

Basketball team hopes to build on last year's success

**BRYAN JOHNSTON
SCRUM DOWN**

The countdown continues. Only six more days until coach Eddie Fogler and his basketball troops hit the hardwood for their first official practice of the 1996-97 season. This season will be full of high expectations for the Gamecocks. Last season, Carolina posted a record of 19-12. The Gamecocks went to the third round of the National Invitation Tournament before losing a heart-breaker to Alabama. Coach Fogler returns every player except Malik Russell. That includes 1995 SEC Freshman of the Year BJ McKie, 1994 SEC All-Freshman team member Melvin Watson, seniors Larry Davis and Nate Wilbourne, sophomore Bud Johnson and many others. Along with this fine crop of returnees, Fogler brought in two big-time recruits: Big-men Antonio Grant and Herbert Lee Davis look to make an immediate impact on the SEC. Red-shirt freshman Hagen Rouse, who is known for his long-range touch, is eligible this year after sitting out last year. The Gamecocks are ranked second in the SEC East behind national champion Kentucky in just about every preseason poll. Many feel that the Gamecock are the only team who can

give the Wildcats a run this year. That includes ESPN. The game against UK is going to be broadcast nation-wide in prime-time. That means the one and only Dick Vitale and his cohorts will invade the Frank McGuire Arena on Feb. 4. The Tuesday night game will tip-off at 9:30 p.m. Mark your calendars now, because the game will be a sell-out. With all of the preseason hype surrounding the Gamecock basketball team, a trip to the NCAA tournament will be the only thing that will satisfy the team and its fans. All the pieces are in place for a successful season and the fans of USC basketball have their hopes up for what promises to be another exciting season of Carolina hoops. Speaking of getting my hopes up, Saturday's near upset of Auburn sent my spirits a flyin'. Even if we did lose the game, the effort put forth by the Gamecocks impressed me. They outplayed the 20th-ranked Tigers on the road and nearly came out of Jordan-Hare Stadium with a much-needed victory. The problem, though, is that they didn't come away with a win. The current three-game losing streak has Carolina sitting with a 2-3 record and 1-2 in the SEC.

But mark my word, USC will reel off three victories in a row starting this week with Kentucky and continuing with Arkansas and Vanderbilt. They won't just win these games, they will win them in impressive form. For those of you who have given up on the team and are embarrassed to be a Gamecock follower, I don't want to see you donning the garnet and black sweatshirts in three weeks and saying how awesome our team is. We don't need bandwagon fans like you and we're better off without you. This team is good and has had some bad luck. I'm warning you now that this team is going to turn some heads before the season is over. I am convinced that this team is closing the gap between the upper-level teams in the SEC and is widening the gap between the rest. The way the defense has stepped up it's play and the numbers the offense has been able to produce can't do anything but impress you. With a few breaks and a few less feet of rain, the Gamecocks could be 5-0 and we wouldn't be having this conversation right now. But they aren't and the fact still remains that they need four wins out of their next six games to be eligible for a bowl. When they win their next three games, USC will be 5-3 heading into the

Tennessee and Florida games. Let's be honest, it'll take a miracle for them to win either of those, but hey, who predicted that Carolina would've kept it close against Auburn. At 5-5 heading into the battle for Palmetto State supremacy on Nov. 23, the Gamecocks should and will whip those Tigers. Clemson right now is playing well enough to beat up on some junior varsity teams, but that's it. They had to schedule a Division I-AA team to assure themselves of one victory and held on to defeat the mighty Wake Forest Demon Deacons. Carolina linebacker Shane Burnham said that this team will find a way to make it to a bowl. I believe him. Any bowl, yes even the Carquest Bowl, would make the fans happy. Look on the bright side: USC is undefeated in the Carquest Bowl! But seriously, the Gamecocks are playing much better now than they did two weeks ago. A Kentucky team who has managed to score only 27 points in five games is the cure for Carolina. Going 6-5 would be nothing to be ashamed of with this year's team. They are young and are just now getting into the swing of life in the mighty SEC. Give them time and a summer to mature and this team will be a force to reckon with next fall.

But a South Carolina team to be reckoned with this year is the volleyball team. After winning two matches this weekend over Auburn and Alabama, The Lady Gamecocks are 13-3 overall and 4-0 in the SEC. It's the first time ever that the volleyball team has started out in the SEC with four victories. Going into the weekend, USC was ranked third in the Division behind Florida and Auburn. After defeating the Eagles in an exciting five-set match, Carolina is assured of moving up in the polls. Coach Kim Hudson has assembled a team that is both very good and fun to watch. A winning team is much easier to watch, and the Lady Gamecocks are doing that. Players such as Ashley Edlund, Heather Larkin, Fe Laire, Cindy Robarge and Lori Drost have led this team to an impressive first-half record. If they can keep it going in the second-half of the season, which continues this weekend with games at Kentucky and Tennessee, look for them to make their second consecutive appearance in the SEC tournament. Volleyball fever is catching on. The proof is in the growing crowds and insanity at the matches. I urge you to catch it before it's gone. Before you know it, it'll be basketball season.

USC BRIEFS From Staff and Wire Reports Compiled by Bryan Johnston

Cross Country

The USC women's cross country team completed their third meet Oct. 5 by placing fifth in the Wake Forest Invitational at Winston-Salem, N.C. The Gamecocks scored 128 points as Georgetown clinched the women's title. Ivana Skladana was Carolina's top finisher, in 17th place, with a time of 18:36. Finishing second through fifth were: Karen Padula (40th at 19:50); Mary Barry (41st at 19:52); Joyce Peebles (45th at 20:04) and Suzanne Higgins (48th at 20:26). South Carolina's next meet will be at the Auburn Invitational at Auburn, Ala., Oct. 12.

Men's Soccer

The Gamecocks dropped a 3-2 overtime decision to No. 8 Southern Methodist in Dallas, Texas, Oct. 6. With the score knotted 2-2 at the end of regulation, Daniel Hernandez was fouled in the goal box and then connected on a penalty kick in the 117th minute to give SMU the game winner. Shining for the Gamecocks was freshman midfielder Ryan O'Neill, scoring and assisting on Robbie Pait's goal. Carolina drops to 2-5-1 on the year.

Women's Soccer

The Carolina women's soccer team defeated Wofford Tuesday night, 3-0 in Spartanburg. Freshman Jennie Ono had two goals and senior Debbie Smith had a goal and an assist. The victory over the Terriers raises the Lady Gamecock's record to 6-6 on the season.

Schedules

The men's soccer team hosts The Citadel tonight at 7 p.m. at Eugene E. Stone III Stadium. Carolina leads the all-time series, 14-0-0. Last season, the Gamecocks defeated The Citadel, 3-0, behind two goals from All-American Clint Mathis. Carolina will then meet North Carolina in Chapel Hill Oct. 13 at 2 p.m. The Tarheels hold a 9-6-1 edge in the series and a 6-0-1 record in Chapel Hill versus the Gamecocks. Last year, USC defeated UNC, 3-1, behind two goals from Chuck Prosser. The women's soccer team will host the Florida Gators in a 7 p.m. SEC matchup. Florida holds a 2-0 lead in the brief series. The last time a nationally-ranked women's soccer team came to Columbia, the Gamecocks defeated No. 9 Clemson, 3-2, earlier this year.

Coaches Corner Bill Curry and Brad Scott square off about this weekend's game

JOSH PENROD Senior Writer

As the leaves start falling and the temperature starts to drop this fall, there probably are not many more campuses in the southeast that will be as picturesque as the University of Kentucky. There will be plenty of faculty, staff, and students that will get a chance to reflect on the breathtaking sights of Lexington. All but Kentucky's Bill Curry and his coaching staff. Head football coach Curry will be too busy trying to muster up some wins for his current 1-4 team and it does not look good with six games in the season left to play. The Wildcats are coming off of a 35-7 drubbing by Alabama and have also lost to Louisville, Cincinnati and Florida. These three opponents collectively have scored a total of 137 points against a dilapidated Kentucky defense. As if Curry did not have enough to worry about, this past week, Sports Illustrated, ran an article, "Currying A Flavor," that shed some of SI's negative light on Coach Curry's stay at Kentucky to the entire nation. "I think we've had some good breaks in games against South Carolina. In the case of these two teams, I think we've been very evenly matched in some cases. We've got lucky here and there. We had a phenomenal performance by Moe Williams last year. [It was not really planned], it just happened that day and South Carolina just happened to be the team," Curry said, referring to the 299 yard career-best rushing performance by senior Wildcat running back Moe Williams that led to a Kentucky 35-30 win at Williams-Brice. Kentucky, despite only having had three offensive touchdowns in five games, has had a week-by-week quarterback controversy since the beginning of the season. Junior Billy Jack Haskins held the reins as last year's signal caller, but heralded freshman Tim Couch has come in this season and put a little pressure on Haskins for the position. "I think the hype that surrounds a freshman quarterback at this day and time makes things very difficult for [Couch] and for our program. [Couch] has done some good things, but he has also had to suffer with this team," Curry said. "We know that South Carolina is really not a 2-3 football team. We watched the film and they played Auburn right off their feet. You just don't go to Auburn and play like that. I don't care who you are. I was very impressed with them. This is by far, Brad [Scott's] best team. This is the best South Carolina team that we've faced," Curry said. Calling this game pivotal for both teams would be an understatement. If the Gamecocks come away with a win, this game may just be a temporary stop for teams that are just passing each other. One on the way up. The other on the way down.



SCOTT

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CURRY

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ACHIM HUNT Sports Editor

South Carolina head football coach Brad Scott knows that his team played well at Auburn, and he also knows that he needs to praise his team for their effort. However, he needs to be cautious about getting a big head in what should be a very winnable game at Kentucky this weekend. "Well, we played well enough to win the football game against Auburn. That effort shows that we are taking steps to build this program," Scott said. "The thing that really hurts is that we really could have made up some ground with a win, but it was not in the cards for us. I am real proud of the team, and the way that our coaches prepared them for battle. It was a tough task to play at Auburn, who is one of the better teams in our conference." Kentucky has won one game this year, a 3-0 thriller over Indiana. In conference play, they have been blown out by Florida and Alabama in the last two weeks. Kentucky really seems to be missing the services of Moe Williams, who devastated Carolina and the rest of the SEC last year. "And now our biggest challenge is this Kentucky football team. Kentucky has had our number over the years. Last year they just gave us a real physical whipping. They have rallied the troops for this ball game. It is a real key ball game for our ball club."

"This is one that we need to win, and we need to get our focus off of Auburn and on Kentucky. Kentucky is a solid team, and they do not make a lot of mistakes. Their defense is a 'bend but don't break' type of defense, and on offense they run the ball right at you. This is the third straight week we have faced a team with that type of offense. I am confident that are our team will have a positive attitude for this game, and I know that they want to win a game badly. There is a lot of hurt on this team right now. We have been evenly matched with just about every team that Kentucky has fielded against us, but we just can't seem to out-play them on the field. One thing I see is that maybe Bill Curry is a little bit more experienced than me, and this is a game that they feel can turn around their season. It is a great challenge for their players and coaches this week. Brad Scott does not feel that the two quarterbacks change Kentucky offense that much as Curry will switch them in and out during the ball game. They do have two quarterbacks in Billy Jack Haskins and Tim Couch. With Billy Jack, they run the option more, and with Couch he is more of a drop-back passer. It really does not matter who their quarterback is, because they run basically the same offense with both fellows. Our team wants to win one real bad, and we think that we have the chance this week. We are evenly


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