

FROM THE SIDELINES

• USC sophomore Terrence Trammell was named the *Track and Field News* Collegiate Athlete of the Year in its August issue. Trammell won two NCAA titles in 1999.

SPORTS

SCHEDULE

• South Carolina will send seven current and former track and field athletes to the World University Games in Palma de Maloca, Spain. The Games run from July 9-13.

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The Gamecock

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A Class Act



Special to The Gamecock

BJ McKie stayed in school, got his degree and left a legacy at USC.



Sean Rayford Photo Editor



Special to The Gamecock

By Charlie Wallace
Sports Editor

BJ McKie. The name spoken aloud could spark a bevy of memories and discussions. Ever since he signed with South Carolina out of Irmo High School, I have watched him with a keen interest and a certain excitement.

In my lifetime, there hasn't been a player who has brought so much to the Gamecock basketball program. McKie's signing with USC signified many things.

McKie was head coach Eddie Fogler's first blue chip recruit and, more importantly, he was from the Palmetto state, not to mention the capital city.

Recent resentment from fans about how USC repeatedly let the prize recruits get away was somewhat dimmed. Larry Davis' traveling up the road to Chapel Hill and Ray Allen's jump to Connecticut seemed to hurt the worst, but McKie's decision singlehandedly squashed the painful memories. In fact, Davis later transferred to USC and was part of one of the greatest teams the program has ever had.

What made McKie's decision to play for USC so special were his credentials. McKie led the Irmo Yellow Jackets to three state championships in the state's most competitive region, scoring 42 points in his last game. As a 4-year starter, Irmo's record was an incredible 111-14.

There was also something special about seeing McKie and Mauldin native Kevin Garnett playing for the same team in the McDonald's All-Star Game, the premier high school All-American event. Watching two South Carolinians take the nation's most extravagant stage with Dick Vitale, the voice of college basketball commentating was something most of the state wasn't accustomed to. BJ McKie already was becoming a household name, and comparisons to USC career scoring leader Alex English were spawning.

South Carolina fans have always been famous for letting their expectations get the better of them. But this time, it seemed that this was a can't-miss shot.

The fans were right.

McKie burst on the scene and wasted no time fitting into his role. After scoring 17 points against UNC-Greensboro in his first career contest, he ended up averaging 15.4 points, 3.1 rebounds and 2.8 assists per game. He even finished in the top-10 in the Southeastern Conference in scoring, breaking English's Carolina freshman scoring record for average (15.4) and total points (478), but McKie proved to be more than just numbers.

There was something admirable about him. He possessed something you can't teach. McKie had guts. He had a determination and a seize-the-day style that fans loved.

I'll always remember the NIT quarter-final matchup against conference foe Alabama. USC had smoked the Crimson Tide earlier in the year, but this game was different. The winner would advance to the semifinals at New York's Madison Square Garden. To Carolina fans, deprived for years without any success whatsoever, this felt like the national championship.

With the game nearing the end, I remember clearly seeing McKie go after a loose ball and, in the process, be pushed to the ground by a defender. It seemed McKie slid about 10 feet and hit the photographers underneath the basket. The crowd reaction was deafening.

I was sitting high in the rafters, but when McKie