

GAMECOCK
ATHLETICSBaseball @ Tennessee
Next Weekend
Knoxville, TNSoftball @ SEC Tournament
May 11-14, 1997
Columbus, GABASEBALL
SCOREBOARDSouth Carolina 3
Florida 8South Carolina 5
Florida 8

SPORTS

Monday, April 28, 1997

The Gamecock

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Lady Gamecocks capture SEC Softball Championship with wins over Auburn and Alabama



BRYAN JOHNSTON The Gamecock

Sky Brown improved to 14-0 Sunday against Auburn. The Lady Gamecock pitching helped lead Carolina to the regular-season Southeastern Conference Championship.

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consecutive victory. Beers (W 13-1, 0.60 ERA) struck out seven Crimson Tide batters in the process.

Schultze held the hot bat for the Lady Gamecocks in game two. The Upland, Calif., native went 3-3 with two RBIs and a run scored.

"I'm excited because I haven't been able to hit for a while," Schultze said.

The two victories gave Carolina more than just the SEC title, it gave them 55 wins. The 55 victories broke the school record of 54 established

by the 1992 USC squad.

Compton said she didn't think her girls even knew about the accomplishment.

Schultze seemed surprised when the feat was mentioned to her.

"I did not know that," Schultze said. "Wow, that's great. I don't think we'll ever do that again."

With all of the records and titles out of the way on Saturday, Carolina still had two more games Sunday to finish up their regular-season campaign.

Auburn came to town looking to gain a spot in the SEC tournament and USC was looking to stay focused

on Senior Day.

The rainy weather was appropriate for all of the tears were shed in the pre-game ceremony honoring the five Lady Gamecock seniors. Lee, Johnson, Lyons, Plew and Kelly Dammer were all given the traditional yellow rose by an underclassman and a portrait of themselves before taking the field.

Emotional or not, Carolina came out and took care of business, completing yet another sweep, 4-0 and 4-2.

In game one, Johnson picked up both her 30th victory and her 21st shutout of the year, striking out 14

Tiger batters. She came dangerously close to tossing her 10th career no-hitter, which would've been a school record, but that was spoiled in the fifth inning when Auburn's Amy Bellanca laid down a bunt that squeezed the third base line and Bellanca reached first base.

Johnson (W 30-2, 0.21 ERA) was not aware of how close she came to setting the school record.

"I didn't know that was it. What a bummer," Johnson said. "I wasn't where I wanted to be today, but I was good enough."

The Lady Gamecocks struck first in the second inning when Brown reached on a walk. She moved to second when Johnson walked and to third on a wild pitch. Schultze knocked her in with her groundout.

Plew tripled to center field in the third and was driven in by Brown's sacrifice fly. McCutcheon and Lee both scored in the fourth inning to seal the victory.

In the second game, Brown took to the mound hoping to end the regular season with a victory. It wasn't the prettiest of efforts but Carolina managed to pull out the 4-2 victory to end the season 57-3 and 25-1 in the SEC.

USC put up two runs in the first when Lee reached with a walk and moved to second on Pietro's single. Lee moved to third on Plew's flyout and scored on a wild pitch. Pietro moved to second on that wild pitch and scored from second when Lyons singled.

Elliott led off the second with a double to right-center and moved to third on Troesh's ground out. Elliott scored when she slid under the tag of Auburn's Kris Heneghan to make it 3-0.

Carolina upped the score to 4-0 in the third.

Plew was hit by a pitch and moved to second on a wild pitch. Freshman Sondra Hall moved her to third with a fielder's choice and Plew scored when Brenda Espinoza uncorked another wild pitch.

Auburn tried to make it interesting by scoring two unearned runs in the fourth, but it would not be enough as Brown shut the door on the Tigers.

Brown (W 14-0) finished up by throwing a two-hitter while striking out four. It was a bit more interesting for Brown because she was throwing against a lot of people she knew.

"It felt good throwing against a lot of my friends on that team," the Montgomery, Ala., native said.

Brown also said it was fun throwing against Auburn because the head coach, Tina Deese, taught Brown how to throw.

As far as Sunday's games, Brown was happy with the team's performance.

"I think we did a good job today, especially with the weather," Brown said. "We came out a little not pumped up. We made some physical errors because of the wet balls but



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Senior All-American Tina Plew takes a swing at an Alabama pitch on Saturday. The Lady Gamecocks swept the Crimson Tide to break the school record for wins in a single season with 55.

overall, I think we did a good job." Sunday's games marked the last regular-season games for the senior class.

This class will be remembered for their many accomplishments. The five seniors were the first class to go to four NCAA regionals and were part of the team that broke the NCAA consecutive-game winning streak.

They were also a vital part of the team that broke the record for most victories in a season and will be forever linked to the first-ever SEC title.

"When you come in as a freshman, you never think this day's ever going to get to you as quick as it does," Compton said. "It's special because they've gone through three other presentations of the roses and now the table's turned."

"The senior class means a lot because they show a lot of leadership," Brown said. "Everyone's going to miss them when they're gone. I think they did a good job today staying focused."

"They've meant a lot to taking this program to another level," Compton said. "The success that their class had has in the three other years they've been here has really

established South Carolina softball on the national map."

Johnson said because it wasn't the last game of the season, it probably hasn't hit any of the seniors yet that Sunday was possibly the last time they would play on Lady Gamecock Field.

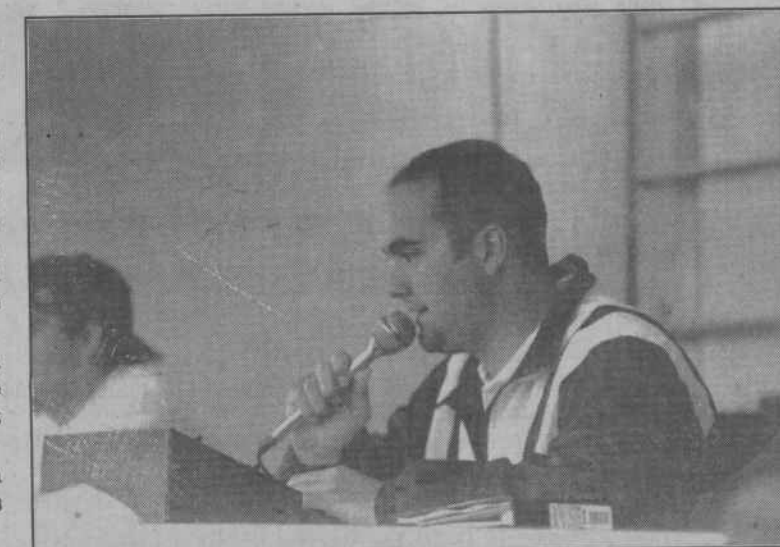
Now that the regular season is over, the Lady Gamecocks must wait nearly two weeks before another game. That next game will be in the inaugural SEC Softball Tournament, which will be held in Columbus, Ga. Carolina will play at 6 p.m. May 9 in the second round of the tournament.

South Carolina heads into the postseason on quite a roll. Before dropping a 6-1 decision to Tennessee April 6, USC had won 38 straight games.

After that loss, the Lady Gamecocks picked up where they left off, winning 17 in a row. Since Feb. 22, USC has won 55 of their last 56 games.

Johnson said she felt the team is in pretty good shape heading into the postseason.

"I think we have a few things we need to work on, but I think we're going to be strong and be ready to go."



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Senior Shaun Howery calls his final game at Lady Gamecock Field. He has announced softball and volleyball for two years. After graduation he hopes to get a job in college athletics.

Next football season features rematches of last year's games

ACHIM HUNT Sports Editor

As the school year is winding down, so is the Gamecock athletic season. Even though there still are a couple of sports that have to compete in their NCAA Tournaments, the events this year are very close to the end.

But, to keep you from total Gamecock withdrawal, here's a short breakdown of next year's football schedule.

The Gamecocks open up at home Sept. 6 against non-conference rival Central Florida. Carolina leads the series 1-0, with last year's 33-14 win over the Golden Knights.

The SEC schedule opens up on Sept. 13 with a road game against Georgia. The Bulldogs lead the series 36-

11-2, but the Gamecocks won on ESPN last year 23-14 on a pair of Duce Staley touchdowns.

East Carolina is next for the Gamecocks, played in Greenville, N.C.

The Pirates have won the last two meetings with the Gamecocks including a 23-7 win last year in the Noah Bowl. The Gamecocks lead the series 9-4.

The Gamecocks' three-game road swing continues in Starkville, Miss. against the Bulldogs of Mississippi State.

The Bulldogs lead the series 3-2, and they are one of two permanent SEC West opponents that the Gamecocks face. Last year the Bulldogs edged out the Gamecocks 14-10 to spoil Homecoming.

The schedule brings Carolina back to Columbia on Oct. 4 against SEC West opponent Auburn. Last year, the Gamecocks lost a fumble late in the game that the Tigers turned into a touchdown to capture a 28-24 victory. That win gave the Tigers a 3-1-1 edge in the series.

The Gamecocks roll on with SEC opponent Kentucky the next weekend in the Homecoming matchup. Last year the Gamecocks overcame a 14-3 halftime deficit to win 25-14.

The Wildcats lead the series 4-3-1, but next year will be the first time that the Gamecocks will face the Wildcats under new head coach Hal Mumme.

Arkansas is next on the

Gamecocks schedule for an Oct. 18 road game in Little Rock, Ark.

The Razorbacks are the Gamecocks' other permanent SEC West rival, and they lead the series 3-2-1, after the Gamecocks won last year 23-17.

Back at home, the Gamecocks will have to face the Vanderbilt Commodores Oct. 25. The Gamecocks have never lost to Vanderbilt and they won 27-0 last year, totally dominating the Commodores.

Then, the Gamecocks reach the Orange Crush portion of the schedule as they travel to "Rocky Top" to face senior Peyton Manning and the Volunteers.

Last year the Vols won 31-14 in Columbia, and they lead

the all-time series 11-2-2.

Following an open week, the Gamecocks face defending SEC and national champions Florida Nov. 15 in Columbia. The Gators lead the Gamecocks 11-3-3 after their 52-25 win last year.

The schedule concludes with the annual grudge match against the Clemson Tigers Nov. 22. The Tigers lead the series by a 55-35-4 mark after last year's thrilling Carolina victory by a score 34-31. The Tigers scored 14 fourth-quarter points and had a chance to send the game into overtime, but Matt Padgett missed a field goal wide left to give the Gamecocks the victory.

Of course, everybody hopes that the season will end with at least six victories and a bowl

game.

With an improved defense and an experienced quarterback in junior Anthony Wright, the Gamecocks have a solid chance to do just that.

Both Central Florida and East Carolina will be dropped from the schedule in 1998 in favor of an opening season game with Ball State, and a third game at home against Marshall.

The tradition of Big Thursday may return because there is now talk of moving the Carolina-Clemson game to Thanksgiving Day. The change may have to be made because of the new ACC TV deal with ESPN and ABC that states that each member school has to play a Thanksgiving game in the next eight years.

The Student Gamecock Club will meet tonight at 7:00 in RH room 315. Important issues will be discussed that affect membership. Be There!