

Moultrie News

News

The real value of USC's and Clemson's accomplishments

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S.C. Comptroller



As I sit down to write this column, the local news is reporting that USC and Clemson have both finished in the top ten in college football postseason rankings for the first time ever.

It's another feather in the caps of two teams who made the Palmetto State proud earlier this month by defeating formidable opponents to win bowl games. On New Year's Day, the

Gamecocks beat the Wisconsin Badgers 34-24 in the Capital One Bowl. A couple of days later, the Tigers defeated the Ohio State Buckeyes by a score of 40-35 in the Orange Bowl.

This is a special moment for South Carolina. Our state shines on the national stage, and these two teams have put us on the college football map.

Personally, I'm a huge USC fan, having earned two master's degrees from the school following my service in the Navy. Like many Gamecocks, I'm quite familiar with the phrase "wait 'til next year," which many people used to joke was the Gamecocks' unofficial slogan.

It took a number of years, but "next year" finally came. Over the last three seasons, the Gamecocks have won three bowl games. (To put it in perspective, USC had only three bowl wins over the previous 97 years.) In addition, the Gamecocks have had 11-2 records in each of the last three seasons. (Previously, the school's season record had been 10 victories in 1984.)

They've also won their last 18 home games, the longest consecutive streak in the country.

And on Tuesday, Jan. 7, we learned that the Gamecocks are ranked Number 4 in the country - the highest postseason ranking in school history.

Clemson, too, has risen to prominence. Until last year, when they were ranked Number 9, the Tigers hadn't finished in the Top 10 since 1990. They were Number 8 in this year's postseason rankings. And Clemson has had three straight seasons of at least 10 victories, with records of 10-4 (2011) and 11-2 (2012 and 2013).

As we celebrate the success of our student-athletes, I can't help but think about what it means for our state in the larger picture.

Every sports fan loves to see his or her team succeed. But sports aside, these teams' accomplishments are especially important in a state which has tremendous challenges to overcome.

For too long, South Carolina has languished in many areas. Our education system is in need of improvement. The tax burden is too high, and our system of government is outdated, inefficient and in need of reform. Our politicians bicker when they should be searching for common ground, and there's a politics-as-usual mindset that keeps our state from moving forward. Although we're making tremendous progress on economic development, too many are without work.

For a state facing such obstacles, perhaps the real value in our football teams' achievements can be found in the example they set. With determination and a winning spirit, both attained success which had eluded them, reminding us that real improvement is possible if we put our collective minds to it.

Perhaps they can inspire us all – as individuals and as a state – to think about what's possible, and to continually strive to better ourselves and reach our full potential.

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