

• A preview of the Clemson/USC game.
• Men's soccer vs. VCU in the NCAA Tournament.
• Walvieball opens up home play.

Four USC volleyball players were named to the SEC Academic Honor Roll Tuesday: Ashley Edlund, Kami Nordgaard, Sara Heri and Mandy Quarterman.

• Friday, 11 a.m. Volleyball @ SEC Tourney
• Saturday, 6:30 p.m. Football @ Clemson
• Sunday, 1 p.m. Men's Soccer vs. VCU NCAA Tourney

Nate says Pittsburgh is the only city in the United States where all the pro sports teams have the same colors: Black and gold.

SPORTS

Insider gives tips on improving Monday NITRO

MICHAEL STRICKLAND

wrestling insider

WCW began NITRO in September of 1995. Shortly thereafter, the Outsiders arrived on the scene to take WCW to the top of the wrestling industry. For two years WCW put out a tremendous product, dominating the WWF in quality. Each week we tuned in to see what the nWo and others would do next. The element of surprise was at its climax. However, since then, WCW's programming has consistently slipped. What should WCW do to retake their position as the No. 1 wrestling promotion in the world?

First, the Outsiders were the reason WCW skyrocketed. Yet WCW decided to break the group up. While there are talks the group will be reformed next month, much has been lost in that time, as the tag-team division has been gutted. WCW should dissolve the Wolfpac and put Hall and Nash back together. Get them back to their "no affiliation" gimmick. With that, send Sting back to the crowd or surfer when he returns in 1999, and use Randy Savage as "The Madness" to see what kind of trouble he can stir up when he returns around the holidays.

Second, reduce Hulk Hogan's airtime. He did help make wrestling what it is, but not by doing what he does now. He was never on the air this much during his glory days. Use him sparingly and carefully. He could be much more effective in a similar role as Roddy Piper. Then Bischoff could be removed from the nWo.

Third, continue to heat up the Four Horsemen angle. Fans love Ric Flair, no matter his age. A Horsemen/nWo feud would surely capture the audience. People want to see Flair go out in style by getting back at Eric Bischoff and proving that the nWo is just a carbon copy of what the Horsemen were during the '80s and early '90s. This time, give the fans what they want.

Also, how about a legitimate feud for Goldberg. Give him a real challenge. Hey, maybe even find someone to beat him. The undefeated, invincible thing will not last forever. Something must be done with him before he goes stale. In addition, continue to push the likes of Kidman and Chris Jericho. These types of guys are terrific performers and deserve a chance.

Finally, I propose that WCW reduce NITRO to two hours. The first hour is pointless, and so is part of the second. WCW might have overestimated how much airtime they could support, with the extension of NITRO and the addition of Thunder. Along with that, take more steps in setting up the Pay-Per-View events better. Too often we are days away from the big events and don't know half of the card. That said, here is a brief recap of a wild NITRO.

Juventud Guererra was able to derail Kidman and regain the cruiserweight title, landing the 450 splash in another terrific match between the two men.
Later, Arn Anderson and the Horsemen took out Horace and Stevie Ray of the nWo with a tire iron, heating up their feud. Ric Flair then came out and stole the spotlight by announcing Barry Windham as "his man." No telling where this may lead.

Bret Hart faced Chris Benoit in a major brawl that saw Hart eventually take out both Benoit and Malenko. However, Hart got a dose of payback as DDP returned from injury unexpectedly to attack The Hitman. These two will lock up in a dandy for the U.S. title at WWIII.

WCW dropped a pleasant bombshell by bringing Bam Bam Bigelow into the fold earlier than expected as the "Beast from the East" entered WCW and demanded Goldberg. The two monsters brawled for a few minutes at the close of NITRO. This sets up a feud for Goldberg.

This NITRO was one of the wildest, most unpredictable NITROs of recent memory. Hopefully the events from Monday mean WCW is getting back on track. Enjoy WWIII this Sunday.

Gamecocks take uninspired victory

asst. sports editor **KELLY MAGUIRE**

The Carolina men's basketball team took a break from regular-season play to take on international competition Monday night at Frank McGuire Arena.

BC Kandiit, Croatia (0-4 on their U.S. tour) arrived in Columbia to give the Gamecocks a taste of European basketball. However, USC showed the Croats which country reigns in basketball. The Gamecocks led by as many as 26 points during the course of the game, ultimately winning 88-80.

Fans not traveling to Clemson for this weekend's football game might have seen glimpses of football-like plays Monday, as the two squads battled for possession, several times tackling each other and rolling across the court. At one point, more than half the players on the court were scrambling for the ball.

"I liked our getting on the floor for loose balls, as well, the first half," said Head Coach Eddie Fogler. "That was very well-done."

Carolina took the early lead and never relinquished it. The only lead of the entire contest for Croatia was the first basket of the game, when Peter Patton hit an 18-foot shot for two points. Less than 20 seconds later, USC's LeRon Williams hooked a 5-foot shot for the Gamecocks, a shot that might as well have sealed the win for Carolina. It began a run of 11 unanswered points for USC, six of which came off consecutive 3-pointers courtesy of Herbert Lee Davis.

Croatia then scored again to narrow the lead to six on what was to be one of 12 3-pointers from the Europeans.

USC freshman Aaron Lucas came in less than five minutes into the first half for Hagen Rouse. Lucas immediately assisted William Gallman on a shot to extend the Gamecocks' lead to 10. With 13:51 left in the first half, Lucas took matters into his own hands and scored two on a driving layup.

"Aaron's good, it's obvious," Fogler said. "A freshman with a lot of talent, he's tough, smart. He's awfully good."

David Ross then extended the Gamecocks' lead to 16 on a 3-pointer from the left corner. That lead dwindled to six after a tip-in from Croatia's Dubravko Zemljic.

However, things only got worse for the Croats, as Carolina ran up the score late in the first half to take a 24-point lead into halftime. Ross was the leading scorer at the half, with 10 points, Bud Johnson had seven rebounds, and BJ McKie led with five assists.

"I liked our unselfishness in the first half," Fogler said. "It was outstanding."

Carolina returned from the lockerroom and USC increased its lead to 26 points on a Johnson baseline shot. The lead decreased early in the second half, as the Gamecocks went over five minutes without a field goal. The only point USC scored during that five-minute period was on a free throw by Williams.

At the 11:03 mark, McKie fouled out while scrambling for the ball at half-court. McKie finished the game with only five field goal attempts and one 3-pointer. McKie finished with four points, all of which came on free throws. He also finished with eight assists.

Lucas was then moved to point guard in McKie's absence.

With 9:18 remaining in the ballgame, Carolina saw its lead trickle down to six points, after a 3-point shot by Croatia's Drazen Tankosic. Lucas then shot two free throws to give the Gamecocks a 65-57 lead. On his next attempt, Lucas hit a 23-foot 3-pointer to increase USC's lead to nine. Over the next minute, Carolina managed to get its lead back to 14 points on baskets by Rouse and Damien Kinloch.

"First half, pretty well; second half, they shot better," Fogler said. "We lost a lot of enthusiasm — basically the game was over at half, so I don't know if we can learn a lot from that."

Over the final five minutes, USC and Croatia stayed fairly even on shooting, as Croatia responded to each of Carolina's baskets.

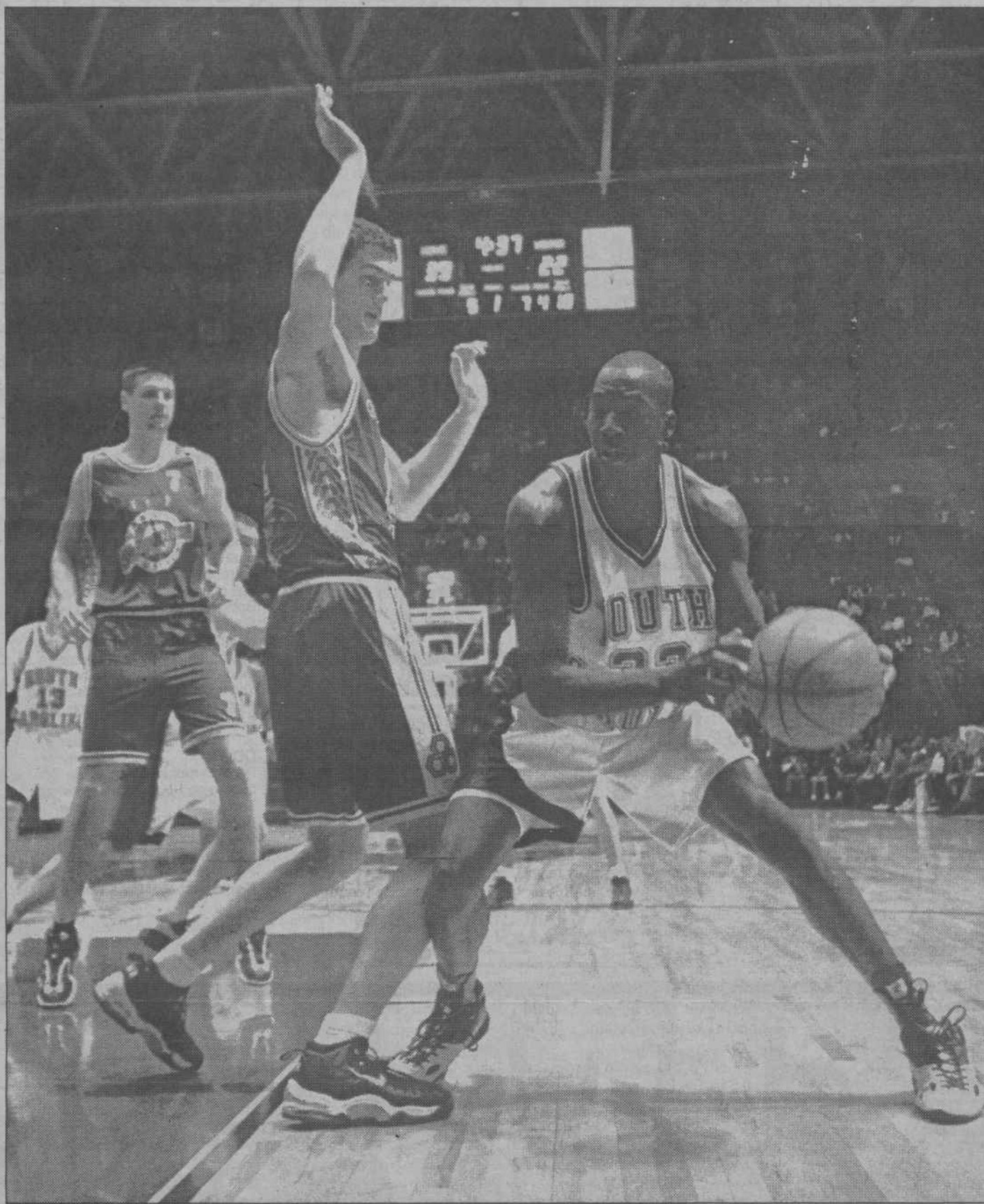
The last shots ended up being two free throws by Croatia, which was fitting, considering the foul trouble each team had in the game.

Croatia saw six of its players commit three or more personal fouls, while only three Gamecocks had three or more: Tony Kitchings with four, McKie with five and Ross with three.

Three players hit double digits for USC: Lucas, Ross and Williams. The trio had 18, 10 and 11 points, respectively.

Carolina shot 45.2 percent on field goals, 38.1 percent on 3-pointers and 64.9 percent on free throws. Johnson led in rebounds, with nine for the night.

Next, the Gamecocks host Wofford at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 23. Carolina might have to do without Davis, who injured his wrist late in the first half, in that game. However, forward Antonio Grant might be able to return to action by Monday.



SEAN RAYFORD Sports Photo Editor

South Carolina freshman Damien Kinloch tries to penetrate down low in the first half of Monday night's 88-80 exhibition win over BC Kandiit, Croatia at Frank McGuire Arena. Kinloch had six points and six rebounds for Carolina. The Gamecocks (0-2) return to regular-season play Nov. 23 when they host Wofford at 7:30 p.m.

Williams' play could carry USC to great heights

DAVID CLONINGER

from the cockpit

When the South Carolina men's basketball team closed out its highly successful 1996-97 season, Head Coach Eddie Fogler knew he had to find somebody to take the place of seniors Larry Davis and Nate Wilbourne.

The answer came in 6-foot-8, 220-pound junior transfer LeRon Williams from Florida. Williams, after several disputes with Florida coach Billy Donovan, decided to come to Columbia to finish out his collegiate career.

Fogler and the Gamecocks weren't disappointed, as Williams stepped into his new position and quickly became one of the most dangerous power forwards in the Southeastern Conference.

Since Dec. 17, 1997, Williams has become the second-leading scorer in the Gamecock offense, behind BJ McKie.

Averaging 14 points per game last year, Williams is off to a hot start this year, scoring 14 against both Valparaiso and Indiana, 11 against Croatia, and 17 against Marathon Oil.

He is also currently leading the Gamecocks in scoring this year, averaging 14 per game.

Williams, also the field goal percentage leader from last year, is shooting 52 percent this year while playing just 22.5 minutes.

As a fan in attendance at the first two exhibition games, I was very impressed with the play of Williams, spurring me and my cohorts in the Cockpit to yell out our battle cry, "Make 'em bleed, LeRon."

You'd be surprised how much an innocent comment can make a difference in a player's performance.

Williams has been the bright spot of the Gamecocks so far this season. Whatever reason coach Fogler has for limiting BJ McKie's role this season hasn't made a difference, because "The Thug" has stepped up to the challenge with explosive performances every game.

Many people are saying that the Gamecocks won't have a very good season this year, but take heart.

Williams has become the sparkplug of the team, always pumping the other players up with the simple way he can drive a basketball into an opposing player's face.

Against Croatia Monday night, Williams scored Carolina's first five points and finished with 11 for the game.

He even seemed to be holding back at times, to let his other teammates take some credit and pull their weight.

The SEC already knows what a threat he can be and has given LeRon a healthy respect since his two 25-point performances last year against Tennessee and Auburn.

"Basically, I was expected to step up and handle a lot of the workload this year, and I have contributed. I knew that I would have to do well if we wanted to win, so I'm just playing basketball right now the best way I know how," Williams said.

Carolina fans who have come to expect 20-win seasons have no reason to worry because the Gamecocks lost their first two games. With Williams leading the way, as he did Monday, USC is sure to have another great season.

USC hosts Virginia Commonwealth in NCAA Tournament



SEAN RAYFORD Sports Photo Editor

Nathan Watkins (kneeling), Chris Morman and Ryan O'Neill celebrate a goal Sunday.

staff writer **CHRIS DeGUIDO**

The Carolina men's soccer team will host Virginia Commonwealth at 1 p.m. Sunday in the first round of the NCAA Tournament, as announced Monday.

This marks the 13th time — the 12th in the last 14 years — the Gamecocks have advanced to the championships.

"I am very, very pleased to return to the NCAA Tournament," said USC Head Coach Mark Berson. "I am proud of our team; they worked hard this season. It is a privilege to represent the University of South Carolina."

"I thought this was a very complete bracket. We have always wanted the soccer tournament to be set up like the basketball tournament."

If the Gamecocks win the first match, they will face the winner of Rider and No. 2-seeded Virginia. Virginia would host the match.

The Rams (12-5-3) handed USC (15-4) one of its few losses this season in Richmond, defeating the Gamecocks 2-1 in overtime.

Four 1998 Carolina opponents advanced to the tournament: VCU, No. 1 Clemson, No. 5 St. John's, and No. 6 UCLA. The Gamecocks went 1-3 against these teams.

Last year, USC was a No. 4 seed and defeated Charleston Southern 3-0 in the first round. Carolina lost to Clemson 1-0 in overtime in the second round.

The top eight seeds in the tournament, in order, are Clemson, Virginia, Duke, Washington, St. John's, UCLA, Cal State-Fullerton and Indiana.