

# Southern Belles add to sideline entertainment

By SUSAN GOODWIN  
Staff Writer

Game-side entertainment is not what it used to be.

According to members of the Southern Belles dance team, it is better.

"We're on the sidelines doing funky dances to the tape music as a form of entertainment," said journalism senior Kelly Ryan, co-captain of the team. "We can do what we want to because it's not so structured like cheerleading."

While the dance troop sets itself apart from pompomed colleagues, cheerleading did play a major role in the team's creation.

"Southern Belles was started in 1988 by some former cheerleaders who wanted to get into dance," said graduate student Jodie Smith, an associate of the program. "They formed the group through the cheerleading department and have been self-run ever since."

Cheerleading is also a predecessor to Southern Belles for some of the dancers.

"I cheered the past two years, and I just wanted something different," said team newcomer Nicole Mariella, a psychology junior.

For Bill Boggs, USC administrative adviser, the correlation

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-Nicole Mariella  
Southern Belle

between the two types of spirit-raisers is not hard to comprehend.

"There aren't a lot of high schools that have dance teams," Boggs said. "So, you'll find a majority of these girls have cheerleading backgrounds."

Regardless of their background, the dancers find that hard work is the bottom line.

"A lot of people don't understand how much time goes into everything," Ryan said. "We don't have a coach, so we have to get all the music and plan all the routines."

With the burden of leadership resting squarely on the two captains, the team's independence has, if anything, helped the team to progress, according to Mariella.

"They're (the athletic department) trying to utilize us more,"

Mariella said. "They're bringing us out to do football games, not just basketball."

Extra activities include performing for a high school cheerleading competition at Carowinds and a stunt at Homecoming. The dance troop also strutted it stuff with the varsity cheerleaders at S.C. State.

The team fills all these requests, especially Homecoming, with a specific purpose in mind.

"The athletics director wants to take us and put us on a higher level," Ryan said. "And if he shows us to the alumni, maybe they'd give us money."

While all this branching out is flattering, Boggs insists that the main emphasis of the Southern Belles has not changed.

"They're becoming in higher demand as they become more popular," Boggs said. "But their pri-

mary function remains the same, which is basketball."

As their true season began with the Nov. 18 Gamecock basketball game and is well under way, the Southern Belles have reaffirmed their reason for dancing.

"It's fun to be in front of the crowd performing," Mariella said. "You get a rush just being out there."

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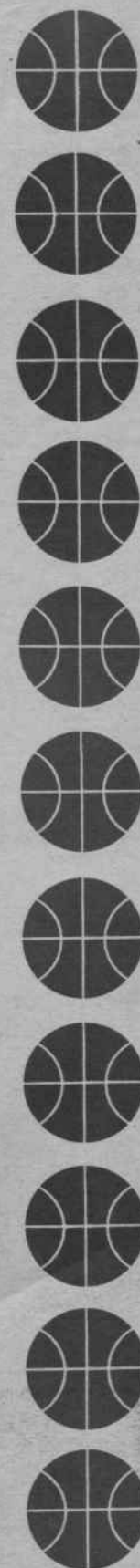
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