

**QUICK HITS**

► The Lady Gamecock basketball team is in Nashville for a game against No. 9 Vanderbilt. The Lady Gamecocks upset the Lady Commodores earlier this season in Columbia. The game can be heard on AM-1400. Game time is 7 p.m.

# SPORTS

**NATE SAYS...**

Nate says that Bj Mckie played in his 80th game as a Gamecock Monday against Furman. Of those 80 games, Mckie has scored in double-digits 72 times, including 65 of the last 67 games.

## Hot-handed Gamecocks scorch Paladins 79-52

asst. sports editor **NATHAN BROWN**

**GREENVILLE** — What in the world is a Paladin?

According to Furman University, a Paladin is a knight on a horse. But as far as USC basketball was concerned, the Paladins were just another team in a long series of six games in 10 days, who would provide a little breather and a little fun for the Gamecocks before USC heads back into the grind of the SEC and Top 25 play.

With a hot hand from behind the 3-point arc in the first half and strong defense, the No. 14 Gamecocks (14-3, 5-2 SEC) jumped out to a sizable lead and in the end knocked the knights off their horses 79-52 in Furman's brand-new Timmons Arena.

"In the first half, we were very sharp and shot the ball well," USC head coach Eddie Fogler said. "[We] got off to a good start. In the first 20 minutes, we played really good basketball...Herbert Lee Davis is starting to come around offensively for us. That's a really big bonus

to our team. We played everybody. The first half was very well done; [in] the second we went through the motions of a team up by 20 points."

The first half saw Carolina catch on fire from 3-point range as USC made nine of 16 3-point attempts. In a five and a half minute span, Carolina scored 17 points with 15 coming from five threes.

The threes were flowing like rain from the finger tips of Herbert Lee Davis. Davis, en route to tying a personal best of 13 points, shot 75 percent from 3-point land. Averaging nine ppg over the last six games, Davis has experienced somewhat of a turnaround in his season, after averaging only four ppg in the first nine games of the year.

"I guess it was just one of those days that I was shooting the ball well with confidence," Davis said. "I had my career-high 13 last year [against Furman]. Maybe I need to play Furman a little more."

"I'm starting to feel a lot more comfortable. My shot is starting to fall. Be-

ing a shooter and your shot is not falling is like the end of the world. But when it's starting to fall and the confidence is coming back, your mechanics start to fit in and the rim is like a big ocean, like Michael Jordan said. It feels good. I'm confident," he said.

With a total of six players making threes, Davis wasn't the sole long-range bomber. But no player contributed more greatly to the win than Bj Mckie. Finishing with a team-high 16 points, Mckie made 60 percent of his 3-pointers, shot 50 percent from the field and led the team in steals with three.

"It feels good [when everyone's shots go in]," Mckie said. "It takes a lot of pressure off of you...We just had some open looks, and we concentrated on our shots, and they fell tonight. It makes it a whole lot easier when they're falling."

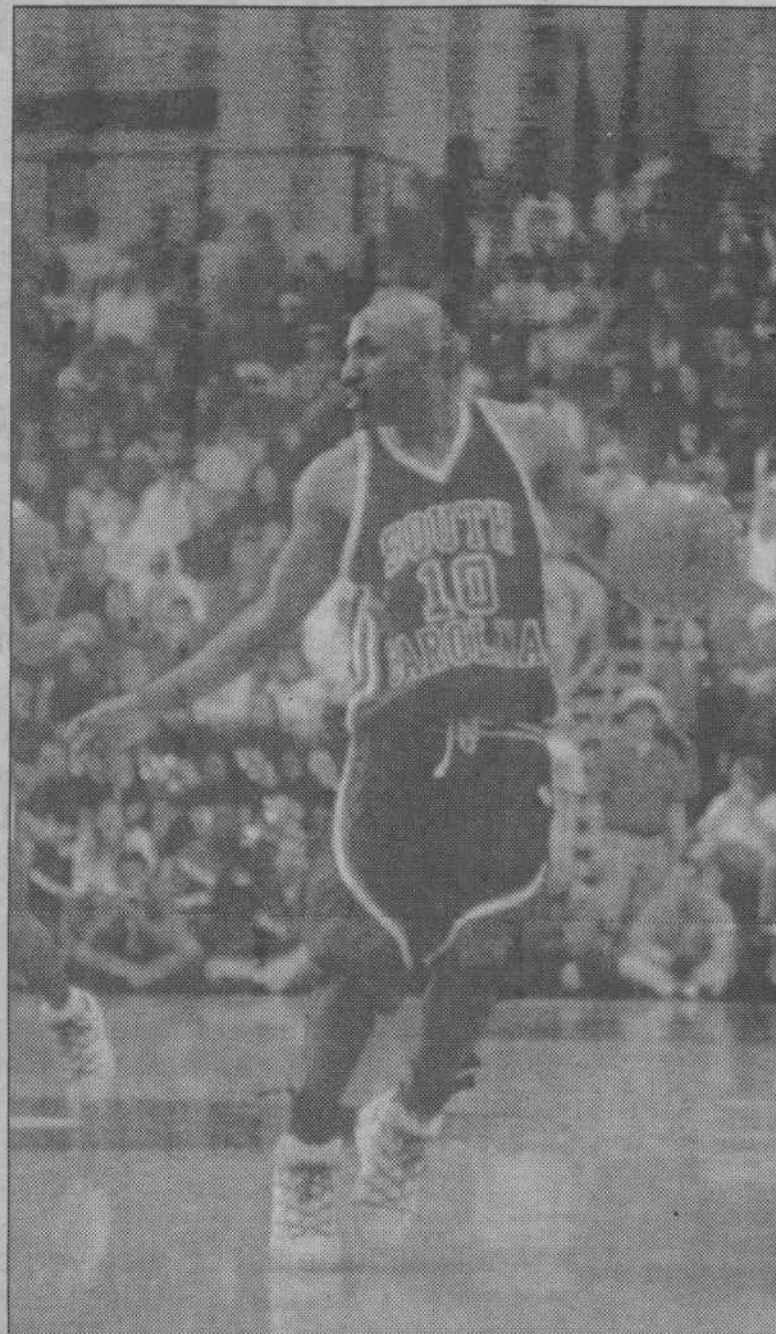
The shots were also falling for LeRon Williams who finished with 14 points. With his second consecutive game of 14 points, Williams looks to have started down the path toward consistency, especially when you consider that the last

two games were on the road where Williams has been less effective.

"I'm going out and playing my game," Williams said. "Hopefully, it will continue and be more consistent."

Consistency has not been a problem for Carolina's defense. The Gamecocks have held 16 of their 17 opponents to 45.8 percent or lower from the field. The trend continued for USC as Furman was able to muster only a 36.1 field goal percentage. Also, Carolina did not allow any FU player to score in double digits. The Paladins had trouble just getting into scoring position with USC racking up nine steals, 20 turnovers and five blocks against FU. More impressively, Carolina closed the door on FU's 3-point shot. Furman attempted 13 3-pointers and made zero.

With Monday's win against Furman, the Gamecocks ride a four game winning streak into Wednesday's contest against Florida.



BRYAN JOHNSTON The Gamecock

Senior Melvin Watson scored five points and racked up a team-high eight assists in Monday's contest against Furman. Watson's defensive skills will be tested tonight against the sharpshooting Gators.

## Williams, Gamecocks ready for Florida

asst. sports editor **NATHAN BROWN**

Coming off a strong defensive effort against Furman, the Gamecocks look to duplicate that performance tonight when the Florida Gators come to Frank McGuire Arena for a 7:30 p.m. tip-off.

Defense will be of the utmost importance, especially from 3-point range, for Carolina as the Gators rank second in the nation in 3-point shooting.

"They are a very good shooting team," Bj Mckie said. "We're going to have to stay out on the perimeter and guard their guards. Their guards are



**WILLIAMS**

going to challenge us on the offensive end."

Florida guard Eddie Shannon returns from last season in which he averaged 13.2 points. Also back from a year ago is forward Greg Stolt who averaged a team-high 13.9 ppg.

One player who is not returning for the Gators is LeRon Williams.

Williams transferred from UF a year ago to join Carolina's squad.

Once in Columbia, Williams has seen his numbers dramatically improve from his days in Gainesville where he averaged 6.2 ppg and 3.4 rpg in two seasons.

Currently, Williams is averaging 10.1 ppg and 4.2 rpg. In the last three contests, this Bradenton, Fla., native has averaged 17.7 ppg and 5.7 rpg.

"This is going to be a war," Williams said. "They will come up here hyped up...Basically, I'm just going to go out and play. They have a good shooting team. [Florida coach Billy] Donovan has that up-and-down tempo so we'll have to go out and play a good game."

"I'd be lying if I said that I wouldn't [be playing with some extra passion]...I just want to go and play. If he [Donovan] wants to make it a statement game, then so be it. I'm not trying to make that. I could care or less about the negative terms [that were exchanged between Donovan and me]. I'm just going to go play for the University of South Carolina," he said.

In this series, USC is down 16-13 to the Gators. In the Coliseum, the margin is closer, but Florida still leads 9-8. For those of you who didn't get tickets, the game will not be televised, but you can buy tickets from the athletic department.

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