

GAMECOCK TRIVIA

Melvin Watson's 157 assists this season ranked No. 2 on the Gamecock basketball team's all-time single-season total. Who holds the record for single-season assists?

SPORTS

COUNTDOWN TO 2001

USC kicks off its 1997 football season Sept. 6 at home against Central Florida. The Gamecocks have six home games this season, including a season-ending finale on Nov. 22 versus Clemson.

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The Gamecock

Friday, May 16, 1997

Gamecocks fall to MSU

Ineligibility gives 'second chance'

SHANNON E. MOTLEY Staff Writer

Thanks to an ineligible Vanderbilt player, the USC baseball team was given a second chance to advance to the SEC Tournament. But the eighth-seeded Gamecocks fell 12-9 Wednesday night in a play-in game against Mississippi State.

Carolina allowed 12 hits and two home runs to the Bulldogs, ranked seventh nationally by Collegiate Baseball. USC, which is the fourth leading scoring team in the nation, put up a good fight with 11 hits and three home runs.

Gamecocks head coach Ray Tanner and his team had said goodbye to the 1997 season after a 5-0 loss to Kentucky on Sunday.

But Vanderbilt starting third baseman and top-hitter Hunter Bledsoe was declared ineligible Monday because of an NCAA rule that requires 24 hours be completed from a transfer athlete's junior college. Bledsoe did not meet this requirement, and Vanderbilt relinquished its spot in the tournament, allowing the Gamecocks to advance.

"It's not exactly the way we wanted to get into the tournament," Tanner said. "We all have to play by the same rules. I feel bad. It was just an oversight. Unfortunately, you have to suffer the consequences."

USC outfielder Derick Urquhart said, "The seniors were sitting there shaking hands and saying their last goodbyes."

After hearing the announcement of the Commodores' tournament withdrawal, Urquhart said, "To have this happen, man, this is great."

Despite the favor Vanderbilt seemed to give, the Gamecocks couldn't take advantage of the situation.

Carolina trailed MSU 7-0 before making a valiant comeback effort. Urquhart led the team, hitting three for four with a homer and two RBI.

Pitcher Brett Jodie got the loss and finished the season 8-4.

The loss knocked USC out of the tournament, ending their season with a 33-24 record.

"We needed this experience," Tanner said. "We don't like to lose, but obviously, I'm delighted to be here. We made some strides this year, and we didn't finish the way we wanted to. But we're determined to get better next year."

Watson, McKie invited to 1997 USA team trials

FROM STAFF REPORTS

USC basketball players Melvin Watson and BJ McKie have been invited to attend the 1997 USA Men's National Team Trials.

Sixty-six of the nation's top collegiate players were invited to the trials, which will be held at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo. May 30 through June 1. The trials will select the finalists for the 12-member USA 22 and Under World Championship and World University Games squads.

McKie and Watson are the only two native South Carolinians invited to the trials. McKie, a native of

Columbia, is eligible to compete for either team. Age restrictions will permit Watson, from Charleston, to only compete for the World University Games team.

Both players were first-team All SEC selections this past season, leading the Gamecocks to the school's first SEC Championship. McKie led the team in scoring with 17.4 points per game. Watson averaged 11 points, while leading the team in assists at 5.2 per contest.

The 22 and Under World Championship will be held Aug. 1-10 in Melbourne, Australia. The World University Games are scheduled for Aug. 21-31 in Taipei, Italy.

GAMECOCK TRIVIA ANSWER

The record belongs to former Gamecock Gerald Peacock, who dished out 182 assists in the 1982-83 season.



BRYAN JOHNSTON The Gamecock

New women's basketball coach Susan Walvius discusses her goals at her first USC press conference.

USC welcomes Walvius

NATHAN BROWN Senior Writer

After posting a 12-14 record during the 1996-97 season, the Lady Gamecocks may have finally gotten the spark they needed all season long.

On April 28, Susan Walvius was named head women's basketball coach for USC.

"I am extremely excited about becoming a Gamecock," Walvius said. "The challenge of building a championship-caliber program in the SEC, the nation's finest conference, is an opportunity of a lifetime."

Before Walvius came to USC, she was the women's basketball head coach at West Virginia University. While in Morgantown, she rebuilt the program, coaching the team to a 19-12 record last year. She also managed to put together a recruiting class that ranks in the Top 20 of the nation, which will now be left to assistant Alexis Basil, who took over the head position at WVU.

When asked why she would leave a promising situation, Walvius said, "Doors like the University of South Carolina don't come open all the time. And when these doors open, and it's an opportunity for me to advance in my career, even though we would have won at West Virginia and we did win at West Virginia, this is a step up."

"To coach in the SEC, to have an opportunity to play and coach against the best and to be successful in that atmosphere, which we will, I think is a challenge that everyone would want to have," she said.

Her decision to come to USC could have been influenced by her five-year contract, reportedly worth \$500,000, which includes a \$90,000 per year base salary.

Recognizing the challenge that lay ahead of her, Walvius remains confident that the Gamecocks will rise to the top of the SEC.

"This is a challenge and a lot of work. I have the energy to do it. I have done it before," Walvius said. "I am young [32 years old] and have established myself very early in my career. I would not take over this program if I didn't know I could get the job done."

"I see the potential here to be very good and I think we will be good. I think we can build a very strong women's basketball program here and a contender in the SEC conference, which is going to have to be one of the best women's basketball teams in the country," she said.

South Carolina Athletics Director Dr. Mike McGee speaks very highly of Walvius and of her ability to meet the demands of the SEC.

"Our goal here at Carolina is to have a women's basketball program that every year is among those vying for a conference championship," McGee said. "Susan is a proven and innovative recruiter. She is regarded to be one of the outstanding young coaches in America."

"We are confident Coach Walvius will take Carolina basketball to the next level and develop a program which will be a perennial contender in the Southeastern Conference," he said.

Senior Women's Athletic Administrator Laurie Massa regards Walvius as an excellent person to fill the vacancy of head coach at USC.

"We have a great person for this job. She has had a lot of success recruiting and that's going to be important. She is also cognizant of how important the community is. We took everything into consideration and felt like she was the best person," Massa said.

The success that Walvius is expected to bring to USC didn't just start at West Virginia.

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