

## Pep Talk

By Chris Silvestri



### Berson has made USC soccer nationally recognized program

If Mark Berson could do for the football program what he has done for the soccer program at USC, he would be revered as a living legend.

Once again the Gamecock soccer team will appear in the NCAA Tournament — the fifth time in as many years.

USC will play Duke in their first round matchup, which will be the sixth tournament appearance for the Gamecocks since Berson took the helm in 1978.

In Berson's 12 years at USC, he has made the Gamecocks one of the most successful programs in the nation, and perhaps more importantly, brought national recognition to USC soccer.

National recognition brings a steady flow of good, young players who want to play soccer for USC, which translates into a constant influx of talent.

Teams like Virginia, Indiana and UCLA, constant powerhouses in soccer, live off their recognition as three of the best programs in the nation. Because of this, they are perennial Top 10 and tournament teams.

This year's Gamecock squad is a prime example of talent flow.

Despite losing five starters from this past year's NCAA Final Four team, including the nation's best goaltender, USC finished the regular season at 15-2-2.

On top of that only two mem-

bers of this season's team are seniors — Scott Henderson and Patrick Mihm.

The most productive members of the offense are a junior and a freshman.

Junior Clark Brisson leads the Gamecocks in goals and total points. Brisson set the USC record for most goals in a season this year. And freshman Ruben Tufino broke the Gamecock record for most assists in a season in 1989.

Added to that, the rest of the team consists of eight juniors, five sophomores and numerous freshmen.

No other South Region team has been to the NCAA Tournament the past five years in a row — USC has been the best.

In Berson's 12 seasons as head coach at USC, which includes this year's up-to-date record, he has compiled a record of 171-53-20 and led the Gamecocks to the highest ever finish in 1988 in the NCAA Final Four.

Berson has brought two South Region titles to USC and was named South Region Coach of the Year in 1984, 1985 and 1988. His accomplishments are virtually endless.

In his short time as head coach, Berson has developed the soccer program into a national powerhouse on the same level as teams such as Virginia, Indiana and UCLA.

## Gamecocks receive tournament bid

By CHRIS SILVESTRI  
Sports Editor

The USC soccer team has received the same phone call from the same people at generally the same time for the past five consecutive years.

Monday afternoon the Gamecocks were officially given a bid to the NCAA Tournament for the fifth time in five years.

The tournament begins Sunday with all 28 of the teams beginning play, except for the first seeds in each region who receive first round byes.

The Gamecocks, 15-2-2, will play host to the Duke Blue Devils, 10-4-4, Sunday at 1 p.m. at The Graveyard in their first round match.

"The situation is about as good as we could have hoped for," USC head coach Mark Berson said. "The opportunity to play at home is a big plus."

USC tied Duke, 2-2, in their only meeting this year in Durham, N.C. The Blue Devils are fresh off a second place showing in the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament this past weekend.

Duke tied Wake Forest, the South Region's number one seed, 2-2, in regulation in the finals before falling 5-3 in a shootout to the Demon Deacons.

"I think it's a great matchup," Berson said. "Both teams are playing well. Duke is probably one of the hottest teams in the nation... That's what you find in the tournament."

"The situation is about as good as we could have hoped for. The opportunity to play at home is a big plus."

Mark Berson  
USC soccer head coach

The ninth-ranked Gamecocks are coming off two wins and a second place finish in this past weekend's Met Life Soccer Classic at The Graveyard.

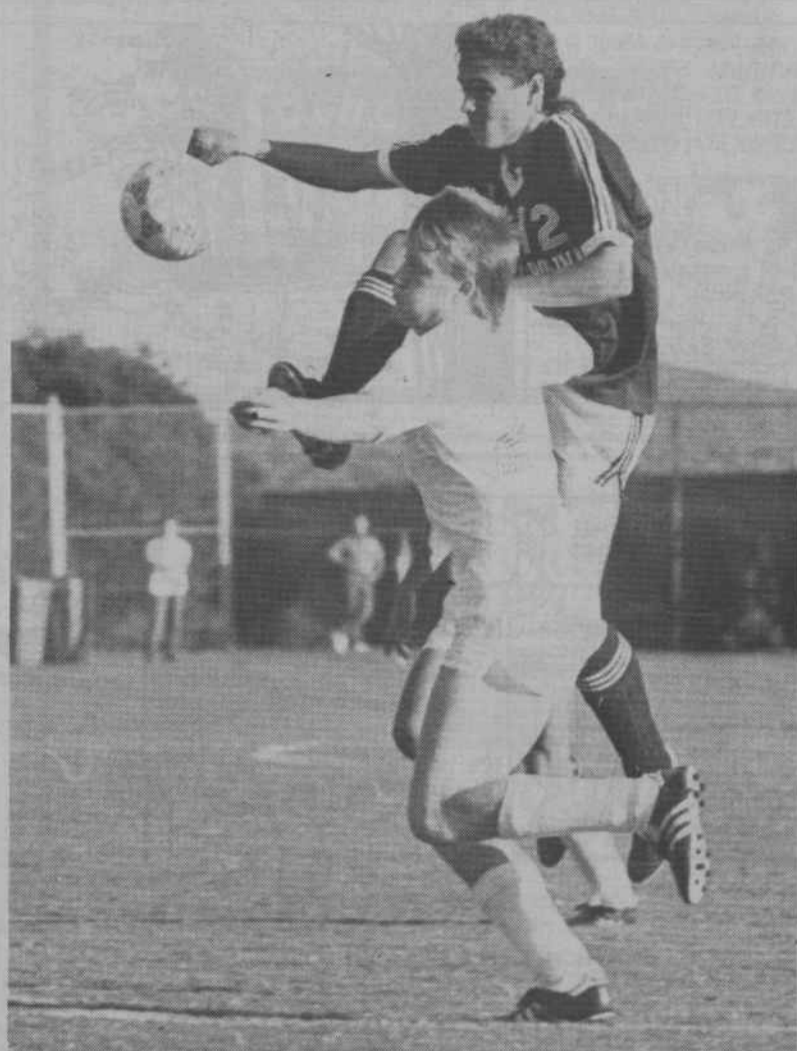
The winner of the USC-Duke match will meet the winner of the Wake Forest-Old Dominion game in the second round. The date and time of the second round match have yet to be determined.

"I can't emphasize enough the importance of playing at home," Berson said. "We really need a big crowd to continue to host for the tournament. We have drawn well in the past and that's one reason we continue to host."

"I'm asking the students to come out and support us," he added.

Because of prices set by the NCAA Tournament, admission to the event will not be free.

Tickets went on sale Tuesday at the USC Ticket Office on Rosewood Drive. Cost for the event will be \$5 for adults and students and \$3 for children under 12.



TEDDY LEPP/The Gamecock  
Freshman Gamecock Ruben Tufino leaps into the air to win the ball from a Charleston player earlier this season. Tufino and the rest of the Gamecocks face Duke in the first round of the NCAA Tournament Sunday.

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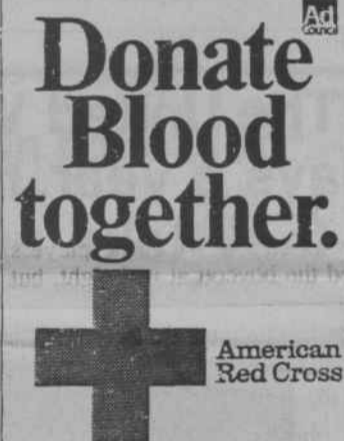
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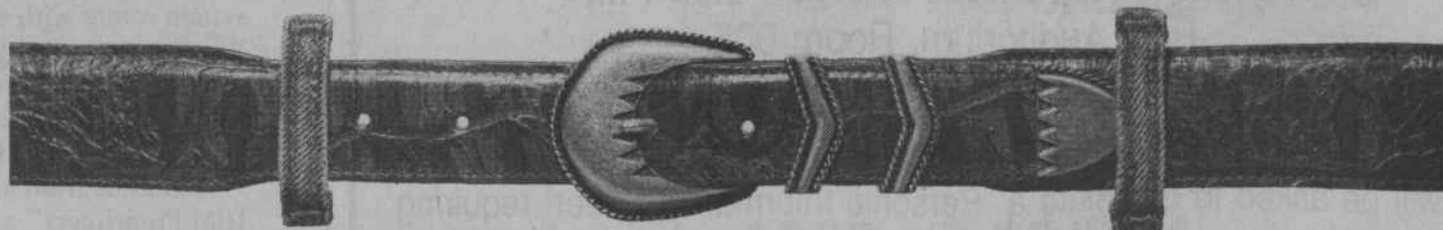
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