

Renee Meyer/The Gamecock

Center Jeff Roulston tries for the jam in a pre-season exhibition game against High Five America. Roulston and the rest of the 25th-ranked Gamecocks take on the Davidson Wildcats tonight in Davidson, N.C.

Century-old rivalry pits Gamecocks at Davidson

By STEVE JOHNSON
Sports Editor

A sellout crowd of 5,800 is expected to be on hand tonight at Belk Arena in Davidson, N.C., where USC (13-4) will be taking on the Davidson College Wildcats (5-11) in a non-conference match-up.

Even though the Gamecocks will be heavily favored when they take the court against Davidson, the game is important because it marks the beginning of the team's three-game road swing. In addition, USC will be attempting to return to its pre-holiday form. The Gamecocks have dropped three of their last seven games, including two crucial Metro Conference match-ups.

The series between Davidson and South Carolina is nearly a century old, dating back to 1909. Though the Gamecocks lost that first encounter in Columbia 29-8, USC holds a decisive lead in the series, 36-27. The Gamecocks beat Davidson in the past five contests.

The two teams last met on Jan. 25, 1990 in Frank McGuire Arena where the Gamecocks thoroughly trounced Davidson, 70-55. USC held a slim five-point lead at the

half but exploded in the second half, finishing with five players in double figures. Guard Jo Jo English was the leading scorer for USC with 18 points.

This is the Wildcats' first season in the Big South Conference. Pre-season hopes were high with Davidson boasting what was billed by noted sportswriter Doug Mead as "perhaps the league's best recruiting class." Mead predicted Davidson "should battle for a first-division finish in their initial season as a Big South member."

Davidson's dreams have turned to nightmares, though, as the Wildcats have dropped to 5-11 overall and 3-5 in the Big South. Most recently, they lost to 21st-ranked Virginia in a non-conference game, 71-47.

While the present may be troubling for Davidson, the future looks bright in the form of freshman guard Jason Zimmerman. In just his first season, Zimmerman is already the leading scorer for the Wildcats with an average of 13.8 points per game. Fortunately for the Gamecocks, Zimmerman represents the only true scoring threat for Davidson, so USC should have an easy time defending the

Wildcats. Defensively, the Gamecocks are light years ahead of the smaller Wildcats. (6-foot-11 sophomore center Detlef Musch is the only Wildcat starter taller than 6 feet 6 inches.) Davidson freshman guard Pat Holloway's team-leading 16 steals are but a shadow of USC junior guard Barry Manning's team-leading 41 thefts. The Gamecocks also have four other players with more than 16 steals this season.

Davidson's Musch, a second year starter from Fulda, Germany, has been anything but sophomore in regards to swatting away would-be points. Musch leads the Wildcats with 21 blocks this season.

However, Davidson's best in this defensive category pales in comparison to the leading shot blocker for USC, junior center Jeff Roulston. Roulston's seasonal total of 40 blocks is only five short of the block total for the entire Davidson team.

Basically, it appears clear that the Gamecocks will win, it's only a matter of by how many points. The game will be broadcast live on the Gamecock Sports Radio Network, including WVOC-AM 56 in Columbia.

QUICK GLANCE

USC vs. DAVIDSON

PLACE: BELK ARENA

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

DAVIDSON			USC		
POS.	PLAYER	PPG.	POS.	PLAYER	PPG.
G	Paul Denmond	8.4	G	Jo Jo English	16.1
G	Jason Zimmerman	13.8	G	Barry Manning	14.1
C	Detlef Musch	8.1	C	Jeff Roulston	9.3
F	James Marsh	7.9	F	Michael Glover	7.3
F	Janko Narat	7.7	F	Joe Rhett	13.4

Dan Barabas/The Gamecock

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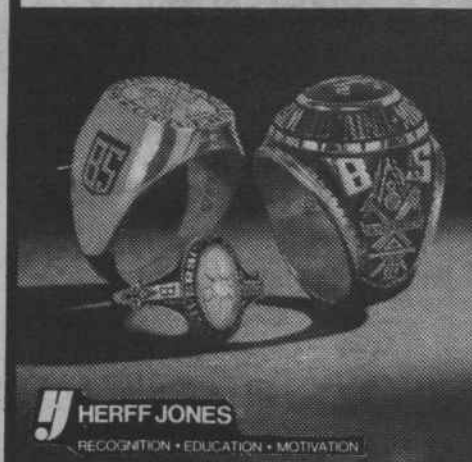
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