starter at Missouri.

Meredith’s impact on her son goes beyond inspiring him to play football. She persevered through a trying childhood and, as a young mother, helped Fatony transform from a timid seventh-grader to a starting punter in the SEC.

MAKING CHANGES

Meredith often tells people that she and Fatony grew up together. She gave birth at the age of 20, and the biological father was out of the picture by the time Fatony was a 3-year-old.

“He was always my little buddy,” she said.

Meredith remarried when her son was 4, and the family moved three times before settling near Nashville in Franklin, Tennessee.

Meredith admits she made mistakes parenting her son before she had totally grown up. She dragged Fatony to her personal events and kept him up too late. She yelled at him, spanked a bit too much.

She put herself first.

But her parenting style changed when Fatony was in second grade. Meredith and her current husband, Brandon Meredith, moved to Jacksonville, and she started attending church. Her faith expanded, and she gained a deeper appreciation for her son.

“My whole life changed,” she said. “We both did.”

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Corey Fatony was shaped by the perseverance of his mother, who overcame a difficult childhood to raise Missouri’s punter.

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“My whole life changed,” she said. “My whole life changed. And my parenting style was better just because I had a different vision for Corey.”

Missouri punter Corey Fatony developed his leg playing soccer in Florida as a kid.
Instead of simply punishing Fatony when he did something wrong, she gave her son explanations — not just consequences — and always made sure to express her love.

“I think that’s why we have such a good relationship,” Fatony said, “because she was so understanding. She spanked me sometimes, but it was when it needed to be done.”

Brandon Meredith, Fatony’s stepfather, saw the change in his wife firsthand. He remembers when Fatony did not get along with his elementary school basketball coach. He wanted to stop playing, but his mother was having none of it.

“We don’t quit,” she told him. It was a message Meredith knew well.

### A Tough Upbringing

Growing up in Virginia, Meredith flinched whenever she walked by her mother, Mary.

“I wasn’t sure when she was going to hit me,” Meredith said. “Or how hard she was going to hit me.”

Mary drank and did drugs in front of her daughter, and Meredith was forced into the role of Mary’s caretaker as her mother got older.

“When she would pass out in her mashed potatoes,” she said, “I would have to pick her up and carry her upstairs and throw her in bed.”

Mary died at the age of 50. Her unhealthy lifestyle caught up to her, and her damaged liver gave out. When Meredith heard the news, she didn’t feel an overwhelming sense of loss. She just felt sad that she grew up missing a mother figure.

Despite the pain and hardships she endured, Meredith is not sorry for what she went through. She chose not to smoke because of Mary. She didn’t experiment with drugs. It made her a better mom.

“I chose to go a different path than my mother did,” she said. “I do everything that I wanted as a child from my mother.”

### Offering Guidance

Though his mom had to drag him to his first football practice in seventh grade, Fatony was quickly hooked on the sport. One of his coaches told him he could make the NFL if he worked hard, and the young punter developed into a standout on the gridiron.

Early in his high school career, Fatony had a decision to make. He could continue playing soccer in the spring, or he could focus solely on kicking.

“My husband and I knew that there was a future with football,” Meredith said.

Fatony listened to his mother, and he did play soccer his sophomore and junior seasons. Instead, the punter attended kicking camps and sent emails and film to college coaches.

Once again, his mother knew best. Auburn and Tennessee showed interest in Fatony, and Missouri offered him a scholarship. Next thing he knew, he was playing in the SEC.

Every time Fatony lines up to punt, Meredith says a quick prayer. She asks for a great kick and — most importantly — prays her son doesn’t get hit.

“Those guys are big,” she said. "If they do hit my son, it’s a 15-yard penalty. But still!”

Sometimes Meredith can’t look. Sometimes she takes a peek with one eye. Meredith said she is filled with emotions.

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Meredith said she is filled with emotions.

“I kind of think of it as God’s love for us and me and my mom’s love for each other,” he said.

Above the word, the mother and son have a lily, Meredith’s favorite flower.

Supervising editors are Brooks Holton and Pete Bland.
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Corey Fatony carries his consistent style from Tennessee to Missouri

Punting puts Corey Fatony in a strange situation. He loves stepping onto the field on Saturdays, but there’s a catch. If he’s punting, it means the Tigers offense failed to convert a first down.

Fatony handles his unique role with a simple mindset. Though he loves to play, he always hopes for his team’s offense to succeed.

“When I do get the chance, then it’s time to go,” Fatony said. “We’re rocking, we’re rolling.”

Since taking over as the Tigers starter in 2015, Fatony has been a constant on the team. He’s developed into a nationally recognized punter, and he’s earned the admiration of his teammates and coaches.

Castle announced the punter’s games when he played for Franklin High School. Lonnie Castle, who announced football games there, gave Fatony the nickname “Mr. Dependable.”

Fatony’s consistency has continued in college.

In his first year with the Tigers, the punter earned Freshman All-America honors from Sporting News and USA Today. He was even named the Ray Guy Punter of the Week after Missouri’s 21-3 loss to Florida.

Fatony did not slow down as a sophomore, finishing the year ranked No. 20 in the NCAA in yards per punt.

“To know that Corey can flip a field from pretty much anywhere on the football field is really nice to have,” quarterback Drew Lock said. “In case we do go a quick three-and-out … Corey’s easily there to back us up.”

Coach Barry Odom was straightforward when talking about his punter before Missouri’s opener against Missouri State. He discussed Fatony’s athletic ability and mentioned him as one of the bright spots on the special teams unit.

“Fatony has done unbelievable,” Odom said. “I wouldn’t trade him for anybody in the country at that spot.”

Supervising editor is Pete Bland.
FAST FIVE WITH TRYSTAN CASTILLO

The Missourian got to know what redshirt freshman offensive lineman Trystan Castillo from Webb City is like off the gridiron

1 WHAT IS YOUR SPIRIT ANIMAL AND WHY?
“Man, that’s tough. I guess my spirit animal would have to be a bear. I like run-blocking; I want to try and maul somebody.”

2 WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE SPORT BESIDES FOOTBALL?
“What’s your go-to post-practice snack?”

3 WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE SPORT BESIDES FOOTBALL?
“Probably basketball. I’m a big basketball guy.”

4 WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE OF ALL TIME
“Some Adele.”

5 WHAT’S YOUR GO-TO POST-PRACTICE SNACK?
“Probably basketball. I’m a big basketball guy.”

Missouri offensive lineman Trystan Castillo lifts wide receiver Dominic Collins into the air after Collins’ TD during the Tigers’ game against Missouri State this past Saturday. Castillo said he enjoys bags of grapes as his go-to snack after practices. JESSI DODGE/Missourian

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JAMAL BROOKS

The freshman linebacker used to practice tackling in his family’s den before he put on pads

Eugene Brooks didn’t let his son — Missouri freshman linebacker Jamal Brooks — play football until he was 10 years old. He wanted his son’s body to mature to ensure that he wouldn’t get hurt before stepping onto the gridiron.

It didn’t stop Jamal Brooks from practicing before he turned 10.

He used to run the length of his family’s den at full speed, only to be stopped by the wall’s impact upon barreling into it.

His mother, Belinda Brooks, had to rearrange the furniture in the den so the linebacker in training wouldn’t continue plowing into the walls.

“He always loved the sport, and even before he started playing competitively, he always had a football helmet on and had a football in his hand,” Belinda Brooks said. “He really enjoyed tackling things.”

As much as he enjoyed football and tackling, Jamal Brooks began his athletic career playing soccer, baseball and basketball. Eugene Brooks said his side of the family played those sports, so when Jamal Brooks blossomed into one of the best football players in the state of Alabama, he was the first on his dad’s side to do so.

Belinda Brooks was quick to jump in, though. Her brother, Mike Sutton, played for Alabama in the 1970s as a running back and defensive back.

“I guess you could say (Jamal’s) football talent is from his mom’s side,” Belinda Brooks said.

As a kid, Jamal Brooks was talented in more than just football. School was top priority in the Brooks household, and good grades were expected if the three Brooks’ children — Jamie, who ran track at Alabama State; Jamila, who plays soccer at Talladega College; and Jamal — wanted to participate in high school sports.

“C’s and D’s, even though that would average out to give you eligibility, that didn’t cut it in our house,” Belinda Brooks said. “And all of them had A’s and B’s and were in honors classes. They had a lot they had to do and keep up with to be able to play.”

The priority for education has followed Jamal Brooks into his first semester of college: He finished his summer classes with three A’s and one B, and although his parents knew that Jamal wasn’t too happy about receiving his first B of college, they were proud of him nonetheless.

“That was good for me to hear, just because now I know he’s gotten to the point that he can motivate himself,” his mother said. “We don’t have to say as much as we did when he was younger.”

Eugene Brooks said his son has always been intelligent, even as a little kid waiting for Santa Claus to come on Christmas Day.

“He figured out that you don’t get everything you ask for, so he picked the one or two things he wanted the most, and that’s all he wanted — nothing else,” Eugene said. “He figured out the game out early.”

And when Eugene Brooks used to walk by his son’s room during bedtime, he would see him in bed reading the Bible. At first, it took him by surprise,