

USC natatorium special

By REX GALE
Gamecock Sports Writer

Whenever a swimming pool is given the name "natatorium" there must be something special about it.

Such is the case with the new home of the Carolina swim team. The natatorium was modeled after two of the most impressive collegiate pools in the country, those at the Universities of Indiana and Tennessee. It consists of a 50 meter olympic size swimming pool with a floating bulkhead which can divide the pool in half, and a diving pool complete with platform dive and four other diving boards. The pool has an electronic Omega timing system that records the time from the moment they leave the starting blocks to the second they touch at the end of the race. The time up to a thousandth of a second, is immediately relayed to large scoreboard along with the order of finish.

The water is always calm, even when the swimmers are in the pool, because of gutters along the sides that drain the waves as they reach the side and keep them from going back into the pool. There are observation windows below the surface of the water that enable both swimmers and divers to be watched for technique and form. And when the chlorine is computer controlled.

How helpful will the natatorium be to head coach Alan Gentry and the performance of the swim team?

"A facility doesn't make your team fast," Gentry said. And the

performance of the Carolina swim teams last year bears witness to that. Competing in the old pool, the men ended the season with 7-3 record, and won the National Independent Championships and placed fourth in the Southern Intercollegiate Championships. The women breezed through an undefeated regular season, and won both the Southern Intercollegiate and South Carolina State Championships.

But there are advantages the new pool will give the Gamecocks. Last year the swimmers and divers had to practice at different times because of small size of the old pool. The natatorium enables all of the swimmers and divers to practice together, and unique practice sessions are being used by Gentry.

"We have a better situation," Gentry said. "We have the faster girls swim with the faster guys, and the slower girls swim with the slower guys. They really give each other some tough competition."

Although there is a new pool and new facilities, the economy has caused the number of scholarships to be drastically cut, but according to Gentry, it really didn't bother recruiting.

"Many freshmen we have recruited turned down scholarships at other schools to come to Carolina," Gentry said. "There have been economic cutbacks that we just can't help. The number of scholarships we can offer has been cut, and right now we have many non-scholarship athletes that would be on scholarship if we had

the money. We just don't. Everyone is in the same situation and we just have to make the best with what we've got," he said.

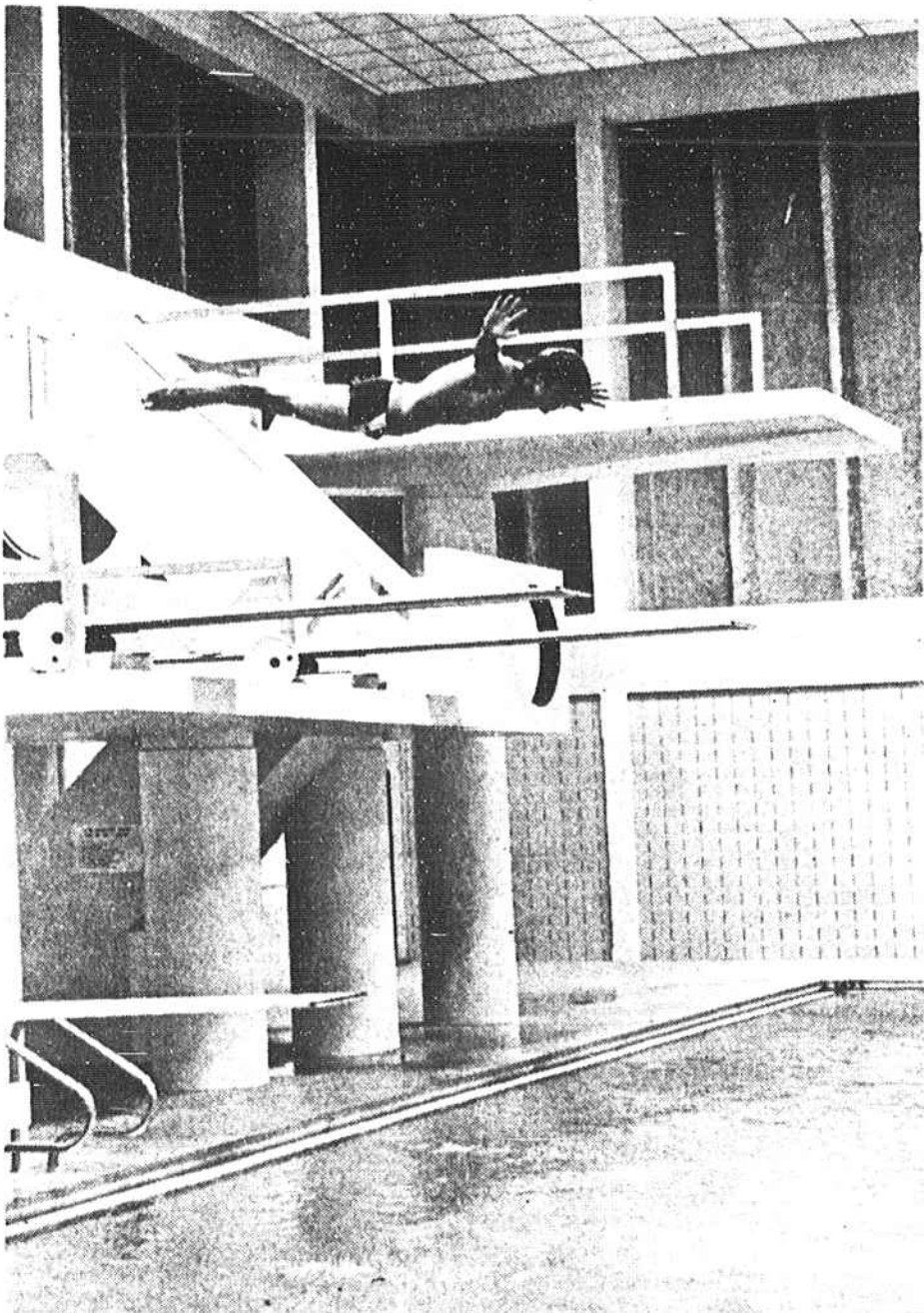
Gentry is looking forward to the coming year. "We have just about the same schedule we had last year," he said, "and we have a lot of good swimmers."

Among those are two freshmen, Dick Kline and Dean Hamilton who have impressed Gentry, as well as diver Don Simmons, Link Doyle, a sprinter and Don Fischer, a middle distance swimmer.

Janet Green, assistant women's coach, has been equally impressed with her swimmers. "Sue Hite looks real strong," she said, "and Lynn Smith, Tina Hasselberg and Jody Pattersen should really help us."

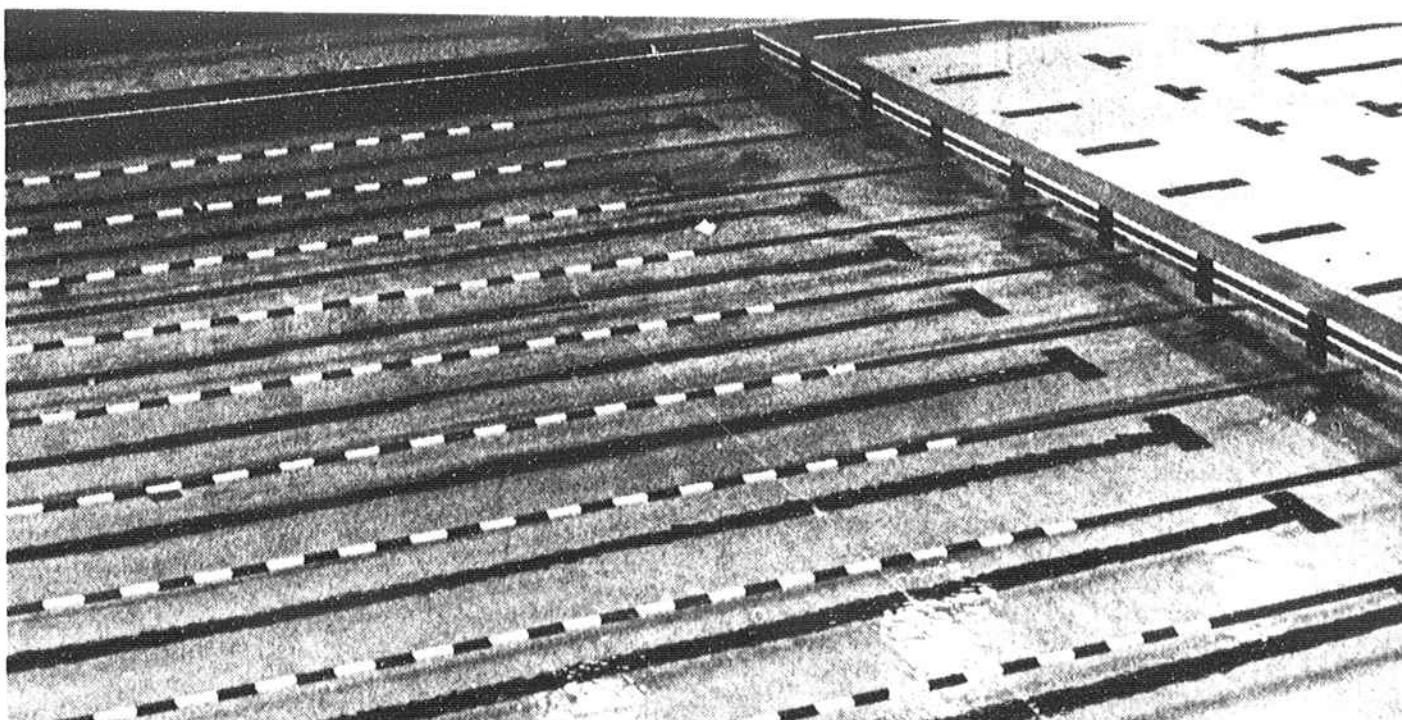
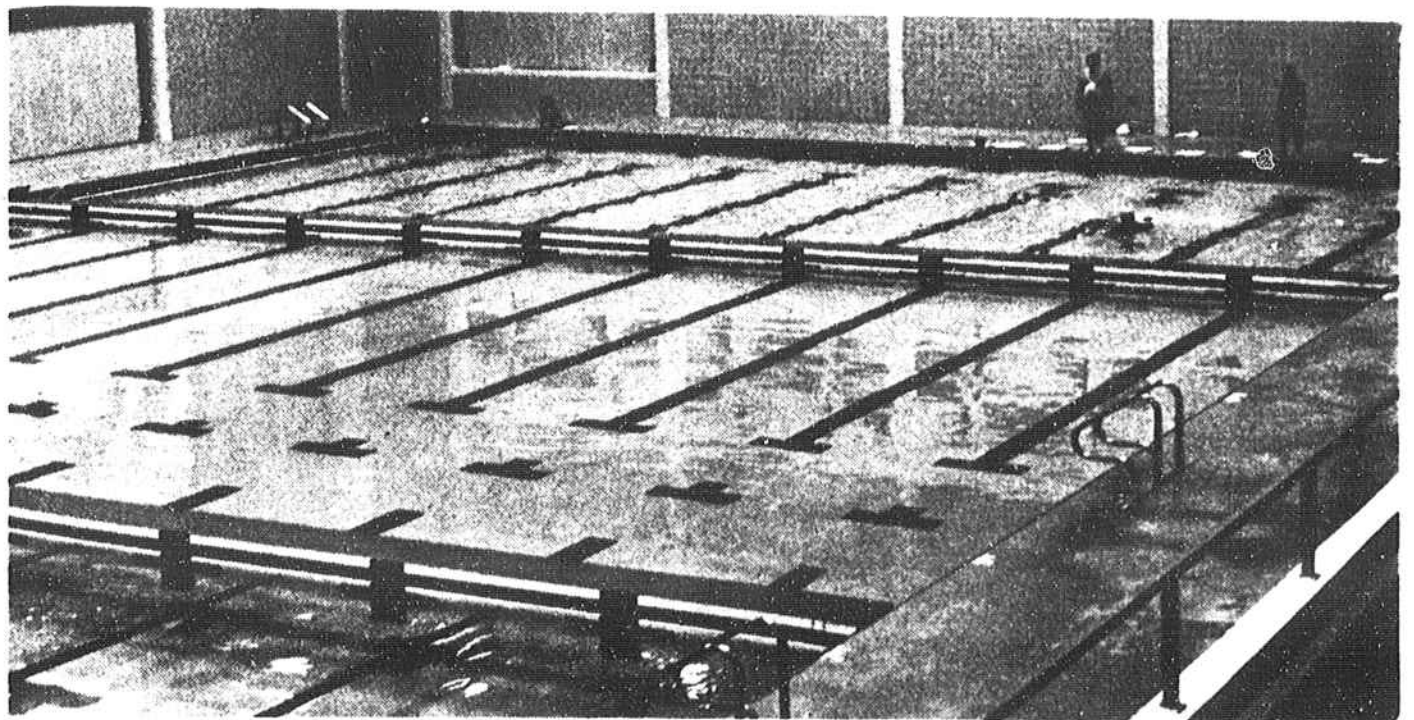
Back from last years squad are Nancy Grimm and Cricket Robbins, who both competed in the National Championships last spring.

Both squads are impressive, as is the pool in which they will compete. And both squads look ahead to the National Independent Championships that will be held here at Carolina this spring. But ahead is a lot work and training, because even the natatorium doesn't guarantee success. As Gentry said, "a facility doesn't make your team fast."



Jim Tingen (above) works on diving form.

Pool can be divided into sections by floating bulkheads (right).



Ten lane pool (left) is one of the largest in the country.

Gamecock Staff Photos by
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