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WREN FOOTBALL



Wren junior running back Muntu Brown has rushed for 1,240 yards and 16 touchdowns in seven games this season. TODD SHANESY/GRENVILLE NEWS

Brown's journey to football field started in orphanage in Congo

Todd Shanesy

Greenville News
USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

PIEDMONT – Wren junior Muntu Brown has the kind of smile that comes not just from his face but from somewhere deep within.

“Most people don’t have the blessings I have,” he said.

In his first season as a high school football varsity running back, Brown has suddenly become one of the best in the state. He’s more thankful, however, about how he got here.

Brown was an orphan in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, adopted at age 8 by an American family after a five-year process.

“I’m grateful just to be able to go to school and play football,” Brown said. “I remember being excited to explore new places and see how kids here are so blessed to even have a chance to do all this. I’m always so grateful for the chance to do what I do.”

Brown has 1,240 rushing yards (7.0 per carry) and 16 touchdowns. In a Week 7 win against Fountain Inn, he ran for 240 yards and three TDs.

Wren is No. 14 in the Upstate Super 25 power rankings. The Hurricanes

(5-2, 2-0 Region 1-AAAA) play at Laurens (1-6, 1-1) in Week 8 of the SCHSL regular season.

“I have loved it,” Brown said. “It really is like a family here. That’s the main thing I like about football. It’s everyone together to achieve one goal.”

“We pour a lot into the players,” Wren coach Anthony Frate said. “We cry when they cry. We hug them when they need one. I think he enjoyed that. ... He’s just an awesome person. He has an open mind and an open heart.”

Brown didn’t play sports until eighth grade, instead concentrating on school. He knew nothing about football. And when he began playing, he was a defensive back. As a freshman on Wren JV team, he was moved to linebacker.

“He looked great physically, but he didn’t really know the game,” Frate said. “He was good. He could run and hit. We said, ‘What if we made him a running back? What if we just handed him the ball and let him go?’ We did that and he really popped.”

Brown (5-foot-11, 205 pounds) didn’t have a chance to show that on the varsity level until this season. He played defense only as a sophomore because Wren was so loaded with ball-carriers, including senior running back Reese

Price (1,625 yards with 23 touchdowns) and senior quarterback Colten Bagwell (1,083 yards with 18 TDs).

In Wren’s current three-game winning streak, Brown has 89 carries for 638 yards (7.2 per attempt) and six touchdowns.

“We’re just scratching the surface of his ability and his knowledge of the game, how to read blocks and the flow of it,” Frate said. “He’s a natural, but he’s still growing into it. And he’s so physical that he wears down defenses. A lot of his big runs happen coming out of halftime or in the fourth quarter.”

Brown’s effect on his own team happens way before that.

“He is perpetually happy. He is perpetually in a good mood,” Frate said. “When you hear things about attitude and effort, he is the model. He makes everybody around him feel better because he is such a positive person.”

Todd Shanesy covers high school athletics for the Greenville News, Spartanburg Herald-Journal and Anderson Independent Mail in the USA TODAY Network. Contact him by email at todd.shanesy@shj.com. Follow him on X, formerly called Twitter, at @ToddShanesySHJ.

SOUTH CAROLINA FOOTBALL

New OL coach needs to protect Sellers against Oklahoma

Lulu Kesin

Greenville News
USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

COLUMBIA — LaNorris Sellers hasn’t been fully protected by South Carolina football’s offensive line in the 2025 season.

The quarterback has been sacked 19 times, No. 2 in SEC and seventh in the FBS. Five came in the 20-10 loss to LSU for a loss of 55 yards, then 24 hours later, coach Shane Beamer fired offensive line coach Lonnie Teasley.

Sellers has been pressured on 75 dropbacks, which is second in the SEC and highest in the conference among quarterbacks with at least 106 total dropbacks this season (48.7%). He’s been sacked 22.7% of the time he’s been pressured, according to Pro Football Focus.

Run game coordinator/tight ends coach Shawn Elliott is now tasked with fixing a position group that’s injured, penalty-ridden and still failing to protect Sellers, who started the season in the Heisman Trophy conversation.

The Gamecocks (3-3, 1-3 SEC) face No. 13 Oklahoma (5-1, 1-1) on Oct. 18 (12:45 p.m. ET, SEC Network).

Oklahoma ranks No. 1 in the nation in total defense (211.2 yards) and second in scoring defense (9.83 points) and passing defense (126.3 yards). The Sooners are second in the SEC with 22 sacks.

“It’s a combination of everything,” Beamer said on Sellers getting pressured. “Certainly starts with the offensive line but we’ve all got a hand in it ... it needs to be better and confident that it will be going forward.”

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Sean Elliott, pictured in 2024, has been named South Carolina’s offensive line coach following the firing of Lonnie Teasley earlier this week. KEN RUINARD/STAFF

CLEMSON FOOTBALL

Backup QB Vizzina has Swinney’s confidence to ‘get it done’

Derrian Carter

Greenville News
USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

CLEMSON — Clemson football backup quarterback Christopher Vizzina has not statistically performed well in limited opportunities during the 2025 season, but Tigers coach Dabo Swinney believes in him.

Vizzina has appeared in three games, completing 50% of his passes for 37 yards and rushing for 21 yards on seven carries. He played one snap against LSU, had two drives against North Carolina and finished the Boston College game after starting quarterback Cade Klubnik suffered an ankle sprain in the third quarter.

Clemson (3-3, 2-2 ACC) hosts SMU (4-2, 2-0) on Oct. 18 (3:30 p.m. ET, ACC Network) at Memorial Stadium, and Klubnik is expected to play but may not be at 100% health. If his injury holds him

Inside

See which teams are up and which are down in this week’s ACC power rankings. **3C**

back, Swinney is confident in Vizzina, a third-year player and former four-star recruit from Birmingham, Alabama.

“If Cade can’t go, CV’s the guy for sure and he gotta go get it done,” Swinney said Oct. 15. “We got confidence that he could.”

Klubnik and Vizzina have had different career arcs. Klubnik, 6-foot-2, became an end-of-year starter in his freshman season, replacing DJ Uiagalelei in the 2022 ACC championship game. Klubnik has been the Tigers’ starting quarterback since, enduring peaks and valleys.

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Clemson quarterback Christopher Vizzina (17) reads the defense against Boston College on Oct. 11 in Chestnut Hill, Mass. ERIC CANHA/IMAGN IMAGES

ACC POWER RANKINGS

Liam Rooney

Tallahassee Democrat | USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Florida State is spiraling, and Mike Norvell's seat is as hot as the sun in Miami, where Mario Cristobal basks in the glory of his in-state rivals falling apart. Elsewhere, Clemson has quietly won two straight, albeit against weak opposition, and Georgia Tech keeps finding ways to win. With that said, let's dive into the ACC football power rankings:

1. Miami (5-0)

Last week: 1
This week: Louisville
What to know: An off week, and both your rivals' head coaches have their seats on fire? Mario Cristobal is laughing his way to the bank with his cafecito.

2. Virginia (5-1)

Last week: 2
This week: Washington State
What to know: Tony Elliot has gone from a potential hot seat to a name that needs to be considered for the Bobby Dodd if Virginia keeps this up.

3. Georgia Tech (6-0)

Last week: 3
This week: Duke
What to know: It's a shame Haynes King will never wear Georgia Tech's Under Armour uniforms; a perfect new football "Superman" ad campaign could have been done.

4. Louisville (4-1)

Last week: 5
This week: Miami
What to know: Jeff Brohm has gone on record to express his dismay for off weeks. He doesn't have one now until the season ends, a reason for cheer in Louisville.

5. Pitt (4-2)

Last week: 7
This week: Stanford
What to know: Mason Heintschel



Pitt quarterback Mason Heintschel celebrates after a touchdown against Florida State on Oct. 11 at Doak S. Campbell Stadium. JAMES GILBERT/GETTY IMAGES

and the Panthers might have cemented the end of Mike Norvell at FSU.

6. Duke (4-2)

Last week: 6
This week: Open week
What to know: The Blue Devils' toughest test of the season is ahead of them, keeping fans in the stands as basketball tips off.

7. Cal (4-2)

Last week: 8
This week: North Carolina
What to know: Jaron Keawe Sagapolutele might be able to put the final nail in the coffin of Bill Belichick's UNC career.

8. SMU (4-2)

Last week: 10
This week: Clemson
What to know: Kevin Jennings locked up the award for coolest play in football with his behind-the-back jet sweep.

9. North Carolina State (4-3)

Last week: 9
This week: Open Week
What to know: The Wolfpack looked lost against the Irish, who extended NC State's losing streak vs. ranked opponents to 1,000 days. I was in college during that time.

10. Clemson (3-3)

Last week: 11
This week: SMU
What to know: The Tigers have won two straight. However, wins over North Carolina and Boston College aren't anything to get worked up over, just yet.

11. Syracuse (3-3)

Last week: 12
This week: Pitt
What to know: Coaches will tell you they don't like off weeks, but last week was a necessary pause in the season for Syracuse.

12. Wake Forest (4-2)

Last week: 14
This week: Open week
What to know: The Demon Deacons got Oregon State's Trent Bray fired. Mike Norvell and Bill Belichick are coming up on Wake Forest's schedule soon. Are they next?

13. Florida State (3-3)

Last week: 4
This week: Stanford
What to know: Mike Norvell's seat is hotter than it's ever been. Pair that with his black eye, and the Seminoles are a wounded program.

14. Stanford (2-4)

Last week: 15
This week: FSU
What to know: Stanford may have lost, but the Cardinal have \$50 million reasons to celebrate the future.

15. North Carolina (2-3)

Last week: 13
This week: Cal
What to know: Two statements under 15 words to reinforce Bill Belichick's commitment to UNC, how comforting.

16. Virginia Tech (2-5)

Last week: 16
This week: Open week
What to know: The Hokies should call James Franklin. He won't answer, but what do you have to lose?

17. Boston College (1-5)

Last week: 17
This week: UConn
What to know: The good news for Boston College fans? Ice hockey is back for the top 25 Eagles.

Liam Rooney covers Florida State athletics for the Tallahassee Democrat. Contact him via email at LRooney@gannett.com.

SPORTS ON TV FRIDAY, OCT. 17 (ALL TIMES EASTERN)

AUTO RACING

12:30 p.m.
FS2 — NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series, Playoffs, Round of 8, Love's RV Stop 225, Qualifying, Talladega, Ala.

4 p.m.
FOX — NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series, Playoffs, Round of 8, Love's RV Stop 225, Talladega, Ala.

5:25 p.m.
ESPN2 — Formula 1, United States Grand Prix, Sprint Qualifying, Austin, Texas

COLLEGE FIELD HOCKEY

4 p.m.
BTN — Northwestern at Rutgers

6:30 p.m.
ACCN — Duke at Boston College

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

7 p.m.
ESPN — Louisville at Miami (Fla.)

8 p.m.

FOX — Nebraska at Minnesota

9 p.m.
CBSSN — San Jose State at Utah State

10:30 p.m.
ESPN — North Carolina at California

COLLEGE HOCKEY (MEN'S)

7 p.m.
ESPN2 — Michigan State at Boston U.

COLLEGE SOCCER (MEN'S)

6 p.m.
BTN — UCLA at Michigan

8 p.m.
ACCN — Duke at Clemson

COLLEGE VOLLEYBALL (WOMEN'S)

7 p.m.
SECN — Alabama at Georgia

8 p.m.
BTN — UCLA at Wisconsin

9 p.m.
ESPNU — Hawaii at Long Beach State

10 p.m.
BTN — Penn State at Washington

GOLF

3 a.m.
GOLF — DP World Tour, India Championship, Second Round, New Delhi, India

2 p.m.
GOLF — PGA Tour Champions, Dominion Energy Charity Classic, First Round, Richmond, Va.

11 p.m.
GOLF — LPGA Tour, BMW Ladies Championship, Third Round, Haenam-gun, Korea

HORSE RACING

2 p.m.
FS2 — America's Day at the Races

MLB BASEBALL

6:08 p.m.
FS1 — Playoffs, AL Championship Series, Toronto at Seattle, Game 5, if necessary

8:38 p.m.
TBS — Playoffs, NL Championship Series, Milwaukee at L.A. Dodgers, Game 4

NBA BASKETBALL

8 p.m.
NBA TV — Preseason, Denver at Oklahoma City

10:30 p.m.
NBA TV — Preseason, Sacramento at L.A. Lakers

NHL HOCKEY

9 p.m.
ESPN+/HULU — San Jose at Utah

SOCCER (MEN'S)

3 p.m.
CBSSN — EFL Championship, Ipswich Town at Middlesbrough

TENNIS

6 a.m.
TENNIS — Stockholm-ATP, Brussels-ATP, Almaty-ATP, Osaka-WTA & Ningbo-WTA Quarterfinals

11 p.m.
TENNIS — Osaka-WTA Semifinals

Vizzina

Continued from Page 1C

Vizzina, 6-4, had to sit in what Swinney calls Clemson's "crockpot," where players develop over a period of time despite not being seen on the field. Swinney is high on Vizzina, opting not to add a quarterback in the 2024 recruiting cycle despite usually pursuing one annually.

Vizzina redshirted in 2023, progressed to win the backup job a year later

and has gotten multiple opportunities in practice and games this season to play with the first-team offense.

"I can see the growth in him, and he's definitely going to be able to make an impact for us whenever he gets the shot," Clemson wide receiver Bryant Wesco Jr. said.

Swinney is confident in both quarterbacks' ability to run offensive coordinator Garrett Riley's offense and understand what defenses are throwing at them. Both can be dynamic with their legs to run and extend plays and have strong enough arms to hit on deep

passes.

Where Klubnik and Vizzina differ is their experience and demeanor. Klubnik has played in 43 games and started in 34 of them in his fourth year. Vizzina has appeared in only 12 career games in his third season; Klubnik played in 37 games over his first three years.

Wesco described Vizzina's demeanor as more "calm" than Klubnik but has no problem with each other's style. Klubnik comes off as more energetic.

Vizzina is Clemson's likely successor when Klubnik's eligibility ends after this season. If Klubnik can't go against

SMU, Swinney has complete faith in Vizzina.

"We gave him a ton of work this spring and a bunch of work in fall camp with the ones, and he really did a nice job," Swinney said Oct. 14. "He performed very well in all those opportunities."

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Coach

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Sellers was asked Oct. 14 about communication with his offensive linemen.

"I think I just trust them ...," Sellers said. "If they make a mistake, just being like 'Hey that's on me.' I think that's what I need more."

Sellers extends plays even when he's inches from the ground but sometimes there's not much he can do. Quicker decisions, thinking on the fly is how he approaches having minimal time in the pocket, but against LSU, he was called

for intentional grounding twice when attempting to extend plays.

"It's just hard," Sellers said when asked the challenge of worrying about the offensive line carrying out their duties. "Football is already hard as is. It's a lot because if someone breaks down, I'm the one with the ball so I have to make it right. If they make a mistake, we all have to work together. If they make a mistake I can't do anything to put us in a worse situation."

How Shawn Elliott plans to fix South Carolina's OL issues

Three offensive linemen were injured

vs LSU, with two out against Kentucky the week before also, forcing players to shift around.

The offensive line was responsible for five of six pre-snap penalties vs LSU, a lingering issue all year that halts Sellers' momentum and kills drives.

Beamer said Elliott lined up across from the center in every play of practice, screaming, yelling, clapping, barking, blowing whistles, making moves, "just trying to make things as difficult as he possibly can."

But is a drastic turnaround realistic in a matter of days, especially with a hodgepodge of five players trying to move as one against the nation's top-

ranked defense?

"Confident," Beamer responded when asked how confident he is that a different voice will cut down penalties. "Then also you turn on the tape of Oklahoma and you see how active they are."

"So would it be nice to say that we're gonna go out there and have zero pre-snap penalties on Saturday? Yes, it would be nice to say that. Is that realistic? I don't know."

Lulu Kesin covers South Carolina athletics for The Greenville News and the USA TODAY Network. Email her at lkesin@gannett.com. Follow her on X @Lulukesin