

Edlund, Larkin garner honors

BRYAN JOHNSTON Sports Editor

Three Gamecocks made the All-SEC volleyball team, with two on the first team and one on the second team, as announced by the SEC Thursday.

Senior Heather Larkin made school history by being named to the All-SEC squad for four years — a first for USC volleyball. She is just the second person in school history to be named All-SEC all four years.

Carolina's three-time All-American golfer Siew Ai Lim was also named all four years.

Junior setter Ashley Edlund made the first team for the second year in a row. She has made the All-SEC team all three years of her career.

Sophomore transfer Crystal Moore was named to the All-SEC second team. It's a first time honor for Moore.

A four-year starter, Larkin has made the first team the past three years. The middle blocker made all four All-Tournament teams this fall and was named MVP of one.

The Lake Elmo, Minn., native was named SEC Player of the Week Oct. 6 after her triple-double in the win over No. 22 Arkansas.

She leads the team in kills, attempts and block solos and is second on the team in hitting percentage, block assists and total blocks.

Larkin is No. 2 in career kills and No. 4 in career block assists at USC. On the year, she had six double-doubles and had 18 matches in double-figure kills.

She hit over .368 in seven SEC matches and had a career-best 24 kills against Kentucky.

"It's exciting for our school that more and more players are making it each year," Larkin said. "It shows how we continue to get respect."

A co-captain, Edlund made the first team for the second consecutive year and the All-SEC team for the third year.

She had her second triple-double of her career against Ole Miss, which led to

her being named SEC Player of the Week Oct. 13.

She is No. 2 in career assists and has one more year to reach the record. She leads the team in hitting percentage and assists and is tied for the team lead in aces.

The Portage, Mich., native made three All-Tournament teams this fall, making it a total of nine all-tournament teams in her three-year career.

Edlund was excited to receive the honor, but said it wasn't as important as other things.

"It's nice to be recognized for hard work, but it doesn't mean as much as how far our team is going to go," Edlund said. "I'd much rather have our team do really great than for me to have these awards."

"I set team goals at the beginning of the year, not individual, but it's nice the coaches recognize my play."

USC Head Volleyball Coach Kim Hudson was very happy for the two first-teamers.

"I'm really proud of Heather and Ashley," Hudson said. "It's a really good accomplishment for them. They certainly are deserving of that award."

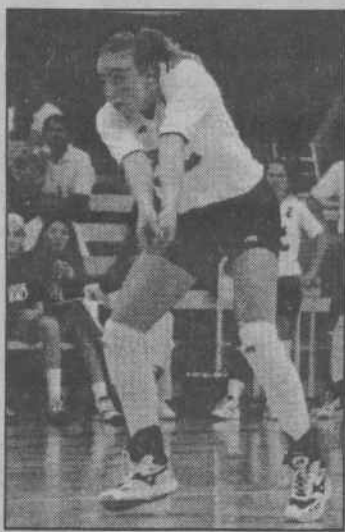
Moore, a transfer from New Mexico State, has made an immediate impact on the team, starting every match but one. She's the team's primary passer.

The outside hitter is tied for the team lead in aces and is second on the team in kills and digs.

She made two All-Tournament teams in 1997 and had eight double-doubles, with four in SEC play.

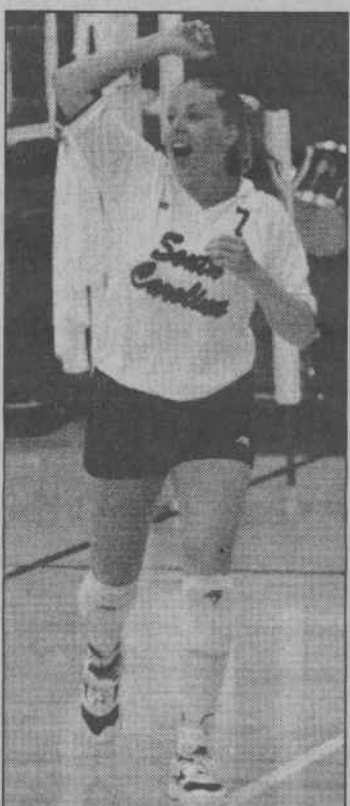
"Crystal has done a fine job this year adapting to our system," Hudson said. "I knew she would be a good player, but I'm a bit surprised at her progress."

The Gamecocks, 19-6 overall and a school-best 11-3 in the SEC, travel to Athens, Ga., this weekend for the SEC Tournament. They take on Ole Miss at 11 a.m. Friday in the first round of the tournament.



KIM TRUETT The Gamecock

Heather Larkin (above) and Ashley Edlund were named to the All-SEC first team. Sophomore transfer Crystal Moore was named to the second team.



KIM TRUETT The Gamecock

Gamecocks crush Slovaks, take on the Bulldogs tonight

NATHAN BROWN Asst. Sports Editor

In their previous exhibition game, the No. 6 Gamecocks were dealt a disappointing loss to Marathon Oil. But USC, coming off a big win against Maryland in their regular-season opener, pummeled Chemosvit-Slovakia 85-54 in their final exhibition game of the year.

Carolina Head Coach Eddie Fogler seemed rather pleased with his team's performance, but recognized Chemosvit is not the same caliber of team as the Gamecocks.

"[My goals were to] play better than against Marathon Oil and play everyone, win or lose," Fogler said. "Hopefully, we can execute better and

play with a lot more emotion than we did against Marathon Oil.

"[I] hope this is a positive step, whether this is a practice or a game today. I think it was. Of course, we are a lot better team than what they are and should win easily, which we did."

The win was spearheaded by senior forward Ryan Stack, who finished with 15 points.

To start the game, Stack swished a three-pointer and followed with four more points to score seven of USC's first 11 points.

By game's end, Stack had snagged three rebounds, shot 75 percent from the free-throw line and was perfect from behind the three-point arc.

Fogler attributes Stack's improved play to him becoming more sure of himself on the court.

"I think the big key with Stack is confidence," Fogler said. "Stack finally believes he's as good as we thought he was. We've always thought Ryan is better than what Ryan thought."

With Stack's quick points, the Gamecocks jumped out to a small lead.

But behind a strong offensive showing by all players, Chemosvit's deficit soon became an insurmountable 25 points by the end of the first half.

In the second half, the Gamecocks increased their lead to 32 before winning by 31. Carolina's offense kept Chemosvit's defense guessing, but USC's defense dominated the Eastern Europeans.

The Slovakian team was held scoreless for the first six minutes and 17 seconds of the game. For the entire first half, the Gamecocks allowed only 18 points, forced 16 turnovers and had a total of nine steals.

Every South Carolina player who dressed saw playing time and contributed to the win. Junior guard BJ Mckie was the leading scorer with 16 points. Junior forward William Gallman pulled down the most rebounds with nine. Senior center George Formanek had USC's only block. And sophomore guard Hagen Rouse had a team-high five assists.

Tonight, in the first regular-season home game of the year, the Gamecocks look to keep their two-game winning streak alive as the Citadel Bulldogs come to Frank McGuire Arena.

According to Fogler, USC has better players, but that doesn't necessarily guarantee a win.

"We are better in terms that we have better players," he said. "We had better players against UNC-Asheville, Charleston Southern, as well as Coppin State.

"So I tell them all the time, and I tell them again, upsets happen in college basketball. And an upset could happen tonight, although we have better people."

The Citadel returns four starters from last season, including center Matt Neuman, guard Virgil Stevens and guard Jamie Jenkins.

The 6-foot-8-inch Neuman needs only 31 points to reach the 1,000-point mark in his career.

Stevens comes back as the Dogs leading scorer with 14.4 points and leading stealer with 31 takes. Jenkins was picked a preseason All-Southern Conference choice by Street & Smith. Coming off the bench to keep Carolina's big men busy will be 7-foot center Kirill Misychenko.

The Bulldogs will try to avenge last year's 85-55 loss. But USC leads the series 66-23 and is 41-9 in Columbia. The tipoff is scheduled for 8:07 p.m.

Gamecock basketball team hopes to repeat last season's performance

LARRY WILLIAMS Staff Writer

It began inauspiciously with a loss to UVA. Then came an encouraging close loss to UNC. But then Clemson came to Columbia and dominated USC.

What began as a season of promise had already turned ugly — and the SEC schedule hadn't even begun.

But after the dreadful start that included the even more dreadful losses to UNC-Asheville and Charleston Southern, the Gamecocks reeled off 18 of their last 19 regular season games.

With an exceptional blend of nerve, excitement and explosiveness, USC shocked the state and, for that matter, the rest of the country, when it climbed as high as No. 4 after a season-ending win at UK, a win that earned the team the SEC Championship.

Of course, we all know what happened next. By their own fault, USC self-destructed. Fell apart. Disappeared. Completely forgot how to play.

Whatever. In the SEC tournament's second round, UGA handled the Gamecocks with alarming comfort. The shots that fell the previous two months were nowhere to be found.

So perhaps the loss to Georgia — USC's second to the Bulldogs in 1996-97 — should have come complete with a sign warning fans what would happen if the Gamecocks failed to show again in the NCAAs.

But it didn't. At least not in Pittsburgh. Not to the No. 2-seed in the tournament. Not against No. 15-seed Coppin State. Coppin who?

It's not the question anyone's asking now. No one who knows anything

about college basketball in these parts. Shocker of shockers, the Eagles beat Carolina. Handily. It wasn't even close.

That brings us to this season.

Presumably, USC has learned from its mistakes, which last season were few and far between, but costly indeed. Surely the Gamecocks have uttered and heard the platitude "anyone can win on any given day" enough that they actually believe it.

Are these Gamecocks the sixth-best team in the nation? Obviously the Associated Press voters think so. Without question, so do USC's fans. But coach Eddie Fogler, true to form, has said he believes No. 6 might be a bit of an exaggeration. That's fine.

But Fogler is Fogler, right? He's never been known to tell everyone and anyone how good his team is. He's more

prone to downplay a victory than pump one up. Right? Sort of.

Fogler has generally given honest analysis of his teams. Before his first season, Fogler said, more or less, that his team stunk. And it did. Same for his second year. Before his third season, he said his team would make strides, and it did, finishing in the N.I.T. Before his fourth year, he said his team would challenge in the SEC. Of course, USC won the SEC.

Barring a rash of injuries or a mass player revolt, the Gamecocks should be a very good team this year.

True, USC is good. That's old news. But how good?

The Gamecocks certainly weren't bad in their 76-72 win over Maryland in the opener last Friday. Taking into account last year's meek beginnings for

USC, any win is a quality win, notably one over Maryland.

If the Maryland victory told us anything about these Gamecocks, it let us know they'll be a lot like they were last year.

Case in point. After the first quarter against Maryland, USC found itself down 20-9. Sure enough, though, there was Bj Mckie notching three consecutive three-point plays to forge a half-time tie with the Terps. Mckie's outburst had 1996-97 written all over it.

So did Melvin Watson's. With a little time left in the game and his team down by three, Watson threw up a prayer from NBA range that was answered, and the game went into overtime. Minutes later, it was Watson again sinking a three from the top of the key — this time about three feet closer — to assure his team the victory.

Truth be told, Watson won't likely burn the nets from long range this season. He's a point guard known more for his serendipities and quickness than his marksmanship.

The Gamecocks won't be able to sneak up on teams like they did so often last season, especially on the road. Early conference games at Mississippi State, Florida, Alabama, Vandy and LSU served as good tests for the yet-to-be-proven Gamecocks.

This year, they can look forward to packed houses most everywhere they go. Yes, the Gamecocks are the hunted now in much the same fashion that Kentucky is.

USC fans remember those days. The way they fancy it, they'll be doing the destroying, giants of the SEC they claim to be.

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