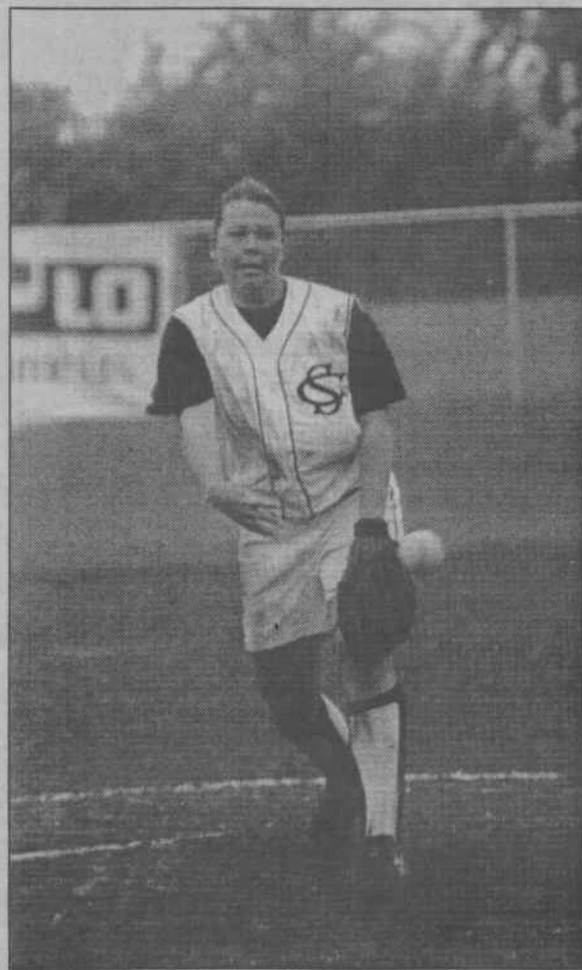


# Softball team looks to repeat success of '97



BRYAN JOHNSTON The Gamecock

Senior Sky Brown (above) and junior Nikki Beers will have to step up their game with the departure of All-American pitcher Trinity Johnson.

sports editor BRYAN JOHNSTON

Last season, the Lady Gamecock softball team experienced a dream season. They broke many records, won the SEC regular season and tournament titles, won the regionals, made it to the Women's College World Series, had numerous individuals honored and were ranked as high as No. 2 in the nation on their way to posting a 63-5 record.

It's a tough act to follow, but the 1998 version believes they can do it. Despite losing three All-Americans, including "all-everything" pitcher Trinity Johnson, the Lady Gamecocks are poised and ready to make another run at the title.

"Last season was a great season," softball coach Joyce Compton said. "They need to remember last year, the experiences they went through and the enjoyment and excitement that was created, because it was a great accomplishment."

"It's not something that you talk about and forget, it's something you do remember. But you also don't sit on it. It's a new team with new people, but we have the same goals and aspirations we had this time last year."

The Lady Gamecocks have a lot of talent returning in key places, but they also lack experience at some positions. Compton believes that as the freshmen gain experience, the team will steadily improve.

"Any team is as good as their freshmen get," Compton said. "Our freshmen got very good last year. We're looking for our freshmen to come in right away and contribute for us."

Carolina returns eight starters, but bring in five newcomers. Here's a breakdown of the positions and players for this year's USC softball team.

## Infield

Carolina returns all four starters with first baseman Leanna Troesh, second baseman Kim Schultze, shortstop Kendra McCutcheon and third baseman Sondra Hall. Also figuring to be key are Sky Brown and Kari Peters.

McCutcheon said it is key to have everyone back for another year.

"I think it's really important that everyone's back," McCutcheon said. "It gave us a lot of experience working together last year. We've already gotten accustomed to how everybody plays."

Troesh came in as a freshman last year and started 38 games. The 5-foot-7-inch sophomore from Santa Maria, Calif., batted .241 with one home run and 10 RBI. She was also named to the All-SEC Tournament team.

Schultze made contributions to the team quickly as she started every game at second base. The sophomore from Upland, Calif., occasionally struggled at the plate, but finished the season with a .264 average and 12 RBI. She was also an All-SEC Tournament selectee.

McCutcheon is the veteran of the group. Now a junior, she is back at the shortstop position she moved to after her freshman year. The Lake City, S.C., native had 113 putouts and 120 assists, but committed 16 errors. She hit .283 and was named to the All-SEC second team.

The third of three freshmen to start in the infield last season, Hall showed signs of brilliance with the glove. A native of Naples, Fla., Hall showed some power and consistency at the plate, hitting .352 with one homerun and 19 RBI. She also hit five doubles and two triples.

Brown will rotate at third with Hall when not pitching, and Peters will see action at first base. Peters, a senior from Suwanee, Ga., who transferred from Palm Beach (Fla.) Community College prior to last season, hit two triples and .297 in her 40 games played.

"It's big to have all of our starters back," Compton said. "Our infield should be a strength for us this year."

## Pitching and Catching

The loss of All-American Trinity Johnson can't be measured in stats alone. Losing Johnson means losing 24 victories, a 0.38 ERA, 399 strikeouts and 242 1/3 innings pitched, but also means losing a great leader who complemented fellow hurlers Nikki Beers and Sky Brown.

Beers and Brown are back and ready to step in and pick up where they left off.

"We got some big experience last year," Beers said. "I think it's going to help us, and I think it's going to help Joyce [McMillin] coming in so we can help her. I think we take our

game, and how we pitched last year, and step it up a little bit."

Beers is an off-speed pitcher who went 15-1 last season and had a 0.56 ERA in 112 1/3 innings pitched. The junior from Sacramento, Calif., struck out 102 batters on her way to being named to the NFCA Second-Team All-Southeast team.

Brown likes to throw the heater and throws it well. The senior went 14-0 last season and has won 20-consecutive games over the past two seasons. Last year, Brown had 45 strikeouts and an ERA of 0.96 in 109 1/3 innings pitched.

Filling the third spot in the rotation will be freshman McMillin. The 5 feet 6 inches tall left hander from Melbourne, Fla., will be called upon to handle some of the pitching duties for the Lady Gamecocks.

"Last year, they shouldered what we asked them to," Compton said. "If we would've asked more, I think they would've given more. Their numbers will be called more this year, and they're both very capable of going out and throwing against any team on our schedule."

Behind the plate will be Carrie Elliott. The senior from Birmingham, Ala., hit .317 last season with two home runs and 11 RBI. She was plagued with injuries last season, limiting her playing time. Elliott has a lot of power, producing six career home runs.

## Outfield

The outfield is probably the biggest question mark for Carolina. The left and right field spots were vacated by former All-Americans Tina Plew and Chanda Lee.

Junior Kim Pietro is back in center field and looks to be the leader in the outfield. Last season, Pietro made numerous outstanding catches on her way to being named a member of the first-team All-SEC. She is also a force at the plate. The Pompton Plains, N.J., native hit .308 with two home runs and 37 RBI last year.

Freshmen Adrienne Genovese (Corona, Calif.) and Kendra Meano (Huntington Beach, Calif.), along with redshirt sophomore Jamie Williams, will fill the vacated spots. Also, freshman Megan Donohoo is a utility player and could see action anywhere on the field.

"The outfield is going to be key for us," Compton said. "With the spots on both sides of Petey [Kim Pietro] vacated, it'll be up to our freshmen to step up quickly and contribute."

## Overall

As the Lady Gamecocks enter their 25th year of softball, they take with

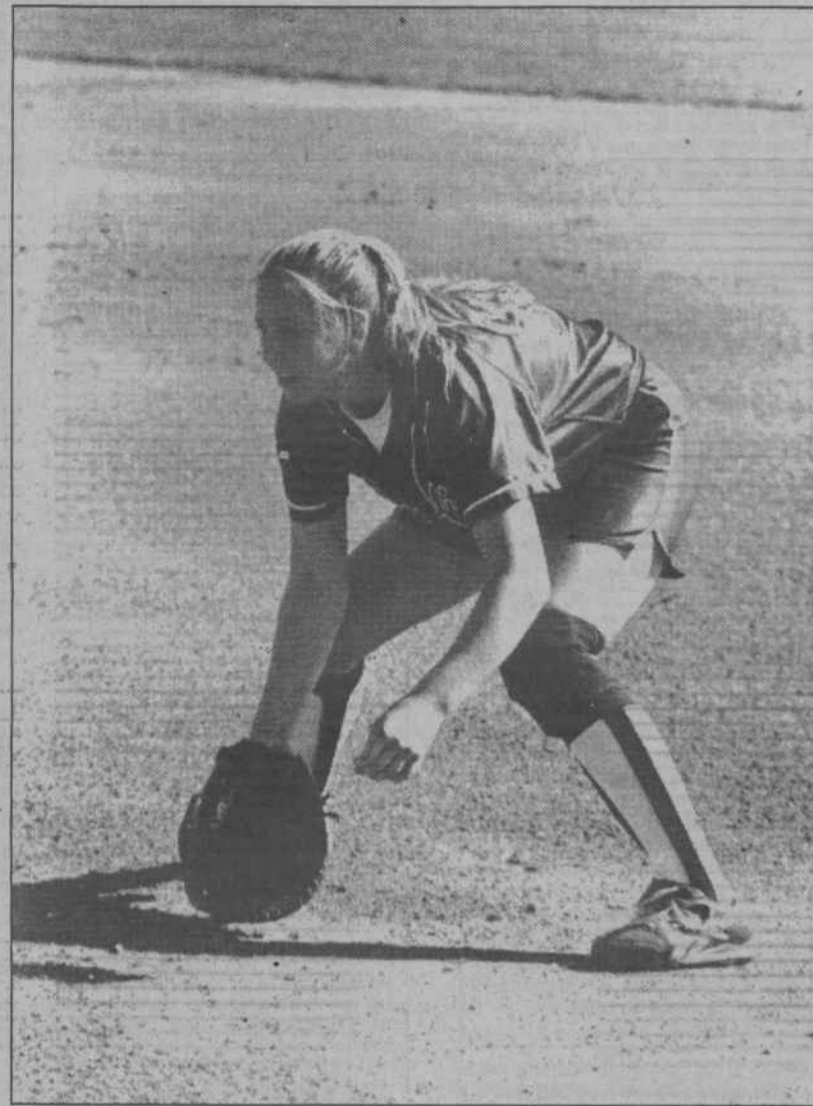
them a 789-274-4 record and the tradition of a program that has been successful in the past.

Tradition will change a little this year with two new additions. Lady Gamecock Field is now Beckham Field after the Beckham family gave a donation to the athletics department. The bleachers seat 1,000 people, but 2,250 crammed in for last year's regional finals against Kansas.

Also, lights have been added, making night games possible. The first night game is scheduled for 6 p.m. March 13 against Florida.

Look for a different type of team this year. Last season, Carolina relied on overpowering pitching and timely hitting. Compton said the team will be more aggressive both at the plate and on the bases.

So the pieces are in place for another run at history and glory. Can they repeat last year's success? We won't know until it's all over, but the road begins 3 p.m. Feb. 17 when Carolina hosts Georgia Southern in their opener.



BRYAN JOHNSTON The Gamecock

Sophomore first baseman Leanna Troesh is one of four starters returning to the infield for the Lady Gamecocks this season.

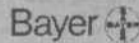
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## Spring 1998 Treasurer's Workshops

Monday, January 19 (Sports Clubs only)	5:30 PM	PE Center 110
Wednesday, January 21	3:30 PM	Russell House 205
Thursday, January 22	3:30 PM	Russell House 315
Monday, January 26	3:30 PM	Russell House 315
Monday, January 26	7:00 PM	Russell House 315

All Student Organizations MUST have a representative at a Treasurer's Workshop to be eligible for funding. Budget requests for 1998-1999 funding are due by Wednesday, February 4, 1998.

Please call the Student Government Office at 777-2654 or come to room 110 in the Russell House for more information.