

## Pep Talk

By Brant Long



### USC athletics should join SEC if opportunity presents itself

Recently, a small uproar occurred in Gamecock athletics. A huge article ran in *The State* a couple of weeks ago about USC possibly joining the Southeastern Conference. Students were livid. Everywhere I went it was, "Hey, Brant, Carolina might play Tennessee."

Being a displaced Tennessee fan, I was instantly interested. "My Cocks and my Vols might play," I pondered to myself, "What a great world we live in."

Now the hoopla has died down, and I have heard no more about the issue, but dang it, I wanna talk about it! So here goes. . . .

The Southeastern Conference, as every living, breathing Southerner knows, is a bastion of college football. Every Saturday, hundreds of thousands of diehard football junkies head for their nearest SEC stadium to cheer on their respective teams to victory. It's amazing just to watch, say, a Georgia-Florida game. This ballgame has to be held at a neutral site, it's so big. As we all know, the Metro Conference isn't exactly a football haven. That's why us football crazies here in Columbia, for that one 1984 season, suddenly metamorphosized the Gamecocks into an independent powerhouse.

We've had our good seasons as an independent, and I'll admit Florida State and N.C. State have become good rivalries, but it's time for a change. The SEC would be tough, sure, but wouldn't it be fun? As my fellow Tennessee fans would say, "Hell, yes!"

Picture this — 92,000 screaming fans, ABC television coverage and my man Keith Jackson in the booth. Neyland Stadium in Knoxville, Tenn., the site for the battle between the mighty Gamecocks and the Volunteers. What a game.

Then, we'd go on to play Alabama at home, hit the road for a game against Auburn, then on to Baton Rouge and Death Valley to battle LSU. Maybe a quick win over Mississippi State, then we finish the season against a lesser conference opponent and Clemson. It would be perfect.

And for those of you wondering about money, think about it, WTBS does a different SEC game every week, and ABC and CBS often do

them as well. We may lose opponents like N.C. State and Florida State, but hey, 59-0. . . we won't miss them. Then again, the SEC will not be much easier.

In basketball, the competition won't be as stiff, yet the SEC is moving up. There were five SEC teams in the NCAA Tournament. So what if the conference was 0-for-the-NCAA's, it was an off-year. Usually, Kentucky would join those teams. We'll have some great competition, and we can still play games against Ohio State and Clemson to keep us in good standing with the NCAA tourney committee.

In baseball, we'll miss Florida State as a foe, because they're always good, but SEC-member Mississippi State is now ranked second in the country. Alabama, Auburn and Florida are also good.

The Metro isn't bad, but a move to the SEC would not only be profitable, but exciting for the fans as well.

Now, to address the suggestion of adding more teams to the conference and splitting it into two divisions, with the two football division winners playing in the Sugar Bowl for the mega-championship. Other teams possibly being looked at are Texas, Arkansas and Texas A&M. The conference would be split into two divisions, probably East and West.

I don't really agree with the Sugar Bowl plan, but the divisions would be interesting. That way, you could have a small game at the end of the season to decide the overall conference champion.

The winner would be in the Sugar Bowl and the runners-up would go to various other bowls. The SEC would vault to being the premier conference in the country, and the Gamecocks would get a lot more recognition.

For now, the debate has silenced, but if it comes up again, I hope every party thinks it over carefully. I think USC's name would look great on the list of SEC schools. The SEC is a Southern tradition, as is Carolina football. Let's put the two together. It would be a very profitable relationship.

Until next time, keep your feet on the ground and. . . ah, forget it.

## USC offsets road woes with win at home

By DAVE KAY  
Staff writer

The USC baseball team returned to winning form Monday night with a 12-9 victory over Campbell University at Sarge Frye Field.

The Gamecocks, who had lost their previous three games on the road, were glad to be back home, where they are now 20-2 on the year, compared with a 4-13 road mark.

"We've been playing good baseball at home and horrible on the road," said USC head coach June Raines of his team's inconsistent play. "You had 33 hits and 20-something runs tonight. It's amazing the way we are playing baseball right now — it was a big win for us."

The game was not a pretty sight for the pitchers, however, as a total of 33 hits were recorded by the two teams. Joe Cardwell, the USC starter, went five innings before submitting first to



Brian Beatson

Burke Cromer and then to Brian Beatson, who picked up the win.

Mike McGee and Skeets Thomas led the way for the Gamecocks' hit-

ting attack, each with four hits and a pair of runs batted in.

The Gamecocks struck first in the second inning when catcher Dave Willman singled in Derrick Mack and Tripp Cromer. But the two-run advantage was shortlived, as the Camels scored four in their half of the third to take a 4-2 lead.

USC came back to tie the score in the bottom of the third before Campbell jumped on Cardwell for two hits and a run in the top of the fourth to once again take the lead, 5-4. But the Gamecocks bettered the Camels in the USC half of the fourth, scoring three runs on singles by Chad Sims, McGee, Thomas and Mack.

With USC leading 7-5, all was quiet until the sixth when both teams erupted for four runs. Burke Cromer replaced Cardwell, but when the Camels scored two quick runs, Raines sent Beatson to the mound. Beatson allowed just three hits over

the last 3 and 2/3 innings and picked up the win after the Gamecocks' outburst in the bottom of the sixth, when they scored four runs on three hits to take the lead for good.

USC pushed over an insurance run in its half of the seventh, which was all Beatson, now 3-0, needed to nail down the win.

The Gamecocks improved their record to 24-15 heading into Tuesday night's home game with Coastal Carolina, while the Camels dropped to 7-23. USC begins a three-game weekend series at 7:30 Thursday night with ninth-ranked Clemson at Sarge Frye Field. The Tigers swept the Gamecocks in three games earlier this season at Clemson.

CAMPBELL 004 104 000 — 9 15 3  
USC 022 304 10x — 12 18 3  
Milton, Russell (6) and Ellis. Cardwell, B. Cromer (6), Beatson (6) and Willman. W — Beatson (3-0). L — Russell (1-7).

## Woods wary, but sees improvement

By The Associated Press

**MOUNT PLEASANT** — Coming out of his first spring football practice at USC, coach Sparky Woods is cautiously optimistic about the Gamecocks' chances in the fall.

Woods took over as head coach for the Gamecocks after the death of Joe Morrison on Feb. 5. And, although he's been on the job less than two months, Woods said his players have adjusted well to the change.

USC completed 18 days of spring drills on Sunday.

Woods, who came to USC from Appalachian State, said the team has a positive attitude, but he is concerned about depth on the club.

"I'm not pessimistic about our chances. I am pessimistic we'll get hurt," Woods told broadcasters attending Saturday's annual meeting of the S.C. Associated Press Broadcasters Association. "We have a chance to be a good football team if we don't get injured."

Woods said he's been approaching things differently from Morrison, stressing spring practice, where the focus is on fundamentals.

"There hasn't been as much emphasis on spring practice with Joe Morrison as there is now," Woods said. "Coaching football has been the easiest part," he added, saying so many other things have demanded his attention he hasn't

coached as much as he would like.

Woods said he will stress academics with his players and candidly admitted, "We have a real academic problem with some players."

Woods said Morrison's philosophy was that the players had an opportunity to come to college and earn a degree and it was up to them to make the most of it.

He said he sees it differently and will be more like a parent to his players, keeping after them to do well both in school and on the field.

"I don't trust 'em," Woods laughed. "I think you have to watch them a little bit and help them along."

Woods now requires the players to attend breakfast. They don't have to eat, Woods said, but at least the coaching staff will know they're up and not sleeping through classes.

There were some initial objections, Woods said. "It was almost like I was asking them to give away their first son," but now the players know he means business, Woods said.

Class attendance is also mandatory for scholarship players.

Woods said he told the team, "If I'm going to pay for your education, you're going to get it."

The Gamecocks will be small along the line of scrimmage again this fall, but Woods is modifying the all-out blitzing defense USC has used in recent

seasons.

Instead of attacking the offense, the Gamecocks will use a more disciplined defense and "defend our goal line first," Woods said.

The offense will feature a single back attack built around tailback Harold Green, who has rushed for more than 2,000 yards during the past three seasons.

"I've never coached a running back who has the skills that he's got," Woods said.

The new system will rely less on the passing of quarterback Todd Ellis, who has shattered school passing records during the past three seasons, but has also recorded 67 interceptions.

"We've got to help Todd Ellis not to throw as many interceptions as he has in the past," Woods said. "We'd like to take it (the ball) away from him. We've got other talented players, and we want to put it in their hands."

Woods said he's concerned about recruiting and said he'd like to have some different players on the USC sideline.

Ten quarterbacks are on scholarship at USC, and four of them are incoming freshmen.

"Of the six practicing, I believe Todd is the only one who can go win football games for us," Woods said.

"I'd like to trade about six of those quarterbacks for tackles," the coach added.

## Softball team takes two

From staff reports

The 15th-ranked Lady Gamecock softball team swept a make-up doubleheader from UNC-Charlotte, 2-0 and 8-0, at Lady Gamecock Field Monday, improving its record to 37-7.

USC hurler Charlene Manley raised her season mark to 18-3 by firing a shutout in the opener, and shortstop Marianne DiRupo led the way at the plate by going two for three with a double and an RBI.

The Lady Gamecocks picked up both their runs in the sixth inning, when third baseman Stacy Agee reached on an error, stole second, and scored on a DiRupo single. DiRupo later scored on a grounder off the bat of Kelly Grotheer.

USC utilized its team speed and more excellent pitching in the nightcap, as they had six stolen bases and another shutout pitching performance, this one by Angie Lear, to take an 8-0 win.

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