

SPORTS



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COLLEGE FOOTBALL NO. 14 SOUTH CAROLINA 17, NO. 12 CLEMSON 14



South Carolina quarterback LaNorris Sellers (16) scores the winning touchdown against Clemson during the fourth quarter on Saturday at Memorial Stadium in Clemson. KEN RUINARD/IMAGN IMAGES

SELLERS SHINES

QB's heroics lead South Carolina to win against Clemson

Lulu Kesin

Greenville News

USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

CLEMSON — The frustration, the confusion, was obvious.

"HOW DOES HE KEEP DOING THAT?" a Clemson fan yelled, looking around at the fans next to him for answers.

Fans in the student section of Memorial Stadium were hoping, audibly beg-

ging, that the magic of South Carolina football quarterback LaNorris Sellers wouldn't kiss their team's playoff hopes goodbye.

With the Gamecocks trailing 14-10 on third-and-16 with 1:18 to play, the ball was snapped and Sellers' pocket instantly dwindled. His options were stark, so he quickly pivoted to run up the middle, beating three defenders. One dove and likely grazed his jersey in attempt to tackle him. Another left running back Rocket

Sanders to try to stop Sellers. They couldn't. Sellers scored the game-winning touchdown.

And that wasn't even the play the Clemson fan was so mad about.

From the first drive of the game, Sellers escaped pressure when it looked like he was a millisecond or millimeter away from getting thrown to the ground. That's what was so annoying for Tigers fans.

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Clemson QB Klubnik falls short in the clutch

Derrian Carter

Greenville News

USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

CLEMSON — The moment was for the taking for Clemson football quarterback Cade Klubnik, and he couldn't deliver Saturday.

South Carolina quarterback LaNorris Sellers scored a go-ahead 20-yard rushing touchdown with 1:08 left in the game to help No. 14 South Carolina (9-3) upset No. 12 Clemson (9-3) 17-14 at Memorial Stadium.

Still, Klubnik and Clemson's offense had a chance to tie or win after trailing for the first time. Klubnik has thrived in these situations this season, pulling off a game-winning 50-yard rushing touchdown on the road against Pitt in Week 12. Saturday's stage was different, though, with the added pressure of the Palmetto Bowl and a possible CFP "win and in" scenario.

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Clemson quarterback Cade Klubnik (2) is tackled by South Carolina defensive tackle Tonka Hemingway (91) and linebacker Demetrius Knight Jr. (17) during Saturday's game.

KEN RUINARD/IMAGN IMAGES

Clemson to play in ACC title game

Derrian Carter

Greenville News

USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

CLEMSON — Clemson football is going to the ACC Championship Game after Miami's 42-38 upset road loss to Syracuse on Saturday and will make the College Football Playoff if the Tigers beat SMU.

The No. 12 Tigers (9-3, 7-1 ACC) will face No. 9 SMU in Charlotte on Dec. 7 at 8 p.m. at Bank of America Stadium. They had one path to the playoff after their 17-14 loss to rival No. 14 South Carolina on Saturday at Memorial Stadium, needing unranked Syracuse (9-3, 5-3) to upset the No. 7 Hurricanes (10-2, 6-2).

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Spartanburg's Justin Rice (14) gets to the end zone as J.L. Mann's Raymone Whitner (9) tries to stop him on Friday night in Spartanburg.

ALEX HICKS JR./SPARTANBURG HERALD-JOURNAL

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS

Strong second half lifts Spartanburg past J.L. Mann

Kamryn Jackson

Greenville News

USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

Spartanburg football got its revenge. Just a season ago, the Vikings were up against J.L. Mann in the second round of the SCHSL playoffs when two interceptions cost Spartanburg the game, losing 17-7 to the Patriots.

This season, the Vikings found themselves in the third round against the same opponent.

And produced a different outcome.

A fourth-quarter rushing touchdown by senior Cam'Rich Smith put the finishing touch on the rematch as Spartanburg defeated Mann 35-9 on Friday night at Viking Stadium to advance to

the Class AAAA Division 1 Upper State championship game against Dutch Fork.

"This feels great, man," senior offensive lineman Travis Miller said. "We lost this game last year, but Coach (Mark) Hodge said we had to eat it, and that's what we did. We executed and came out with a win."

Senior receiver Justin Rice and sophomore running back Trenton Lynch were the difference-makers for the Vikings (9-2) against the Patriots (10-3). Rice scored the first touchdown of the game at the end of the first quarter after both teams struggled to move the ball downfield initially. He finished with three catches for 90 yards and two touchdowns.

Lynch is having a breakout sophomore season, as he entered the game with 16 touchdowns. Adding two more wasn't a sweat.

Lynch finished with 193 yards and two touchdowns on 20 carries.

"This feeling is awesome," Hodge said. "These kids played hard and earned the victory. We didn't play great in the first half, but they didn't panic. They entered the locker room, got themselves together and played much better in the second half."

Next up for the Vikings is no small feat, as they'll take on Dutch Fork (11-0) next Friday at Dutch Fork Stadium. The two teams matched up this season

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ON THE AIR

MONDAY TELEVISION

COLLEGE MEN'S BASKETBALL

6:30 p.m. FS1 – Maryland-Baltimore

County at Georgetown
8 p.m. FDSNSO – Jackson State at Saint Louis
 truTV – Game TBA
10 p.m. truTV – Game TBA

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Upstate's top performers after quarterfinals round

Todd Shanesy

Greenville News

USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

Here are the Upstate's top performers from the quarterfinals of the high school football playoffs.

Marquise Henderson, Belton-Honea Path: Henderson, a Clemson commit, had 32 rushes for 144 yards and a touchdown as the Bears beat Powdersville, 35-14, to reach the Class AAA Upstate championship.

Noah Thomas, Belton-Honea Path: Thomas was 10-for-11 passing for 82 yards with a touchdown.

Tajeh Watson-Martin, Belton-Honea Path: Watson-Martin had nine catches for 71 yards.

Grayson Clary, Daniel: Clary passed for five touchdowns in a 49-35 loss to South Pointe in Class AAAA.

Jayvon Gilmore, Gaffney: Gilmore passed for three touchdowns in the first half as Gaffney beat T.L. Hanna to reach the Class AAAA Division 2 Upstate championship game.

Jayden McDowell, Gaffney: McDowell ran for 121 yards on 17 carries and caught four passes, including one for a touchdown.

Zyon Ratchford, Gaffney: Ratchford had seven tackles, four unassisted.

Jamarcus Smith, Gaffney: Smith had four catches with a touchdown and ran three times for 41 yards.

Keyshun Henderson, J.L. Mann: Henderson caught five passes for 85 yards against Spartanburg.

Bennett Brooks, Powdersville: Brooks had 115 yards on four catches against Belton-Honea Path.

Keagan Reid, Powdersville: Reid passed for 277 yards and two touchdowns.

Trey Burke, Spartanburg: Burke passed for two touchdowns and 166 yards in a 35-9 win against J.L. Mann as the Vikings reached the Class AAAA Division 1 Upstate championship game.

Trenton Lynch, Spartanburg: Lynch ran for 193 yards and two touchdowns on 20 carries.

Justin Rice, Spartanburg: Rice had two touchdowns on three catches for 90 yards. He scored from 14 yards for the first score of the game and 76 yards on a pass from Burke to make it 28-9 in the third quarter.

KD Patterson, T.L. Hanna: Patterson ran for 70 yards on 15 carries against Gaffney.

Dylan Williams, T.L. Hanna: Williams ran for 52 yards and a touchdown on nine carries.

NFL

8 p.m. ESPN – Cleveland at Denver

NHL

7 p.m. NHL – New Jersey at N.Y. Rangers

Note: Live events only. Schedule is subject to schedule changes, local blackouts.

SC HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCORES

Here are SCHSL football playoff scores from across South Carolina from the quarterfinals of the SC high school football playoffs.

Friday, Nov. 29

Abbeville 41, Lamar 24
 Barnwell 28, Cheraw 27
 Belton Honea Path 35, Powdersville 14
 Clinton 31, Batesburg-Leesville 14
 Cross 12, Hannah Pamplico 7
 Dutch Fork 52, River Bluff 14
 Fairfield Central 48, Pageland Central 28
 Gaffney 21, Hanna 7
 Irmo 56, West Florence 7

Lake View 42, Bamberg - Ehrhardt 32
 Lewisville 31, Hunter-Kinard-Tyler 6
 Loris 30, Keenan 14
 Manning 34, Philip Simmons 21
 Mountain View Prep 30, Crescent 14
 North Augusta 63, Gilbert 14
 Northwestern 35, Greenwood 6
 Oceanside Collegiate 28, Dillon 21
 South Florence 49, Hartsville 21
 South Pointe 49, Daniel 35
 Spartanburg 35, Mann 9
 Summerville 49, Ridge View 20
 Sumter 34, James Island 17
 Westside 49, Camden 7
 White Knoll 23, Berkeley 3

SCHSL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Here are the SCHSL matchups for the high school football state semifinals. State championships will be played at South Carolina State University in Orangeburg.

Class AAAA Division 1

Upper State championship
 No. 2 seed Belton-Honea Path at No. 1 seed Mountain View Prep
Lower State championship
 No. 2 seed Oceanside Collegiate at No. 1 seed Loris

Class AAA

Upper State championship
 No. 2 seed Belton-Honea Path at No. 1 seed Mountain View Prep
Lower State championship
 No. 2 seed Oceanside Collegiate at No. 1 seed Loris

Class AA

Upper State championship
 No. 1 seed Region 3 Fairfield Central at No. 1 seed Region 1 Clinton
Lower State championship
 No. 2 seed Region 5 Barnwell vs. No. 1 seed Region 7 Manning

Class A

Upper State championship
 No. 1 seed Region 1 Abbeville vs. No. 1 seed Region 2 Lewisville
Lower State championship
 No. 1 seed Region 5 Cross at No. 1 seed Region 6 Lake View

Class AAA
Upper State championship
 No. 1 seed Region 1 Abbeville vs. No. 1 seed Region 2 Lewisville
Lower State championship
 No. 1 seed Region 5 Cross at No. 1 seed Region 6 Lake View

Class AAAA Division 2
Upper State championship
 No. 2 seed Gaffney at No. 1 seed Northwestern
Lower State championship
 No. 7 seed White Knoll at No. 1 seed Irmo

(State championship: Dec. 14, 6 p.m.)

Class AAAA

Upper State championship
 No. 3 seed South Pointe at No. 1 seed Westside
Lower State championship
 No. 4 seed South Florence at No. 2 seed North Augusta

(State championship: Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m.)

Spartanburg

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when the Silver Foxes defeated Spartanburg 24-7 in August.

Dutch Fork has won eight state titles since the SCHSL expanded to five classifications in 2016, all under coach Tom Knotts.

But luckily for the Vikings, Hodge is not one to back down from big-time matchups. He welcomes them.

"We have to play well, execute, make plays at a high level, and be physical," Hodge said. "We're blessed to be a part of the game, and the team who plays the best will win the ball game."

"It's a game we want. It's a game they want. And it's a game the state wants."

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Clemson

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"I told myself, 'This is what you're made of. This is what you're made to do,'" Klubnik said. "Drove down the field and didn't get it done."

Clemson's final drive started perfectly with Klubnik hitting on multiple big plays and the team efficiently using its timeouts to get to South Carolina's 18-yard line. However, on second-and-10 with 16 seconds left, Klubnik received the snap, drifted right toward a South Carolina defender and forced a pass that went behind running back Phil Mafah, who tipped the ball. Gamecocks linebacker Demetrius Knight Jr. dove, intercepted the pass and ended the game.

"Trying to throw to Phil and kind of dirt-balled it," Klubnik said. "Even if we

would have caught it, it really wouldn't have helped us a ton, and the guy made a good play."

Clemson coach Dabo Swinney said Klubnik should have thrown the ball away to avoid taking a sack or having a turnover because the Tigers still had a timeout left.

"He made a lot of great plays, and I know that play will be magnified, and that was a mistake, but he'll learn from it," Swinney said.

The Tigers entered Saturday with a 37.7% chance to make the CFP, according to ESPN's FPI. They could have landed one of the seven CFP at-large bids with a win, but after losing, they luckily still have a path to the playoffs now: the ACC Championship Game. No. 6 Miami lost to Syracuse on Saturday, allowing Clemson to overtake the Hurricanes for a spot to the conference title game. The

Tigers will face SMU in Charlotte on Dec. 7 at Bank of America Stadium. The winner gets an automatic bid to the CFP and a possible first-round bye.

Klubnik's late interception was the cherry on top for a disjointed game for Clemson on both sides of the ball. Despite winning the turnover margin 3-2, its offense and defense imploded with their respective woes.

Offensively, Clemson's last five drives ended with a fumble, three punts and an interception. The Tigers could not sustain drives against South Carolina despite having all five of their starters back on the offensive line after a rash of injuries, and they scored zero points off of the three turnovers the defense forced.

Defensively, Clemson's run defense issues arose again. A week after allowing a season-high 288 rushing yards

against The Citadel, it gave up 267 yards vs. South Carolina. It could not tackle Sellers, who rushed for 166 yards and two touchdowns. His game-winning score happening on third-and-16.

"I'm sick to my stomach," linebacker Barrett Carter said. "We did not plan for this to go this way."

Swinney said Clemson needed to beat South Carolina to have a great season. With the loss, Swinney labels a nine-win season as "good." Clemson can still sneak into the CFP, but Saturday's defeat marks its second straight season where it did not reach 10 wins in the regular season.

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USC

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At least four times, he snuck out of pressure instead of getting dragged down by defenders. On the second play of the game, he escaped with players grabbing at his ankles and legs, and ran 38 yards for a first down.

Houdini-esque.

"LaMagic," defensive back Nick Emanuel said.

Any nickname works, Sellers said. He'll run with whatever people want to call him, even if the majority of people in the stands Saturday were negatively impacted by Sellers' actions.

Seller's elusiveness, his ability to escape pressure, lifted the No. 14 Gamecocks (9-3) to a 17-14 win over the No. 12

Tigers (9-3) in the rivalry game. He scored South Carolina's two touchdowns, rushed for 166 yards and finished 13-of-21 passing for 164 yards.

"He made two of the greatest runs you're ever gonna see," Clemson coach Dabo Swinney said of Sellers.

Sellers didn't even have answers when asked why he's so hard to tackle.

"Uhhhh, I don't know," Sellers said.

While Sellers was growing up in Florence, the Clemson-South Carolina rivalry didn't matter much, he revealed Tuesday, saying he didn't really watch the annual game. In 2022, he was still in high school when the Gamecocks defeated the Tigers in Memorial Stadium. Last season, he was standing on the sideline watching his team fall 16-7.

Saturday's game was like no other previous Palmetto Bowl. It's been 11 years since both teams were ranked in the

matchup, and this year's game had serious College Football Playoff implications. South Carolina coach Shane Beamer revealed that former Gamecocks coach Steve Spurrier called him Tuesday and said this was the biggest Carolina-Clemson game ever.

The brisk 41-degree day didn't stop any fans from yelling "boo" to Sellers and his team. The 6-foot-2, 242-pound redshirt freshman quarterback was enemy No. 1 in Memorial Stadium.

"They can say whatever they want, but we are still out there playing, and that's all that matters," Sellers said of the crowd noise.

Clemson didn't make it easy for Sellers to succeed. After four straight games in which Sellers passed for more than 244 yards, he couldn't get much going against a swarming defense that put on a clinic against the Gamecocks' blocking. Mean-

while, Clemson QB Cade Klubnik had 148 passing yards in the first half.

In the third quarter, Clemson garnered 112 total yards compared to 62 for South Carolina, and until the final five minutes momentum was swinging in the Tigers' favor.

Then suddenly, Sellers, unfazed by his previous mistakes ran 20 of the most important yards of his young career, on the same two feet that have brought this South Carolina team to six consecutive wins.

"LaNorris Sellers is the best player in the country," Beamer said.

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Title

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According to ESPN's FPI, Clemson had a 9% chance to win the conference entering Saturday. The Tigers overcame those slim odds thanks to Miami's

shocking loss, which gave them a better conference record than the Hurricanes.

SMU (11-1, 8-0) clinched a spot to the ACC Championship Game last week. The Tigers will likely need to beat SMU to make the CFP because their loss to South Carolina ruined their chances at one of the seven at-large bids.

SMU will be the designated "home team" in the conference championship because it finished above Clemson in the standings.

Winning the conference is especially important this season as the ACC champion will receive an automatic bid and a likely first-round bye in the 12-team Col-

lege Football Playoff. The top four ranked conference champions get a bye.

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