

Tart set to help overcome 1996 woes

SHANNON E. MOTLEY Staff Writer

David Tart believes in the power of teamwork and thinks it might hold the magic it will take to bring the Gamecocks' men's soccer team out of last season's slump.

The 22-year-old senior captain said the team worked through its disappointment last season — when they finished 8-9-2 under head coach Mark Berson — with a spring full of position and attitude changes.

"Coach [Berson] was concerned with players' team concept, but he did a good job explaining it to [the captains], and we relayed that to the team," said Tart, a biology major who hopes to go to medical school after graduation.

"Through us, the younger guys understood how things needed to be done as a team," he said, emphasizing "team."

Tart will be playing defense for the Gamecocks this season as a right fullback. He had been a midfielder, but because of the style of play and Berson's decision to move players around, Tart will be in a new spot.

"We didn't have the season we wanted last fall," the Garner, N.C., native said. "But, spring was productive and things look better."

USC was one of the top four teams in the country two years ago, but they lost in the first round of the NCAA Tournament after a bad game, Tart said. The team garnered preseason ranking in 1996, but finished unranked and, for the first time in five years,

without an NCAA Tournament bid.

"We were confident we would win the national championship," Tart said. "But the team chemistry and team attitude were not where they should have been."

"It was like we were on a roller coaster. We beat big teams and then would lose to small teams we shouldn't have."

Tart said USC has a great recruiting class for the 1997 season, which includes some players who have previous NCAA soccer experience.

"It's a hard transition from high school to college, and it's easier because they have played college ball," he said.

Tart said he visited and was recruited by North Carolina State, North Carolina-Chapel Hill and Greensboro, Furman and South Carolina out of high school, when he was on the Under-17 National Soccer Team.

"I had ties to N.C. State, and I visited the other schools, but Coach Berson impressed me and my parents, and I was impressed by the program," Tart said of why he chose Carolina.

Tart was redshirted his first year after breaking his leg. Despite the injury, he made a great recovery and has earned his place as a 1997 team captain, as well as four varsity letters. He was also a scholar-athlete All-American in 1996.

Tart has a positive attitude about the season ahead. He said the spring games, workouts and attitude changes



Special to The Gamecock
USC men's soccer captain David Tart is ready for the 1997 season. Tart said position and attitude changes will help the team improve.

were necessary to boost the team spirit and get them ready for the 1997 schedule.

"What I hope is we're not ranked, because the young guys feel like they

have something to prove," Tart said. "Win one game, and then concentrate on the next game, then the NCAA Tournament, and then look to the Final Four."

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"The men are young and it really helped a lot of them to participate here," Frye said.

Tonique Williams was ninth in the 400 meters. Erin Narzinski finished seventh in the women's heptathlon at her first NCAA meet.

"I missed sixth place by three points and that's painful," Narzinski said. "I wanted to be All-American and I did that."

Ten Gamecocks received All-American honors. They Ellerbe (hammer, shot put), Misipeka (hammer, shot put), Mannon (hammer, shot put), Narzinski (heptathlon), Crystal Brownlee (shot put) and Charmaine Howell (800 meters), and the men's 4x100 relay, which consisted of Corey Bridges, Shah Mays, Jamaal Williams and Jamie Price.

Misipeka's eighth All-American selection set a school record.

Ellerbe finished her collegiate career with four NCAA titles, five SEC titles, four USATF titles and six All-American honors. She also holds the American record in the hammer.

Although the team will miss Ellerbe's contributions, it does return a number of top performers, including the other nine All-Americans. The team will also have the services of Brad Snyder, Ryan Harrison and Riaan Dempers, key performers who were redshirted due to injuries.

Frye said the success of this season and the talented newcomers will bring a positive outlook for next season.

"We should be in the position to finish in the top five next year with both programs," he said.

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