

Pep Talk

By Jeff Shrewsbury



Joe Morrison earned respect in a quiet, unassuming way

It was homecoming 1985, and USC had just pounded Duke 28-7. I was waiting in the press area for Coach Joe Morrison's post-game interview deep inside Williams-Brice Stadium. It was the first time I had ever seen Joe other than on television or from 200 yards away.

He was a bulky man compared to most. He was tanned, quiet and mysteriously shrouded in black with his collar turned up. He wore a black baseball cap pulled down over his brow.

As the players thundered into the locker room, happy at the win and with smiles on their faces, Joe was clapping his hands as he stood next to the big garnet double doors that led to the locker room. He smiled at a few of the players as they rushed by, and he patted a few on the head.

After everyone had trotted through the doors, Joe followed them in for his post-game pep talk. There was a few moments of quiet, then a loud cheer. Then Coach Joe emerged to face the press, as he did every week, no matter the outcome of the game.

I caught a glimpse of him slipping his way through the throngs of people who moved aside in silent awe as they realized it was him tapping them on the shoulder.

As soon as he was through the door of the interview room, the press grew quiet. They knew he was there. He commanded their attention, even if they couldn't see him right away.

He impressed me immediately in the way he captured his audience on each carefully chosen word.

I felt like I was in the room with someone who had a certain presence that only celebrities have. If you have ever been in the presence of someone famous, or have even seen one, you find yourself sensing them. You know they are in the room.

Joe Morrison was like that, at least with the press.

I can't say what he was like with his friends and family because the press did not make up his friends for the most part. There were the few who got to know him — as well as anyone can get to know someone who shelters his personality — but for the most part, Morrison stayed away from the press as much as possible. It seemed he had no love for reporters, but then again, who likes having questions fired at him everywhere he goes?

For a long time, I felt Morrison was distrustful of the press. I figured it went back to his playing days in the NFL, but I think now that it was something else.

I don't think he really disliked the press. I think he knew it was their job to ask him questions and his job to decide how to answer them. He was a master at dodging, avoiding and circumventing.

But I don't think the press, per se, put him off. I think Coach was just not really an open person to people he didn't know.

I think he was shy, in a way.

After four years of covering Coach Joe and occasionally running into him on more informal terms, with greetings exchanged and smiles traded, I realize he was just a quiet jock who didn't like to answer a bunch of questions.

I can't tell you if he was good to his players or if he was a good coach, because I didn't play for him, and like everyone, I have an opinion that may or may not be accurate.

But I can tell you he commanded respect — from the press, the coaches and his team. It seemed like that was most important to him. When I would see him with players, coaches and the press, it seemed he wanted the respect he would probably have given his head coaches. I don't think he cared if everyone liked him, but I think he cared that people respected him.

Most of the people I know, who may or may not have liked him, respected him.

And I can also say without fear of contradiction that he was completely responsible for making the entire country aware of what South Carolina football was. USC may not have made it to national championship stature, and it may have had its share of bad publicity, but ask any fan around the nation who the head coach of South Carolina was and they would say, "That guy in black. Morrison."

The country respected him.

Whether Morrison did wonders for his players or would have been one of the great coaches of all time, hated the press or was just shy is all irrelevant.

What he gave to the city of Columbia, the state of South Carolina and Gamecock football is what counts, and that is immeasurable.

Morrison raised the expectations we have for USC teams and football in the state, and he led this area through six entertaining, stimulating years.

It's ironic to me, however, that it takes a man's death for people to awaken to his life.

So long, Joe. We're going to miss you.

Gamecocks demolish Southern Miss

By DAVID CARAVIELLO
Staff writer

The USC men's basketball squad used extensive bench play, stifling defense and a lot of emotion Monday night to demolish the Golden Eagles of Southern Mississippi 105-63 in a game which USC head coach George Felton dedicated to the late Joe Morrison.

A moment of silence was observed before the game, and the Gamecocks wore black patches on their uniforms in honor of Morrison, who died Sunday night of a heart attack.

"I've been around a lot of schools," said Felton after the game, "but I've never been around a person that truly cared like Coach Joe Morrison."

"There was a lot of emotion about Coach Morrison," senior point guard Brent Price said. "Before the game, Coach Felton told us about Coach Morrison and what a competitor he was. He told us to go out there and play like a bunch of Joe Morrisons."

The Gamecocks did. All 12 players entered the scoring column in the victory, USC's highest-scoring game this year. The win also signaled the end of a three-game losing skid in which the Gamecocks fell to Florida State, Oral Roberts and Clemson in a two-week period.

Felton believes the team has returned to its early season form, during which the Gamecocks scored two victories over Top 20 teams.

"I think the kids are back to the way they were against Ohio State," he said. "I saw intensity, and I saw defense, which were the most important things we wanted to accomplish tonight. It was a game that showed people that we really can play, and I thought it was a great team effort."

The Gamecocks, now 13-6, 3-2 in the Metro, exploded out of the huddle to an early 11-4 advantage and never looked back, outscoring the Golden Eagles 28-16 the remainder of the half. The Gamecocks held their largest lead of the half with 4:56 remaining on a dunk by John Hudson that put USC ahead 33-13. Southern Miss shot a woeful 36 percent from the field in the first half, digging themselves into a 39-20 hole at halftime.

In the second half, the rout continued as Joe Rhett, Barry Manning,

and Brent Price hit successive buckets to give USC a 21-point advantage only 50 seconds into the second stanza. Southern Miss was able to cut the lead to 18 on a David Hannan three-pointer at the 18:28 mark, yet Price answered with a triple-shot of his own immediately afterward to boost the lead to 21. The Golden Eagles would never get any closer,

despite a technical foul on Felton at the 12:56 mark.

The remainder of the game was a menagerie of blinding breakaways, passes and dunks as USC easily coasted to a 42-point win. The night was fittingly climaxed with senior Bill Verneau's 3-point basket at the buzzer to close the score at 105-63. Southern Mississippi's offense

emerged battered and bruised after a terrible shooting display of only 39 percent for the game. The Eagles also committed 24 turnovers and were outrebounded by the Gamecocks, 46-29.

Southern Miss coach M. K. Turk was able to find at least one positive aspect of the game.

"The best thing about that ballgame is that it's finally over," Turk said. "South Carolina played well from the opening tap, and they played a very determined basketball game. We didn't rise to the occasion... We succumbed to the pressure, we didn't rebound the ball well, and I don't know what happened to our offensive execution. It certainly wasn't there tonight."

Felton believes that USC must play the way it did against Southern Miss the remainder of the season.

"We have to take what we've done tonight and do the same thing on the road," he said. "I'm going to expect only the best from this team, and I've told them that. We're ready to do what we set out to do, and we're going to do it with desire, dedication and a tremendous amount of pride."

Price led all scorers with 22 points, while Manning contributed 18 points and eight rebounds. Hudson scored 13 points, and Troy McKoy and Joe Rhett added 10 and 11 points, respectively. Clarence Weatherspoon led Southern Miss with 18 points.

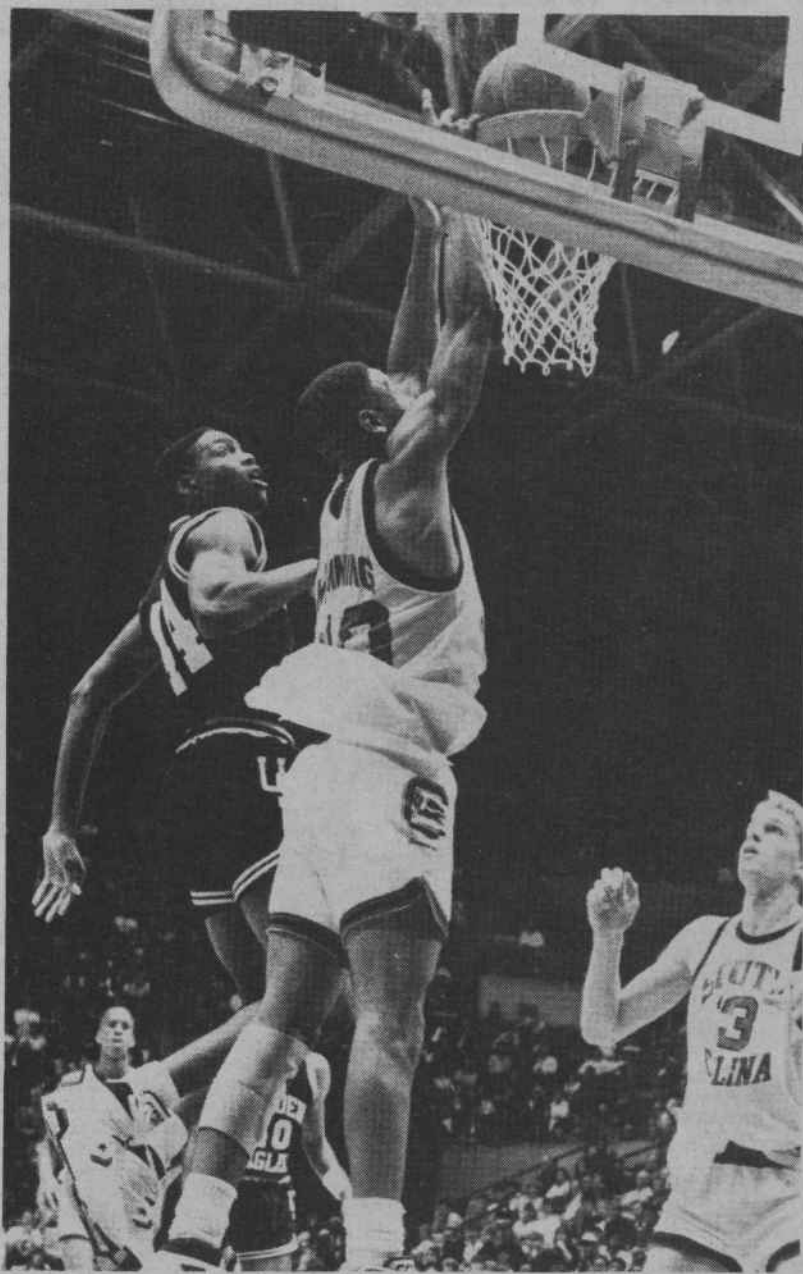
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI (63)

Weatherspoon 5-12 8-9 18, Bates 1-4 0-0 2, Boyd 1-4 1-2 3, Pettus 0-3 0-0 0, Chancellor 2-9 1-3 5, Hinton 5-7 5-7 15, Smith 0-2 0-0 0, Crowell 3-4 0-0 6, Brown 1-3 0-0 2, Brown 2-5 1-2 5, Hannan 1-1 0-0 3, Jones 2-5 0-0 4, Totals 23-59 16-23 63.

USC (105)

Dozier 2-6 4-4 8, Rhett 5-7 1-2 11, Hudson 6-9 1-2 13, Price 7-10 7-22, Manning 9-17 0-1 18, Roulston 0-4 1-2 1, English 3-4 1-2 7, McKoy 5-9 0-0 10, Glover 0-2 2-2 2, Breckenridge 2-2 2-3 6, Vernau 1-3 2-2 5, Sykes 1-1 0-0 2, Totals 41-74 21-27 105.

Halftime — USC 39, Southern Miss 20. 3-point goals — USC 2-4 (Price 1-2, Vernau 1-2), Southern Miss 1-10 (Hannan 1-1). Rebounds — USC 46 (Manning 8), Southern Miss 29 (Hinton 9). Assists — USC 25 (Price 6), Southern Miss 10 (Chancellor 3). Total fouls — USC 22, Southern Miss 21. Attendance — 7,678.



USC guard Barry Manning slams one home in Monday's 105-63 Gamecock victory over Metro Conference opponent Southern Mississippi at Carolina Coliseum. Manning finished with 18 points and led USC with eight rebounds.

Golden Eagles hit USC with first Metro loss

From staff reports

The Lady Gamecock basketball team suffered their first Metro Conference setback Monday in a heartbreaking 91-89 loss to Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Miss.

Trailing by 10 at halftime and by as many as 16 in the second half, USC battled back to tie the

game with seven seconds left to play when Karen Middleton sank a jumper to knot the score at 89.

Southern Mississippi's Renee McGee hit two free throws with one second remaining to secure the victory for the Golden Eagles. Southern Miss improved to 6-2 in the Metro Conference, while the Lady Gamecocks fell to 7-1.

Schonna Banner led USC with 35 points and 12 rebounds, while Lisa Diaz added 18 points, Martha Parker had 16 and Beth Hunt had 13 for the Lady Gamecocks. Catrina McCants was the top scorer for Southern Miss, with 26 points.

USC, now 15-5 overall, will next face Metro opponent Cincinnati at Carolina Coliseum Monday.

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