

USC tries to take bite out of Bulldogs



David Mandrell/The Gamecock

By **TIM THORSEN**
Staff Writer

Led by the exciting duo of freshman center Erick Dampier and sophomore guard Darryl Wilson, the Mississippi State Bulldogs invade Frank McGuire Arena tonight.

The Bulldogs (15-7, 7-5) are looking to snap their first two-game losing streak of the season, which has dropped them to third in the SEC West.

The Gamecocks (6-16, 2-10) are struggling as well, having dropped their past eight SEC games. Their last conference win was Jan. 19 against Tennessee, the team USC is tied with for last place in the SEC.

For the Gamecocks to get back on track, they must find a way to stop Dampier and Wilson, both of whom are on a roll. In last weeks losses to Vanderbilt and Auburn, the duo combined for 39 points and 33 points respectively. Wilson ranks in the SEC Top 10 in four categories. He

is 10th in scoring, averaging 15.6 points per game. Wilson has proven to be one of the conference's most deadly shooters, ranking ninth in both three-point shooting percentage (38.7) and three-pointers per game (2.2). He is sixth in field goal percentage (80.3).

Dampier has proven to be a force inside in his first season, leading the SEC in both rebounding and blocks per game. Dampier is averaging 9.3 boards a game and 2.5 rejections per contest.

"He's one of the best looking freshmen I've seen since I've been coaching," University of Kentucky coach Rick Pitino said. "If he can stay hungry, he will be great."

In his past seven games, Dampier has averaged 16.1 points, 11.1 boards and 2.9 blocks. He was named SEC Player of the Week for the week of Jan. 10-16. Dampier needs eight blocks to set the MSU single-season record. Wilson has been equally as hot during the span, averaging 17.2 points per game. Wil-

son, the team's leading scorer, has scored more than 20 points in a game five times this year. He has done this coming off the bench, averaging 29 minutes a game.

"When Darryl Wilson comes into the game, it really gives a spark because Darryl doesn't care about the opponent," MSU coach Richard Williams said. "He's the kind of player that can really make something happen. He'll hit a shot, get a steal, take a charge. That kind of play just makes the other players play harder."

The Bulldogs' magic number for the night is 65. During the past four seasons, MSU is 27-1, 8-0 this season, when opponents score less than 65 points. The lone defeat was a 56-53 loss to the University of Mississippi last year.

The Bulldog defense has lost some of its bite lately, though, allowing Vanderbilt to shoot 53 percent and Auburn to shoot 57 percent in the past two Bulldog games. On the season, the Bulldogs have held opponents to 36.8 percent shooting.

Women's basketball takes on UNCC today

By **JIMMY DeBUTTS**
Assistant Sports Editor

The Lady Gamecock basketball team will play the UNC-Charlotte 49ers at 5 p.m. today at Frank McGuire Arena.

UNCC (12-9) is led by freshman Charlotte Hargrove, who's averaging 11.7 points and 7.7 rebounds per game. Sophomore Martika Aldridge is averaging 15.8 points and 5.2 boards a game.

USC (13-11, 2-8) is coming off an 80-68 loss Sunday to Florida (20-4, 8-2). The Gamecocks held an early 25-19 lead against the Gators but weren't able to hold off the sharp shooting of forwards Merlakia Jones and Takilya Davis.

Jones scored 26 points to lead the Gators. She also grabbed 10 rebounds, including seven offensive boards. Davis scored 19 points and pulled down 13 rebounds.

With 8:12 left in the first half, the Gators tied the score at 27 and went on to outscore USC 13-6 the rest of the half. They took a 40-33 lead into halftime.

The Gamecocks trailed the Gators by double figures for most

of the second half. With 12:03 left in the game, USC was down by 19 points. The Gamecocks were able to put a run together, which was led by Shannon Johnson's and Nikki Bass' three-pointers. Bass hit two, and Johnson added another to cut the gap to eight with 6:03 left.

Florida's Kerry Cremeans hit a three-pointer with 5:43 left, and the Gators retained a double-digit lead the remainder of the game. Delisha Milton scored 14 and pulled down a team-high 15 rebounds.

The Gamecocks attempted a school-record 46 three-pointers, and with the 24 attempted by the Gators, a new national record was set. USC connected on 12 of the treys, with Christi Timmons hitting seven of her 20 attempts.

Three USC players scored in double figures. Timmons led the way with 21 points, Shannon Johnson added 20 and pulled down six rebounds, and Bass led the team in assists with four and put in 10 points. Malinda McDaniel worked the boards for USC, grabbing a team-high 14 rebounds and scoring eight points.

Gamecock golf finishes eighth in Gator Invitational

By **TONY SANTORI**
Sports Editor

The USC men's golf team finished eighth at the Gator Invitational this weekend in Gainesville, Fla.

USC shot a 871 during the two-day event, finishing 45 strokes behind the run-away winner, the host Florida Gators. Central Florida finished second at 852 and Alabama third at 858.

Sophomore David Seawell was the top Gamecock performer. He tied for second with a 10-under-par 206. The Aiken native fired rounds of 69-71-66.

Gamecock coach Steve Liebler is impressed with Seawell's play.

"David Seawell gets closer and closer to SEC Player of the Year every time he plays," Liebler said. "He has played in four tournaments this year and has finished second, fourth, fifth and 15th. I know he has the lowest stroke average in the conference, and I think it's one of the lowest in the nation."

USC freshman Brad McFadden tied for 32nd. After struggling to a 76 in the first round, McFadden shot back-to-back rounds of 71 to finish a two-over-par 218.

David Steelman played poorly in the first round but came back in the final two. The sophomore shot rounds of 82-72-69 for a 223. He tied for 45th.

Liebler is pleased with his team's performance this season.

"We played extremely well considering the youth of our team," he said. "We took three sophomores and two freshmen to the tournament. We beat Georgia and Mississippi State and some other SEC teams. There were six Top 20 teams in the tournament. We're getting closer to being a good team."

The Gamecocks will compete in the ImperialLakes Invitational March 4-6 in Lakeland, Fla.

Men's Golf Results

Gamecocks tie for 8th in Gator Invitational

1.	Florida	826
2.	Central Florida	852
3.	Alabama	858
T8.	USC	871

Individual Results

T2.	David Seawell	69-71-66-206
T32.	Brad McFadden	76-71-71-218
T45.	David Steelman	82-72-69-223

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