

'This team has tremendous heart.'

Carolina's upset bid over Arkansas falls short, 63-62

■ Lady Gamecocks overcome 19-point deficit but come up short at the buzzer.

RYAN WILSON Sports Editor

As the USC women's basketball season winds down, one thing has become clear about coach Nancy Wilson's squad: Win or lose, the members play with heart.

This was evident in the Lady Gamecocks' 63-62 loss to the No. 20 Arkansas Lady Razorbacks (17-5, 4-4) in front of a crowd of 528 Saturday at Frank McGuire Arena.

The Lady Gamecocks (10-11, 1-8) trailed by as many as 19 points in the first half, but with the help of some scrappy defense and a strong second half by All-American Shannon Johnson, the Gamecocks came back and had an opportunity to win the game on their last possession.

"We know that this team has tremendous heart," Wilson said. "We were all as a team disappointed with our play in the first half, mainly because it was so lethargic. We didn't feel like we were getting after it. Fortunately, in using the press, we found the Achilles' heel that would give us momentum and loosen us up a little."

"I wish, for our team's sake, we could have come up with one more basket, but I believe we gave ourselves the opportunity to do that. They did everything we asked them to."

The Lady Razorbacks opened the game scoring the first five points, but Carolina answered by tying the game at five with 15:33 left in the half. In the following minute, Arkansas pulled away, but a steal and subsequent 3-pointer by Christi Timmons closed the lead to 9-8.

The Lady Gamecocks went ice cold after Timmons' trey, as the Lady Razorbacks went on a 23-5 run over the next nine minutes to take a 19-point lead at 23-13 with 5:10 to play in the half.

Carolina stopped the run with Timmons' 3-pointer and outscored Arkansas 10-4 in the final four minutes. A 3-pointer as time expired by freshman Heather Godfrey cut the lead to 13 at 36-23.

The half time clearly described the way the game was heading. The Lady Razorbacks hit 51.6 percent of their shots, while Carolina hit 27.3 percent. Even though Carolina's shooting stats were bad, one other aspect of USC's game was missing: Shannon Johnson.

The junior All-American guard, who leads the team in scoring, scored only one point in the half. Wilson stressed in the locker room the importance of getting Johnson the ball more in the second half.

"At halftime, we talked about our motion offense, setting screens and getting Shannon the ball and who in turn would set other people up," Wilson said.

Johnson said, "Coach felt like I wasn't getting the ball enough, and she told the girls to get me open more. I thought they did a better job in the second half."

The Lady Gamecocks came out with a different lineup in the second half. Freshmen Godfrey and Tenna Thompson started the half in place of senior Jenny Randall and junior Cindy Kelly. Wilson justified the lineup change because she felt Godfrey and Thompson were making more of an effort.

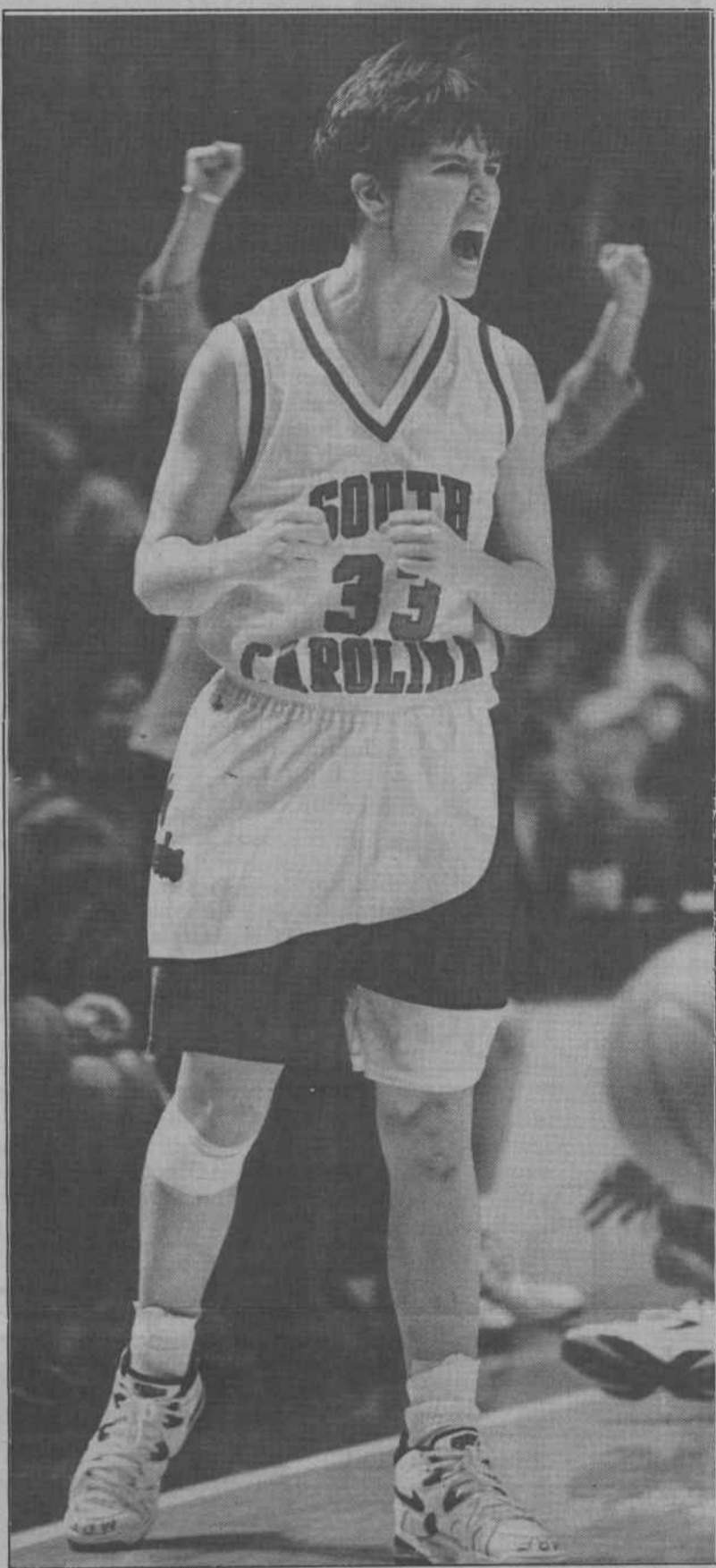
"I thought they were outplaying the others," Wilson said. "The five we started in the second half were the ones who were playing in the first half. Fortunately, some of the other people cranked up."

The lineup change payed off as the Lady Gamecocks used a full-court press to cause some turnovers. The pressure caused Arkansas to lose its composure as Carolina outscored the Lady Razorbacks 15-2 and tied the game at 38 with 12:54 left in the game.

"The pressure obviously bothered Arkansas," Wilson said. "I think our girls did an excellent job to be able to press as much as they had to to negate the half-court strength that Arkansas had."

"I was real pleased with the effort we had in the second half. Christi Timmons was tremendous on defense, creating steals and coming up with loose balls."

Arkansas coach Gary Blair praised Carolina for the determination it showed



KIM TRUETT The Gamecock

Junior guard Natalie Funderburk gets excited after causing an Arkansas turnover in USC's 63-62 loss Saturday to the Lady Razorbacks. The Lady Gamecocks were down by 19 in the first half but managed to come back, only to lose by one as time expired.

in coming back from 19 down and responding to coaching adjustments.

"When you're down by 19 in the first half, with the little freshman (Godfrey) hitting the 3 right before half to give them momentum and with a little coaching at the half, that's what college basketball is all about," Blair said. "The kids responded to coaching in the second half and made some adjustments."

Arkansas finally regained its composure and pulled away, but never led by more than seven for the rest of the game. The Lady Gamecocks battled back, mostly on the play of Johnson, and managed to tie the game at 58 when Johnson converted a three-point play with 2:18 left in the game.

The Lady Razorbacks answered with a basket and a free throw to get a 61-58 lead. Johnson scored on the next pos-

session to cut the lead to one, but Arkansas' Christi Smith was fouled on the inbound pass. Smith, who earlier in the season missed a free throw that would have tied the game at Ole Miss with :00.3 left in the game, hit both free throws to up the score to 63-60.

Carolina hurried the ball down the court, but Jenny Randall missed a tightly guarded 3-pointer attempt. Cindy Kelly got the rebound and scored as time expired to make the final 63-62.

"The second half, we did the smart things with our half-court offense," Wilson said. "I felt like we could win to the buzzer because of the way they were scrapping. I thought Shannon was tremendous in the second half, and our play as a team defensively was scrappy."

USC vs Arkansas - WOMEN

		Arkansas						
	MP	FG	FT	Rbs	A	F	S	Pts
Jones	14	2-2	0-0	0	0	1	1	4
Johnson	35	5-10	6-7	6	1	3	0	16
Bloomer	31	4-10	6-6	16	3	3	3	14
Smith	40	5-10	2-4	5	3	3	1	13
Wilson	38	5-13	0-0	7	2	3	1	11
		USC						
	MP	FG	FT	Rbs	A	F	S	Pts
Timmons	36	5-16	0-0	5	3	3	3	12
Randall	32	1-5	0-0	3	0	2	1	3
Kelly	23	3-6	0-0	4	0	3	0	6
Johnson	37	8-21	5-8	9	7	3	1	23
Funderburk	34	1-5	1-2	6	3	5	3	3
Arkansas					36	27		63
USC					23	39		62

ETHAN MYERSON / The Gamecock

Lady Gamecocks rout Rice, 87-81

■ Lady Gamecocks set arena record for 3-pointers made as they defeat Lady Owls.

MICHAEL BAUR Staff Writer

The Lady Gamecocks have shown a penchant all season long for hitting the 3, and when they do, most teams crumble in front of them.

Carolina's most recent victim was the Lady Owls from Rice Monday night at Frank McGuire Arena. The Lady Owls watched the Lady Gamecocks connect on a Coliseum-record 14 3-pointers en route to an 87-71 victory over the Lady Owls in front of 412.

The win evened USC's record at 11-11 overall and 10-3 against nonconference opponents.

The Lady Gamecocks torched the nets early and often, hitting six 3-pointers in the first six minutes of the game. For the half, Carolina shot 52.9 percent from downtown.

Jenny Randall led the Lady Gamecocks with 21 points despite only 17 minutes on the floor. Randall was injured after hitting a 3-pointer with 16:10 left in the first half. As a result, Randall only played nine minutes the entire first half.

Cindy Kelly chipped in 20 points with Heather Godfrey adding a career-high 15. Overall, the team shot 48 percent from the field and beyond the 3-point arc.

"It's exciting to break the record," USC coach Nancy Wilson said. "Shannon [Johnson] opened the game with a three, and Heather and Jenny contributed as well, so we did a good job of distributing the ball."

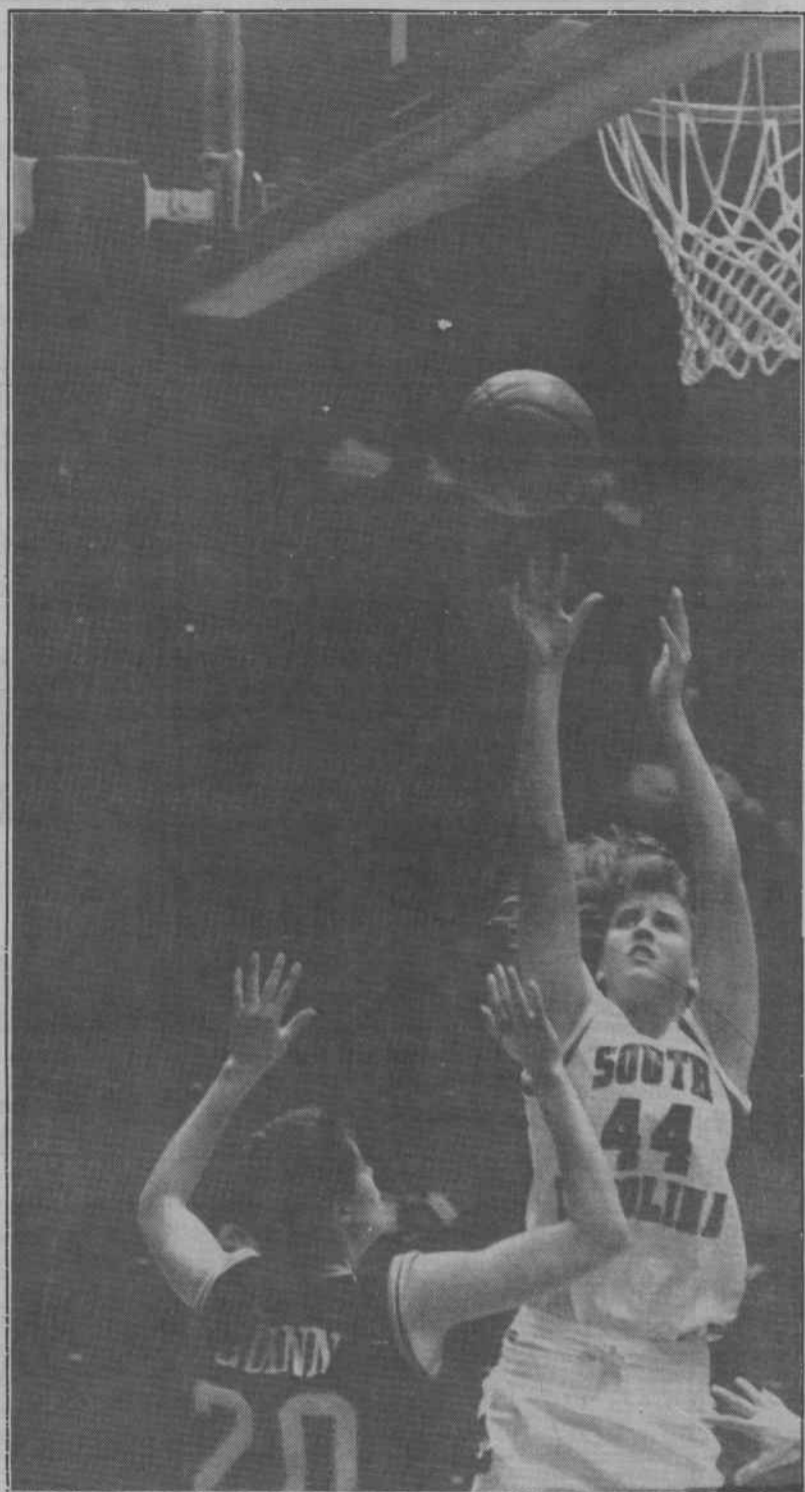
Randall and Godfrey were a combined 6-for-9 from 3-point land as the Lady Gamecocks built a 44-34 lead at the break. In the second half, Cindy Kelly posted six quick points inside the paint while connecting on 50 percent of her 3-point attempts to key the 16-point victory.

After an early second-half run by the Lady Owls, the Lady Gamecocks answered and kept the game at a safe distance. For the game, USC shot 48.4 percent from the field while shooting 48.3 percent from behind the 3-point arc. The Lady Gamecocks also found some points on the inside as Kelly and Audrey Ramsey found their rhythm in the post.

"We hadn't taken advantage inside in the first half," Wilson said. "We went to our high-low offense that created more opportunities for us to get more points."

Next up for the Lady Gamecocks is a Saturday SEC contest against nationally ranked Florida. Despite the Lady Gators' impressive statistics, Wilson expects her team to be ready for the 2 p.m. contest at McGuire Arena.

"I've heard that they're the most athletic team in the league," she said. "But we'll be ready for them."



JAMIE CLARK The Gamecock

Jenny Randall scored a team-high 21 points in the Lady Gamecocks' 87-71 home win Monday against Rice.

USC vs Rice - WOMEN

		Rice						
	MP	FG	FT	Rbs	A	F	S	Pts
Smith	22	1-6	0-0	5	2	0	0	2
McCallum	26	7-11	8-9	6	0	4	0	22
Manzo	12	2-3	0-0	6	3	2	0	4
Guinn	32	4-9	1-2	4	2	3	2	12
LaLonde	40	4-12	0-0	6	7	3	1	10
		USC						
	MP	FG	FT	Rbs	A	F	S	Pts
Timmons	33	2-9	1-2	3	6	2	1	7
Randall	17	8-11	0-1	4	0	3	0	21
Kelly	24	6-10	7-8	4	1	3	0	20
Johnson	32	5-9	2-3	6	7	2	1	13
Funderburk	23	0-4	2-2	1	9	0	1	2
Rice					34	37		71
USC					44	43		87

ETHAN MYERSON / The Gamecock

Connecticut women, men top-ranked

Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. — The talk about Connecticut basketball was flowing as freely as the coffee Monday at the Sugar Shack. And not even the poetry of owner Nick Buonocore could spoil this day.

"Never in history has it been done, both men and women ranked No. 1," the poem went. "Our Huskies did it, I'm filled with glee. So come in and have a coffee. Hey, it's on me."

Not only did the men's team reach the No. 1 ranking for the first time in the program's 93-year history, but by catching up with the women, the school became the first to have both programs ranked first in the polls.

"Everybody's talking about it. Everybody's excited," said Tom Iannone, a senior who works at Buonocore's doughnut shop, which gave away more than 100 gallons of coffee Monday.

The campus was relatively quiet the day after the men's team beat Syracuse to improve to 19-1 overall and 12-0 in the Big East. Most of the celebrating took place Sunday, when the Huskies' biggest fans knew a win would all but assure the team of being No. 1.

And that is exactly what happened. The men's team received 50 of 66 first-place votes and 1,626 points in the latest AP poll.

The Connecticut women's team, which also won Sunday to remain the only unbeaten team in Division I (21-0, 13-0), has been in the top spot since mid-January.

"This is something we all knew about both UConn teams," said Gov. John Rowland, who phoned his congratulations to men's coach Jim Calhoun. "We didn't need the AP poll to tell us they are No. 1."

In the eyes of Connecticut, the Huskies have always been the top dogs, especially in a state where the only professional franchise is the NHL's Hartford Whalers, who have provided fans little to cheer about.

But now that both teams are No. 1, there seems to be more legitimacy to the Huskymania gripping the state.

"I think it is a tribute to the small state of Connecticut that we are getting this kind of recognition," athletics director Lew Perkins said. "The fact that we are the first school in the country ... it's wonderful."

The men's team, which jumped from third to first in the polls, became the fourth school to hold the No. 1 ranking this season and the first Big East team to be top-ranked since Syracuse was on top for six weeks in 1989-90.

The Huskies easily outdistanced North Carolina (19-1), which dropped

to second following a midweek loss to Maryland. Next was Kansas (18-3), the only team to beat Connecticut.

Kentucky (17-3) moved up one spot to fourth and was followed by Massachusetts (18-2), which fell one place in a week in which the Minutemen won one game and had another suspended by a student protest at Rutgers.

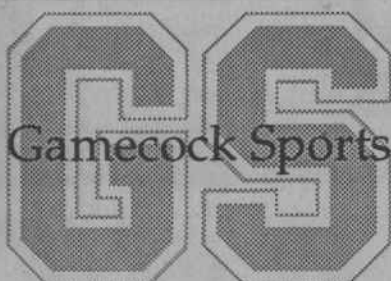
"It's more important to be No. 1 in the middle of February than the first week of December," Calhoun said after practice at George Washington University Monday. "But what really counts is being No. 1 the first week of March."

Starting center Travis Knight agreed. "Being No. 1 won't be important until the end of the season. It doesn't mean a thing until then," he said.

The women have been holding up extremely well under the pressure of being No. 1. They continue to breeze through their schedule, beating opponents by an average margin of more than 30 points.

"I like the way the women are handling it," said forward Donny Marshall. "If we could do the same thing the women's team is doing, we'll be fine."

The men didn't have long to celebrate before preparing for their first test at No. 1. They went straight from Syracuse to Washington, where they face Georgetown Tuesday night.



Taking the charge.

