

SPORTS



South Carolina quarterback LaNorris Sellers passes against Furman in 2023 at Williams-Brice Stadium.

JEFF BLAKE/USA TODAY SPORTS

USC sees a resilient leader in QB Sellers

Lulu Kesin

Greenville News

USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

When LaNorris Sellers, South Carolina football's new starting quarterback, was a toddler, his grandmother used to say, "That baby's been here before."

He was mature even from a young age, according to his father Norris Sellers.

Preparing his son to play football, the words of his mother continued to echo. "That baby's been here before."

Sellers grew up known as the most athletic kid. That separated him from other young football prospects.

"Everyone always looked up to him, even guys older or guys his age just because of his athletic ability so he was thrust into being a leader from a very young age," Drew Marlowe, Sellers' coach at Florence High School, told The Greenville News.

Sellers started every high school game as a freshman and sophomore but a shoulder injury midway through his junior season cut his year short.

He returned as a senior and threw for 2,949 yards and 45 touchdowns and rushed for 1,338 yards and 17 touchdowns and led Florence to the South Carolina 4A state championship.

After Sellers hoisted the championship trophy, he returned home and washed the dishes, his father said. As his hometown celebrated the triumph, Sellers silently scrubbed plates, replaying moments in his head before going to his room and watch it on film.

That's just Sellers. The player who



South Carolina football's LaNorris Sellers with his mother, Cheryl Ford, and father, Norris Sellers, at Florence High graduation in May 2023.

COURTESY OF CHERYL FORD

throws for almost 3,000 yards in a season, the person who inspired his two younger brothers, including 2025 South Carolina commit Jayden Sellers. LaNorris Sellers leads by example, supporting those around him. He's an old soul whose simplicity makes others laugh.

His personality is deeply rooted in football, with a sprinkle of eccentricity. "He eats lemons whole, the peel and everything," Norris Sellers said.

When coach Shane Beamer told him he'd start in the season opener against

Old Dominion on Saturday (4:15 p.m., SEC Network), Sellers replied with "OK," before going right back to the field. Sellers may be unassuming but will defend himself to playful chirps from teammates in practice, something Beamer said he'd just ignore in 2023.

The 6-foot-3, 242-pound Sellers, a redshirt freshman, is ready to ignite South Carolina's offense in 2024.

"That baby's been here before."

That time Sellers wrote Cam Newton

Cheryl Ford found her son writing one day. Sellers, then 11, scribbled "to Cam Newton" on an envelope, assuring his mother it was all the information needed to send the letter. Ford said her son idolized Newton when he was the quarterback of the Carolina Panthers, spending his free time watching film, studying Newton's every move.

Spencer Rattler, last year's starter, noticed Sellers was hungry to compete and calm on the sidelines.

"When he came in, he was super talented, naturally gifted with stuff you can't work on," Rattler said.

Sellers spent his entire freshman year learning from Rattler, who is now in the NFL. Sellers swapped socializing for nights in his dorm watching film and learning schemes, sitting by his computer with stacks of papers and playbooks. His father said he'd just block out the noise, focus and prepare.

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Georgia, Clemson ADs share similar journeys

Marc Weiszer

Athens Banner-Herald

USA TODAY NETWORK

When Georgia football coach Kirby Smart and Clemson's Dabo Swinney take their spots on opposite sidelines Saturday in Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium, the top 15 showdown will pit two of the three active coaches who have won national championships.

It will also be a clash of powerhouse programs located less than 75 miles apart, with athletic directors — Georgia's Josh Brooks and Clemson's Graham Neff — who share a bond that started as they rose up to their positions at schools where football matters a lot.

The game between the No. 1 Bulldogs and No. 14 Tigers (noon, ABC) is a marquee matchup on the first full weekend of the season. Either Brooks or Neff will leave with fans having to come to grips with a loss on their team's ledger before Labor Day.

"We'll see how the results fall," Neff said. "I would tell you that however the outcome goes, the team or the school on the losing end will remind our head coaches that the prior ADs actually scheduled this game. ... If we or he were to win, we'll probably take credit for scheduling the game."

Brooks, now 44, remembers getting to know Neff, 40, in 2017 when the Bulldogs played in the College Football Playoff for the first time. Brooks worked in internal operations at Georgia. Neff had a similar role at Clemson and was at the same site visit with all four playoff teams in Atlanta.

Brooks said they talk now a couple of times a month and both consider each other to be among their closest friends in the industry.

"He's a great person, a great colleague, someone you can bounce ideas off of," Brooks said. "We had a similar journey coming up. ... We can be very open with each other. We're respectful of each other's jobs but helpful in sharing the right information that can be useful to learn from each other."

Brooks was hired as Georgia athletic director in January 2021 after Greg McGarity retired. Brooks, a Louisiana native, had moved from football operations to assistant and associate AD to senior AD positions at Georgia, with stops at Louisiana Monroe as deputy AD and Division III Millsaps as athletic director in between.

So Brooks tried to be a resource for Neff in December 2021 when the Clemson AD job opened after Dan Radakovich left for Miami. Neff said he did the same before Brooks landed the job at Georgia.

"We're both kind of younger dudes, his AD job was the year before mine,"

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Westside stays atop Upstate's Super 25 football rankings

Todd Shanesy

USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

Here are the Upstate Super 25 high school football power rankings headed into Week 1 of the 2024 SCHSL schedule.

Class AAAA state champion Westside stayed at No. 1 after holding on for a 30-27 victory Saturday in Week Zero against Creekside, a Class AAAA power in Georgia. The top eight teams in the rankings remained in the same order. Dorman moved into the top 10 after a win against Greenville.

Gaffney opens its season 7:30 p.m. Friday at J.L. Mann in a highly anticipated game between Class AAAA state championship contenders in a No. 2 vs. No. 3 matchup.

Pickens joined the list after a 47-41 win against Easley.

1. Westside

Record: 1-0

Previous ranking: 1

Last week: Beat Creekside (Ga.), 30-27

This week: No game

2. J.L. Mann

Record: 1-0

Previous ranking: 2

Last week: Beat Midland Valley, 56-0

This week: Home vs. Gaffney

3. Gaffney

Record: 0-0

Previous ranking: 3

Last week: No game

This week: At J.L. Mann



Westside defender Ja'Nyzae Allen (25) reaches while RJ Livingston (4) tackles Creekside quarterback Cayden Benson (7) on Saturday in Anderson.

KEN RUIWARD/STAFF

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2025 edge rusher Davis flips commitment from Clemson

Derrian Carter

Greenville News

USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

CLEMSON — Clemson football commit Bryce Davis flipped his commitment to its ACC rival, Duke, on Sunday.

The four-star defensive lineman from Grimsley High School in Greensboro, North Carolina, originally commit-



Davis

ted to the Tigers in July. He is rated as the No. 59 player nationally and the No. 3 prospect in the state by the 247Sports Composite.

Davis helped the Tigers end their recruiting troubles back in July when they missed out on several high school recruits who

had listed Clemson as a finalist. With the defensive lineman heading to Duke, Clemson has only landed one recruit since: four-star linebacker Logan Anderson.

Although this is a loss for Clemson, its 2025 class still boasts strong defensive line talent. It has three four-star defensive linemen with Amare Adams, Isaiah Campbell and Ari Watford.

After Davis' flip, coach Dabo Swinney's 2025 class has 14 recruits and is ranked No. 14 nationally. It has 10 four-star recruits and four three stars.

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Journeys

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we were both deputies together," Neff said. "It's stitched together for quite some time. It's pretty cool."

Neff was in his ninth year at the South Carolina school, serving as chief financial officer, director of capital projects and deputy AD.

He graduated from Georgia Tech in 2006 with a degree in civil engineering and was head manager of the Yellow Jackets' basketball team that reached the Final Four in 2004. He worked for accounting firm Deloitte & Touche, as financial controller and in ticket operations at Georgia Tech and then associate AD at Middle Tennessee State before going to Clemson.

Brooks and Neff spend time together at professional development events, like in Atlanta earlier this month. Brooks usually goes to Clemson for an indoor track meet at the start of the season and gets to catch up with him there.

Neff said Brooks is usually one of his first calls to discuss "the moving parts of the industry," being at "like-minded schools in a lot of different regards, but certainly in investment and support and broad-based and comprehensive investment for all of our sports."

Neff provided insight about logistics for playoff trips after the Tigers' run of appearances in the CFP from 2015-20.



Clemson athletic director Graham Neff and Georgia athletic director Josh Brooks, whose football teams meet in the season opener in Atlanta.

KEN RUINARD/USA TODAY SPORTS AND JOSHUA JONES/ATHENS BANNER-HERALD

Neff said the two talk about names for head coach openings no matter the sport.

"He's a great communicator and people person and then you balance that with his intellect and strategy, he knows his stuff and has a great way about him," Neff said. "He's highly strategic and that combination makes him really, really unique."

When Brooks was searching for a gymnastics coach this spring, he turned to Neff as a sounding board about the possible pool of candidates because Neff had hired a coach two years earlier when Clemson started its program.

"He's somebody I trust," Brooks said.

Neff picked Brooks' brain about gymnastics, too, before Clemson hired Utah State coach Amy Smith.

Neff and staff attended a Georgia gymnastics meet to see it firsthand before the school hired its first coach. They sat together and talked about the sport during the meet.

"It's leaning on each other for resources and recommendations," Neff said.

Brooks said there's not much sharing how the schools are approaching major changes to college athletics, including revenue sharing with athletes, but it tends to be more personnel matters like firing a coach.

"These jobs can be lonely," Brooks said. "When you're sitting in this chair, you need friends who are sitting in similar chairs that are going through the same challenges you are. You can just discuss ideas or just commiserate sometimes."

Brooks sent a video for a birthday video Neff's staff put together for his 40th.

They joked when Neff replaced Brooks as the youngest power conference AD when he was hired.

"We laugh at that from time to time," Neff said.

They sat together at the NCAA soccer round of 16 game last season between the schools. Clemson prevailed on penalty kicks.

"We were joking that if it was tied after PKs, the ADs would get out there and have PKs vs. each other," Brooks said. "He's taller and longer so that would have been more of a challenge."

Sellers

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Sellers was always told, 'real men do cry'

Norris Sellers couldn't cry. That wasn't how his generation as a child envisioned men.

"I refuse to use that for my boys, I always told them real men do cry," Norris Sellers said.

Real men *show* their emotions.

Sellers' parents made a home that comforted feelings and left the door open for conversation. They never wanted their son's head to feel too heavy, where he couldn't focus on the task at hand so they encouraged him to get his emotions out. His mom said if there was an issue, Sellers sought advice and worked through it without put-

ting down others in the process.

Still, Sellers was quiet. In high school, Marlowe begged Sellers to speak more, hoping he'd chew out his teammates, hinting that his reserved side wasn't always productive. Slowly, he began to become more vocal.

"Sellers' parents allowed him to fail when he needed to fail which allowed him to grow," Marlowe said.

Sellers gets thrown out of practice

While most of offensive coordinator Dowell Loggains' focus last season was on Rattler, his development with Sellers began.

That development varied. Intense workouts, extra reps after practice, typical backup QB things. It also at times included tossing Sellers from practice. That was part of the maturation process Loggains said, with a goal to make him an SEC quarterback.

"He is resilient," Loggains said. "We know there will be lumps (along the way) but I have a ton of faith in him."

Loggains referred to him as a robot to illustrate his self-possession. Beamer has expressed a similar evaluation — "nothing fazes him," he said.

Sellers bounces back extremely fast, Loggains said, adding that he rarely makes the same mistake twice. His youth showed at times, but Sellers gained the trust of Beamer, Loggains and his teammates. That's why he's starting as a redshirt freshman.

"That's been a match made in heaven," Norris Sellers said of his son and Loggains. "(Loggains) makes a world of difference for the team, and it made a world of difference for the LaNorris."

USC's 2024 season

Those who watched Sellers flourish in high school hope to witness it again

on a grander stage.

"I think that a lot of people around this area knew how special he was," Marlowe said.

This is his team now and he's ready for the responsibility.

"Not saying too much, not saying too little, I try to stay calm, when bad things happen, you have to stay calm, you can't get frustrated because it's a domino effect," Sellers said.

When Sellers takes the first snap at Williams Brice Stadium on Saturday, his mom may hold her breath for a moment and say a prayer. His father will remember what his mom used to always say about his son.

"That baby's been here before."

Lulu Kesimal covers South Carolina athletics for The Greenville News and the USA TODAY Network. Email her at lkesimal@gannett.com and follow her on X, formerly known as Twitter, @Luluke-sin

Rankings

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4. T.L. Hanna

Record: 1-0

Previous ranking: 4

Last week: Beat Byrnes, 19-16

This week: No game

5. Daniel

Record: 1-0

Previous ranking: 5

Last week: Beat Chapman, 41-21

This week: At Stratford

6. Belton-Honea Path

Record: 1-0

Previous ranking: 6

Last week: Beat Broome, 45-15

This week: At Greer

7. Hillcrest

Record: 1-0

Previous ranking: 7

Last week: Beat Laurens, 16-0

This week: Home vs. Clover

8. Spartanburg

Record: 1-0

Previous ranking: 8

Last week: Beat South Pointe, 26-25

This week: Home vs. Dutch Fork

9. Dorman

Record: 1-0

Previous ranking: 13
Last week: Beat Greenville, 42-35
This week: At Grayson (Ga.)

10. Greenville

Record: 0-1

Previous ranking: 9

Last week: Lost to Dorman, 42-35

This week: Home vs. Riverside

11. Byrnes

Record: 0-1

Previous ranking: 10

Last week: Lost to T.L. Hanna, 19-16

This week: At Irmo

12. Boiling Springs

Record: 1-0

Previous ranking: 14

Last week: Beat Greer, 43-0

This week: Home vs. Mauldin

13. Christ Church

Record: 0-1

Previous ranking: 11

Last week: Lost to Hammond, 56-28

This week: Home vs. Asheville School (N.C.)

14. Pendleton

Record: 1-0

Previous ranking: 17

Last week: Beat Chesnee, 47-21

This week: At Keenan

15. Chapman

Record: 0-1

Previous ranking: 12
Last week: Lost to Daniel, 41-21
This week: Home vs. St. Joseph's

16. Broome

Record: 0-1

Previous ranking: 15

Last week: Lost to Belton-Honea Path, 45-15

This week: At Chesnee

17. Riverside

Record: 1-0

Previous ranking: 18

Last week: Beat Mauldin, 39-20

This week: At Greenville

18. Mountain View

Record: 1-0

Previous ranking: 20

Last week: Beat Atlantic Collegiate, 69-0

This week: At Southside Christian

19. Greer

Record: 0-1

Previous ranking: 16

Last week: Lost to Boiling Springs, 43-0

This week: Home vs. Belton-Honea Path

20. Powdersville

Record: 0-1

Previous ranking: 19

Last week: Lost to Seneca, 35-34

This week: Home vs. Abbeville

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