



Top recruit commits to Carolina

BY JEFF ROMIG
SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK

In 1995, there was talk of Kevin Garnett combining with BJ McKie to be the Gamecocks' saviors.

Nope.

The next year, Eau Claire's Jermaine O'Neal was supposed to fill that role. Think again.

Wednesday, Eddie Fogler scored what could be his most highly touted recruit when Lower Richland High School's Rolando Howell gave his verbal commitment to play for the Gamecocks.

"I have a lot of confidence, in myself and in the program, that in the next two to three years, we will be good," Howell said.

Howell has proved, thus far, that he is as good as advertised.

In 1998, he helped lead the Diamonds (28-3) to the South Carolina Class AAAA state championship and a No. 15 national ranking by USA Today.

Howell had narrowed his choices to USC and Kentucky before making his final decision.

"I knew that USC was the best place for me to come," Howell said. "Kentucky's a really nice place, but there's nothing like home. Nothing at all."

The State's Fred Gonzalez said he thinks that Howell can be an impact player for the Gamecocks, but he will have to switch positions to do so.

"Rolando Howell is a very versatile 6-9 player who I believe could play power forward for USC next season," Gonzalez said. "At the high school level, he is a dominant center, but in college, his mobility and skills which aren't normally seen in a big man will be showcased."

Gonzalez said he thinks Howell can eventually move into the starting lineup to compliment the inside play of Tony Kitchings and Marius Petravicus.

"His confidence level is very high, and I think that will also make just as much an impact as his play," Gonzalez said. "He will earn the respect of his peers quickly, and I think a major reason he chose South Carolina was because he could enter with a large splash."

Howell is confident in his ability to make an immediate impact, as well as his status as a top 10 recruit.

"I may be one of the top prospects that USC has ever had, but I will take that into consideration when I go to the University of South Carolina and do the best I can," Howell said.

Howell is happy that he was able to make his decision early to take any pressure off before his season starts.

"My phone has been ringing off the hook the past two weeks, so I'm glad to get it over with," Howell said.

Now that Howell has made his verbal commitment, he's expected to sign a letter of intent during the Nov. 10-17 early signing period. The only question centers around the length of his stay at USC.

"The NBA isn't out of the question, and Howell seems to believe that in two years, it wouldn't be out of the realm of possibilities to be talking about the NBA," Gonzalez said. "But he needs to finish his senior year in high school before he thinks that far ahead. He does have the talent, but to say he will be in the NBA is a bit premature."

USC rejects 'Authority'

BY SHAWN SINGLETON
SENIOR WRITER

The Gamecocks opened the 1999-2000 campaign with a 72-60 exhibition win over the Court Authority team. Junior David Ross and freshman Travis Kraft led USC with 11 points each, and sophomore Damien Kinloch added 10 points. Kraft and Ross each hit a trio of 3-pointers in 10 combined attempts.

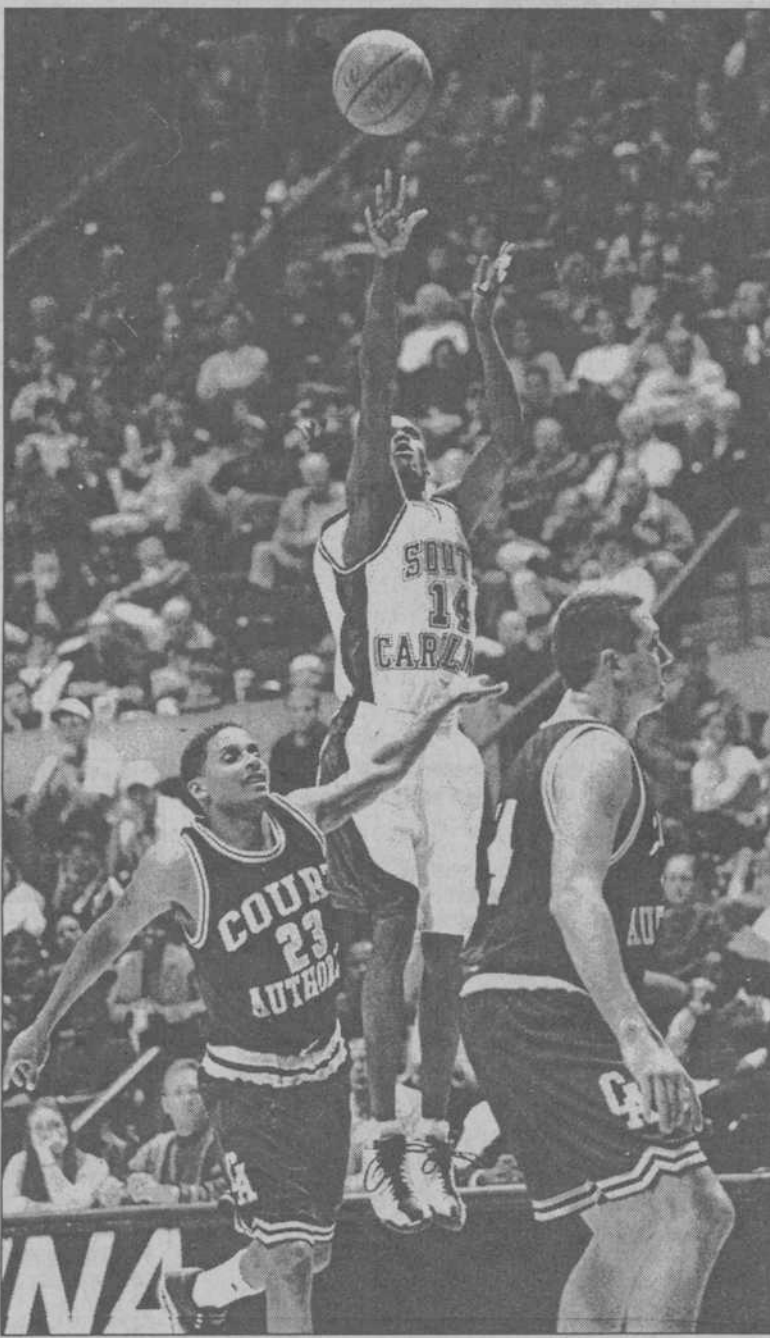
Coming off an 8-21 season, the Gamecocks won for the 25th time in 31 exhibition games all-time and their fifth in a row. Six different players saw action for the first time under Eddie Fogler, as the Gamecocks played with seven freshmen and three sophomores.

The freshmen combined for 23 points, 16 rebounds and 13 turnovers in their first college game, as 11 of the Gamecocks' 13 dressed players scored and all but two played at least 11 minutes.

"I thought our unselfish play was good," said Fogler, who is entering his seventh season as the head of the Gamecock program. "We didn't take too many bad shots, but we got out-rebounded and turned the ball over some, and those things bothered me. But for the first exhibition game, it was pretty much what I expected."

Vince Wilson led Court Authority, as well as all scorers, with 17 points, including a four-for-10 3-point shooting performance. Kenny Harris also added 15 and Dan Plondge scored 10 in the loss, which dropped Court Authority to 0-2 on its 11-game tour of eastern colleges.

The Gamecock defense forced Court Authority into 22 turnovers resulting in 24 points. Court Authority was also held to 32.8 percent from the field, including a three-for-12 showing from long range in the second half.



SEAN RAYFORD PHOTO EDITOR

Senior Herbert Lee Davis releases a shot Wednesday night against Court Authority. The Gamecocks won the exhibition game, 72-60, and will play Lithuania-Alita on Nov. 10 at Frank McGuire Arena.

Gamecock golf looking for victory at Hilton Head

BY MICHAEL STRICKLAND
SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK

The No. 10 USC men's golf team is on Hilton Head Island this weekend to compete in the prestigious Rolex/Golf World/Palmetto Dunes Collegiate Invitational, presented by Cleveland Golf.

Thursday was reserved for practice rounds, while the 3-day event officially begins today with tee times starting at 8:00 a.m.

As a team, Carolina is coming off the best 3-round tournament in school history. At the Red River Classic in mid-October, the Gamecocks tore up the Dallas Athletic Club with a 48-under 816. That effort bested Carolina's previous low of 845, set in 1997 at the Palmetto Classic.

Overall, 10 teams in the Top 25 have made the trip to the Palmetto Dunes resort for this weekend's event.

Meanwhile, six players ranked in the CGF's individual Top 10 will also be in action this weekend. South Carolina's John Bloomfield is ranked 13th in the nation in that poll.

Bloomfield, a junior from Kingston, Jamaica, is the Gamecock's top performer of the fall season. After his individual medalist effort of 19-under 197 at the Taylor Made/Red River Classic, a school record, Bloomfield's stroke average is down to 71.08. All 12 of his rounds have been counted toward the team total. His best round, 65, came in his Red River Classic win.

Bloomfield is joined by senior All-American Eric Ecker. Ecker is averaging 72.17 strokes per round. He has carded two top 20 finishes. His low round of 66 came in Georgia at the Carpet Capital Classic.

Junior All-American Kyle Thompson has also started to swing a hot club as of late. At the Red River Classic, Thompson tied for 11th with two sub-70 rounds, including a season-low 64. That 64 is the second-lowest round in school history. Only David Seawell's 63 at the 1996 Gator Invitational is better.

Play this weekend is at the Arthur Hills Course in Palmetto Dunes, a par 72, 6,651-yard course. Previous players to compete in this event include such notables as Tiger Woods, David Duval and Justin Leonard. Last year's team champion was UNLV.

Ondo named first-team All-SEC in women's soccer

SPORTS ROUNDUP
THE GAMECOCK

WOMEN'S SOCCER

Senior forward Jennie Ondo was named first-team All-Southeastern Conference on Wednesday, capping a strong final season at USC.

The other members of the team are: Florida's Abby Wambach, Sarah Yohe, Keisha Bell and Heather Mitts; Kentucky's Annie Gage, Jen Reese and Allison Peppers; Mississippi's Jennifer Soileau; Vanderbilt's Asta Helgadottir; and Alabama's Rachel Brown.

Senior midfielder Mindy Sanders was awarded a spot on the second team, along with: Tennessee's Allison Campbell and Kelly Berrall; Georgia's Carolyn Cayard and Nicole Williams; Kentucky's Keri Boyce; Vanderbilt's Kim Szurovy and Lindaliz Arauz; Arkansas' Erin Sampson; Florida's Danielle Murphy; and Louisiana State's Ashley Mitnick.

MEN'S TENNIS

Senior Jerome Jourdon, junior Guillaume Legat and freshman Robert Steckley will represent USC's men's tennis

squad over the weekend at the 1999 Top of the Hill/ITA South Atlantic Championships.

Jourdon, seeded No. 2, will face Tomas Miho of Charleston Southern. Legat, seeded No. 3, will take on Richmond's Travis Wagner. Steckley will play Tomas Ibler of Hampton.

The No. 2-seeded doubles team of Jourdon and Steckley will take on the team of Mule and Torres of UNC-Greensboro.

The Championships are through Monday at the Cone-Kenfield Tennis Center at the University of North Carolina.

The top two finishers in both singles and doubles qualify for the 2000 Rolex National Indoor Championships. That tournament is the third leg of the ITA Grand Slam, which is Feb. 3-6 in Dallas, Texas.

After the Gamecocks opened up a 10-point lead to start the second half, Court Authority went on a 19-6 run

in the first half.

Fogler then substituted his five freshmen-Kraft, Marius Petravicus, Ivan Howell, Eidson and Calvin Clemmons. This was a recurring pattern throughout the contest as USC rotated freshmen and upperclassmen in seven-minute intervals.

"Travis Kraft had a lot of open shots," Fogler said. "Ivan is more of a slasher, but they're all still inexperienced. However, they didn't play badly for just two-and-a-half weeks of practice."

USC SEE PAGE 9



Todd Money
Money in the Bank

Bowls still don't work

All right, I'm fed up. Actually, I've been fed up for about 13 years. It was at least that long ago when I started looking through my big brothers' magazines when they weren't around.

Not those kinds of magazines. Sports magazines.

The first sport I was attracted to was football, the college variety. I'm not sure whether it was the colors or the action or the fact that the rest of my family largely disappeared every fall Friday and Saturday, leaving me to be — yick! — babysat. But those articles were so interesting.

And they still are. But there's still something about college football I just can't be enthusiastic for, even after all those years.

Why can't college football have a playoff system?

It would be so easy. And so popular. And profitable, too. It would have to be.

Let's see now, what are the reasons the NCAA and college administrators have given us for not working this out?

• **It would conflict with exams.** Suuuuure. Going by USC's academic calendar, fall exams begin during the second week of December. Coincidentally, nearly every college team plays its last regular-season game the last weekend of November. So if a football playoff began that first weekend in December, would it really conflict that much with exams?

And while we're on this particular trip, what is it with college teams traveling to the cities of their bowl games to prepare a week in advance? Or even several days in advance? The reward of a bowl becomes a laid-back tourist trip, a fact that, yes, does affect the quality of the subsequent bowl games. See the NFL's Super Bowl and Pro Bowl for reference.

• **It would put the tradition of the bowl system in disrepair.** Riiiiiiight. How many people can name the official titles of more than two bowl games? There is no Orange Bowl or Sugar Bowl or Citrus Bowl anymore because corporate sponsors have found ways to brand their own names into the games. And they change from year to year, making the whole process of following them all the more annoying. Once you sell out, you become nondescript. And tradition is out the window.

• **It wouldn't make enough money.** This is the worst excuse. Does the term "March Madness" mean anything to you? When the NCAA picks the top 64 teams in the land to play in its post-season tournament in the spring, chaos happens. The eyes of the sports world and its viewers become transfixed on brackets for three weeks. With every game televised somewhere, the NCAA Tournament is the most-watched playoff of the year, and by far the most enthralling. Everyone has a team.

So turn that around and do something reasonably close with football, the country's most popular sport. What do you have? The new most-watched playoff event. The new most enthralling thing on TV for a few weeks. And all the money in the world.

Just think about it. The playoff could be made up of the top 16 teams from the poll of your choice or the Bowl Championship Series standings or whatever. Announce them on a TV show on Sunday afternoon on the last weekend of the regular season, and watch the money flow in.

The rest is simple. Split the games between Fridays and Saturdays, so every game can be televised. Follow basketball's system, because it works, and lay the teams out in four regions. Make sure teams don't get to play in their home stadiums.

If we started this year, the first round could be played on the weekend of Dec. 3, with the championship game being on the weekend of ... Dec. 24? Perfect. Or if you had five rounds, with 32 teams, the playoffs could end just before New Year's Day.

And that would give us a lot more time to enjoy the NFL playoffs, which, of course, mean everything.

So why can't it be done? Basketball, you can't have it all.

THE SLATE

NATIONAL FOOTBALL CONFERENCE

East Division	W	L	Home	Road	Div	Str
Washington	5	2	3-1	2-1	2-2	W-1
Dallas	4	3	3-0	1-3	3-1	L-2
New York Giants	4	3	2-1	2-2	2-2	W-2
Arizona	2	5	1-3	1-2	2-2	L-2
Philadelphia	2	6	1-3	1-3	1-3	L-2

Central Division

Detroit	5	2	3-1	2-1	2-0	W-2
Green Bay	4	3	3-1	1-2	2-1	L-1
Minnesota	4	4	2-2	2-2	1-3	W-2
Tampa Bay	3	4	2-1	1-3	0-2	W-1
Chicago	3	5	2-2	1-3	1-0	L-3

West Division

St. Louis	6	1	4-0	2-1	3-0	L-1
San Francisco	3	4	2-1	1-3	1-2	L-3
Carolina	2	5	1-2	1-3	1-2	L-2
Atlanta	2	6	1-3	1-3	2-2	W-1
New Orleans	1	6	1-3	0-3	1-2	L-6

AMERICAN FOOTBALL CONFERENCE

East Division	W	L	Home	Road	Div	Str
Miami	6	1	2-1	4-0	2-1	W-4
New England	6	2	3-1	3-1	2-1	W-2
Indianapolis	5	2	4-1	1-1	2-2	W-3
Buffalo	5	3	3-1	2-2	2-1	W-1
New York Jets	1	6	0-4	1-2	0-3	L-3

Central Division

Tennessee	6	1	4-0	2-1	4-0	W-3
Jacksonville	6	1	2-1	4-0	3-1	W-4
Pittsburgh	4	3	1-2	3-1	3-1	W-2
Baltimore	2	5	1-3	1-2	1-2	L-4
Cincinnati	1	7	0-4	1-3	1-3	L-3
Cleveland	1	7	0-3	1-4	0-5	W-1

West Division

Kansas City	5	2	4-0	1-2	2-1	W-3
Seattle	5	2	2-1	3-1	1-1	W-2
San Diego	4	3	2-2	2-1	2-1	L-1
Oakland	4	4	2-2	2-2	0-2	L-1
Denver	2	6	1-3	1-3	1-1	L-2

THURSDAY'S TOP NEWS

• **Red Sox pitcher Pedro Martinez voted MLB Associated Press Player of the Year**

• **Michigan State voted preseason No. 1 in ESPN's NCAA basketball poll**

• **Colorado Avalanche trade Claude Lemieux to New Jersey Devils for Brian Ralston**

• **Vijay Singh in first place after first round of American Express Championship**

• **Milwaukee Brewers hire Davey Lopes as manager**