

GAMECOCK SPORTS

# Outlook positive for USC baseball team in 2000

BY JEFF ROMIG  
SPORTS EDITOR

The goal is set. Anything less than berth in a regional will be a let-down for the USC baseball team that sufficiently filled its holes from last year.

Brian Roberts leaves a void at shortstop. Drew Meyer, the Los Angeles Dodgers' second round pick in last year's draft, steps in.

Jay Lambert is graduated. Adam McHenry brings a .425 average and 40 stolen bases from Cerra Coso Junior College in California to second base.

Brandon Pack solidifies a shaky catching slot with good defense and a .360 JC average.

Chris Plummer brings solid JC credentials to the hot corner, as does Brennan Dees to right field.

When combined with a pitching staff that is considered to be the strongest piece of USC's puzzle, anything less than the goal set will be missing the mark for the 2000 Gamecocks.

"I came here with hopes of going far in the playoffs," Meyer said. "I think we've got the pitching to do it and I think we've got the team to do it."

Kip Bouknight thinks the team's unity will play a major role in its success.

"Obviously Carolina fans have noticed Carolina basketball," Bouknight said. "Why are they a little bit different this year? I'm a fan, and I go watch. I see uni-

ty there. I see guys going out there and hustling - diving on the floor. Well, that's kind of how we are."

Coach Ray Tanner is very pleased with the team he will be fielding this spring.

"I like this team," Tanner said. "There's a lot of kids on this team who have been around for a little bit and I think that's going to make a difference for us. I'm hoping that in the course of this season that experience and maturity is going to make a lot of difference."

Tanner's pitching rotation will be an integral part in any success the Gamecocks might have.

"Certainly on paper, pitching seems to be where we're strongest," Tanner said. "We lost Randy Hadden and Jason Pomar, but other than that, everybody's back and has some experience. I think our pitchers are good enough that they can give us a chance to win everyday."

Kip Bouknight will be Tanner's No. 1 starter coming off a 7-4 record with a 3.86 ERA.

Bouknight is followed by fellow junior Peter Bauer, who was 5-3 in 1999.

"Kip has done a tremendous job since day one of his freshman year," Tanner said. "Pete had a great year his freshman year and a lot of experience last year. They're certainly as experienced as you can have in college baseball as juniors."

Sophomore Chris Spigner, who was undefeated in 1999 at 3-0, will be third in the rotation and JC trans-

fer Ernie Bascuas (8-3, 3.00 ERA in 1999) is the leading candidate to be the Gamecock's fourth starter.

Tanner is as high on his pitching staff as he is on Meyer, whose decision to pass up Dodger blue to come to college came down to the wire.

"Anytime you can get a player that good to come to school, it certainly means so much to your program," Tanner said. "He's a freshman and I expect him to have some bumps along the way, but he certainly has the talent to step in and play."

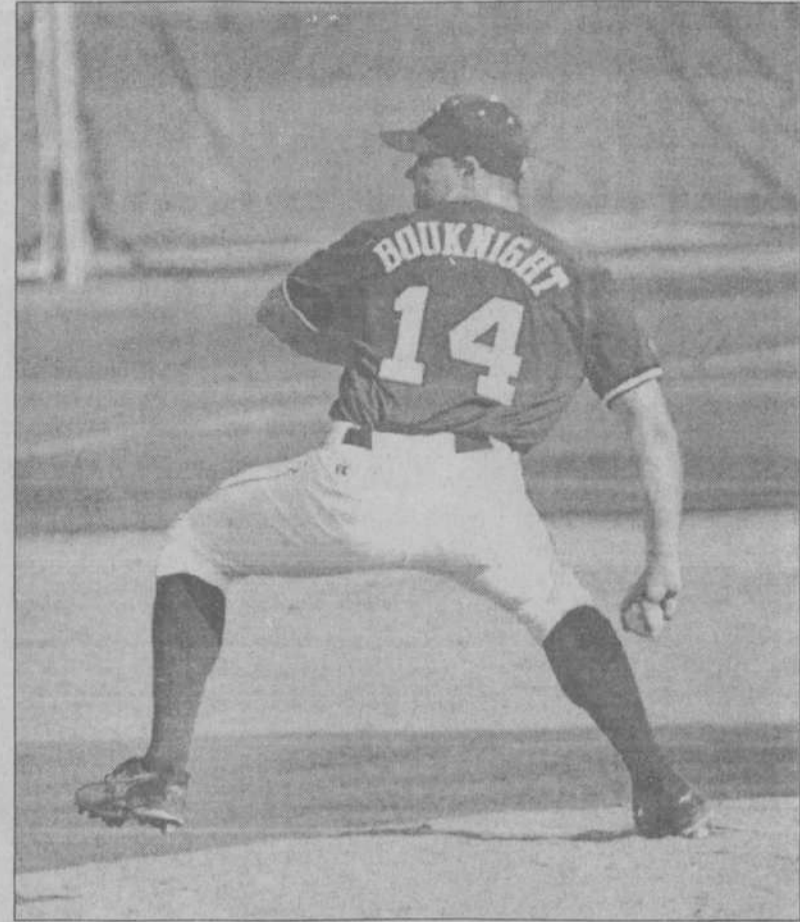
Sophomore Trey Dyson, who also started for most of his freshman year, knows what adjustments have to be made from the high school level to the SEC.

"One thing about Drew is he's definitely not scared," Dyson said. "He's going to come out here and play as hard as he can everyday. I think he's adjusted pretty well."

Dyson returns at first base, as does Shane Nelson in left field. Marcus McBeth, who also saw time as a freshman, will be Tanner's everyday centerfielder.

USC also welcomes back outfielder Nate Janowicz, who led the team in hitting for much of the season last year and anchored a solid defense. Janowicz, one of the few seniors, will be competing with newcomer Brennan Dees for a starting spot.

The Gamecocks will begin the new season on Feb. 4 against Charleston Southern at Sarge Frye Field. The first pitch is scheduled for 3 p.m.



AMY GOULDING PHOTO EDITOR

Junior pitcher Kip Bouknight will be the No. 1 starter for the Gamecocks this season, as they try to repeat last year's SEC Eastern Division championship.

| 2000 GAMECOCK BASEBALL SCHEDULE |                             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>FEB.</b>                     | 28 at College of Charleston |
| 4-5 Charleston Southern         | 29 Elon                     |
| at Franklin Life Classic        | 31 Alabama                  |
| (Charleston, S.C.)              | <b>APRIL</b>                |
| 11 Old Dominion                 | 1-2 Alabama                 |
| 12 East Carolina                | 5 The Citadel               |
| 13 The Citadel                  | 7-9 Mississippi State       |
| 18-20 Delaware State            | 12 at Clemson               |
| 22 Campbell                     | 14-16 at Vanderbilt         |
| 25-27 College of Charleston     | 18 Davidson                 |
| <b>MARCH</b>                    | 19 Clemson                  |
| 3-5 Radford                     | 21-23 at Kentucky           |
| 8 Furman                        | 26 at UNC-Asheville         |
| 10-12 at Auburn                 | 28-30 Georgia               |
| 14 UNC-Asheville                | <b>MAY</b>                  |
| 17-19 Florida                   | 5-7 at Arkansas             |
| 22 Wofford                      | 10 at Duke                  |
| 24-26 at Louisiana State        | 12-14 Tennessee             |

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