

INSIDE:
 USC athletes make the grade in fall 1999 semester; Gamboa makes run for title at SEC Indoor Tennis Championships

SPORTS

SCHEDULE

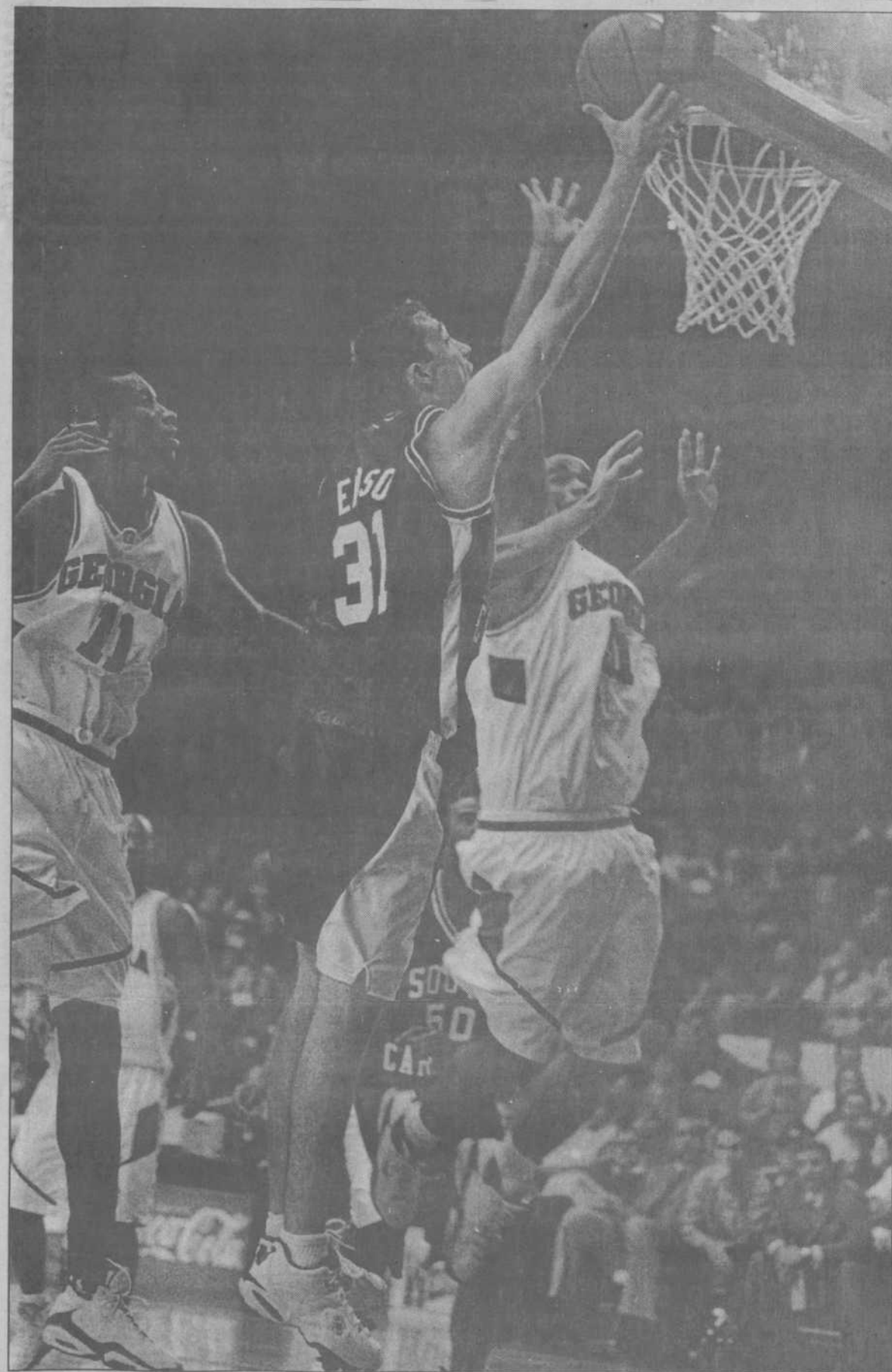
- Men's basketball vs. Vanderbilt, 7:30 p.m.
- Women's basketball at Arkansas, Thu.
- Track at ETSU Invitational, Fri.
- Swimming at Auburn, Fri.
- Men's tennis at USC Invitational, Fri.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2000

The Gamecock

PAGE B1

USC tries to halt streaking Vandy



USC's Chuck Eidson (center) goes up for a layup against Georgia's Adrian Jones (11) and Shon Coleman (51). USC lost to Georgia 90-62 on Jan. 22. It was their fourth consecutive loss.

BY DAVID CLONINGER
 SPORTS EDITOR

The USC men's basketball team, reeling from four consecutive losses, will try to break out of their current funk by beating No. 20 Vanderbilt tonight at Frank McGuire Arena. Tipoff is scheduled for 7:30 p.m.

Vanderbilt (12-3, 3-2 SEC), comes into the game on a high note, getting a solid start in Southeastern Conference play and taking No. 18 Kentucky to overtime Saturday before being defeated. Preseason All-American Dan Langhi is averaging 22.1 points per game, and has been the Commodores' catalyst for the entire season.

For USC, the game is the start of four straight games against ranked opponents, with only two in the friendly confines of Carolina Coliseum. The Gamecocks (9-9, 1-4 SEC) need a win to keep their hopes afloat for post-season play.

Guards

Vandy has an excellent trio of guards in sophomore Sam Howard and seniors Atiba Prater and James Strong. Strong is the second-leading scorer for Vanderbilt behind Langhi, and has 61 assists for the season. Prater is winding down a brilliant career at Vanderbilt while collecting an SEC-leading 98 assists already this year. Although he averages only 7.3 points per game, Prater directs the high-scoring Commodore offense and is the team's floor leader.

USC will be directed once again by sophomore Aaron Lucas and freshman phenom Chuck Eidson.

Lucas continues to play solid basketball, averaging 7.4 points per game and amassing 88 assists for the year. Eidson, meanwhile, is being discussed by all of USC's previous opponents as one of the future's bright stars. The freshman is leading the conference with 58 steals, has 63 assists and averages 10.3 points per game. However, Eidson has scored 24 and 17 points, respectively in his last two matches.

Both of USC's guards were limited by foul trouble in the Gamecocks' 90-62 loss at Georgia. If Eidson and Lucas get into early foul trouble again, USC might have a long night ahead.

Forwards

Langhi enters the game as the

SEC's leading scorer and has already won one SEC Player of the Week award this year. The driving force behind head coach Kevin Stallings' high-powered offense, Langhi is in the top five of almost every SEC offensive statistical category and is making Vandy a legitimate contender to run into the NCAA Tournament. The versatile senior is a threat from anywhere on the floor, playing power forward mostly but also platooning at center.

Langhi is helped by junior Anthony Williams, who scores around nine points a game and vacuum-cleans the boards, averaging 6.6 rebounds per game. He and Langhi combine to present one of the SEC's more formidable inside forces, both on offense and defense.

The Gamecocks are without a typical beefed-up, bang-inside forward, so they use senior guard Herbert Lee Davis as a swingman, flashing outside and then in to lead the team in scoring with 10.9 points per game.

USC also uses sophomore Damien Kinloch, a 6-10 forward who averages 4.7 per game, both in points and rebounds. Also, redshirt junior Antonio Grant helps out in the paint and has a good shot from the 3-point line.

Center

The Commodore and Gamecock centers both have something in common they don't score many points per game, but no defender wants to get in their way.

Vandy is led by sophomore Darius Coulibaly, a 7-1 blocker from Greensboro, who has rejected 17 shots this year. He joins with 6-10 junior Greg LaPointe, who collects 5.5 points per game but only has two blocks for the year.

USC starts 6-11 freshman Marius Petravicius, who has had several solid games this year and averages 7.8 points per game.

Redshirt freshman Tony Kitchings adds in a team-leading 21 blocks for the year, as well as 6.6 points per game. Both of the USC big men are reliable, but lack the scoring drive necessary to match up with the other centers of the SEC.

Langhi key for Vandy victory

BY JEFF ROMIG
 SPORTS EDITOR

Eddie Fogler wouldn't comment on how other SEC teams have guarded Vanderbilt forward Dan Langhi.

He would only say that the Gamecocks (9-9, 1-4 SEC) would do their best against the 20th-ranked team's top player.

The 6-11 senior has established himself as one of the premier players in the SEC this year, averaging 22.1 points and 5.7 rebounds a game. His scoring average is tops in the SEC and ninth in the country.

If USC can figure out a way to guard Langhi, they will have done something that only one team has done all season. Langhi has scored in double figures against every opponent except for Belmont. Langhi could only managed four points in the Commodores (12-3, 3-2 SEC) first game of the season.

He's scored 20-plus in 10 of 15 games and scored 30-plus on three occasions.

"He's terrific offensively," Fogler said. "He as good as there is—hard to stop."

Fogler won't do anything special to shut down Langhi.

"I think everybody puts an emphasis on trying in some way contain him," Fogler said. "I don't think anybody goes into a game with Vanderbilt and doesn't concentrate on Langhi to some degree."

Langhi isn't solely a scoring threat. His ability to combine height, ball-handling ability and perimeter scoring allow him to play either forward position successfully.

"Their sets are geared to give him opportunities," Fogler said. "He's a problem for anybody. He is one of the most versatile big men in the United States."

Langhi isn't the only person the Gamecocks have to worry about though.

"Their guards are very good," Fogler said. "I've always been a big [Atiba] Prater fan. He's excellent in the open court and excellent in making decisions."

Prater is averaging 7.3 points and 6.6 assists a game. He leads the SEC in assists and is second in career assists at Vanderbilt with 435.

"They are offensively diverse," Fogler said. "Kevin Stallings has done an excellent job installing his system. They picked it up great."

USC Men's Basketball Team Statistics (through Jan. 26)

PLAYER	GP-GS	MIN-AVG	TOTAL			3-POINTERS			REBOUNDS			PF-FO	A	TO	BLK	ST	PTS	AVG
			FG-FGA	PCT	FT-FTA	PCT	FG-FGA	PCT	FT-FTA	PCT	OFF-DEF							
14 Herbert Lee Davis	18-18	477-26.5	77-170	.453	22-58	.379	21-43	.488	24-34	58-3.2	25-0	23	22	10	10	197	10.9	
31 Chuck Eidson	18-8	497-27.6	72-147	.490	17-43	.395	24-47	.511	11-46	57-3.2	38-0	63	48	12	58	185	10.3	
35 Antonio Grant	17-13	434-25.5	49-108	.454	18-54	.333	20-40	.500	43-53	96-5.6	22-0	17	25	2	21	136	8.0	
12 Marius Petravicius	18-18	374-20.8	45-99	.455	0-0	.000	51-82	.622	35-43	78-4.3	54-3	3	34	12	6	141	7.8	
05 Aaron Lucas	18-18	575-31.9	46-127	.362	16-59	.271	26-35	.743	11-41	52-2.9	38-0	88	55	4	24	134	7.4	
50 Tony Kitchings	18-0	372-20.7	52-107	.486	0-0	.000	15-33	.455	26-50	76-4.2	30-1	13	26	21	16	119	6.6	
33 Damien Kinloch	18-15	380-21.1	37-77	.481	0-0	.000	11-26	.423	37-48	85-4.7	40-2	6	29	9	8	85	4.7	
15 Travis Kraft	11-0	12-11.5	13-39	.333	11-35	.314	5-6	.833	5-6	11-1.0	8-0	4	10	0	2	42	3.8	
10 Jamel Bradley	17-0	123-7.2	20-43	.465	18-37	.486	3-4	.750	1-8	9-0.5	2-0	8	3	0	3	61	3.6	
32 Calvin Clemmons	7-0	43-6.1	9-19	.474	0-0	.000	4-9	.444	6-8	14-2.0	3-0	0	3	0	0	22	3.1	
00 David Ross	18-0	158-8.8	19-40	.475	11-26	.423	1-4	.250	6-7	13-0.7	26-0	0	10	14	0	50	2.8	
04 Ivan Howell	9-0	51-5.7	4-15	.267	3-6	.500	5-6	.833	2-4	6-0.7	7-0	8	8	0	2	16	1.8	
20 Jo Jo Cadray	5-0	12-2.4	1-2	.500	0-1	.000	3-4	.750	0-1	1-0.2	0-0	2	1	0	2	5	1.0	
24 Brian Scott	2-0	3-1.5	0-3	.000	0-1	.000	0-0	.000	0-0	0-0.0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	

Probable starting lineups

No. 20 Vanderbilt (12-3, 3-2 SEC)
 F 32 Anthony Williams (6-7, 235, Jr., 9.4 ppg, 6.6 rpg), F 42 Dan Langhi (6-11, 215, Sr., 22.1 ppg, 5.7 rpg), C 52 Greg LaPointe (6-10, 235, Jr., 5.5 ppg, 3.3 rpg), G 5 Atiba Prater (6-1, 180, Sr., 7.3 ppg, 3.3 rpg), G 13 James Strong (6-3, 195, Sr., 12.2 ppg, 4.3 rpg)

South Carolina (9-9, 1-4 SEC)

F 14 Herbert Lee Davis (6-5, 182, Sr., 10.9 ppg, 3.2 rpg), F 33 Damien Kinloch (6-7, 215, So., 4.7 ppg, 4.7 rpg), C 12 Marius Petravicius (6-10, 245, Fr., 7.8 ppg, 4.3 rpg), G 5 Aaron Lucas (5-11, 170, So., 7.4 ppg, 2.9 rpg), G 31 Chuck Eidson (6-7, 198, Fr., 10.3 ppg, 3.2 rpg)

Head Coaches:

Vanderbilt: Kevin Stallings (123-63, 12-3 VU) USC: Eddie Fogler (244-174, 102-94 USC)

Tipoff: 7:30 p.m.
 Location: Frank McGuire Arena
 TV: None
 Radio: WVOC-Columbia, 560 AM
 Tickets: Still available

Series History

All-time record: Vanderbilt 13, USC 11
 Last meeting: USC 69, Vanderbilt 57 (1-30-99, Columbia)
 First began: 1926 Vanderbilt 31, USC 25 (in Atlanta)
 At Columbia: USC 7, Vanderbilt 3
 At Nashville: Vanderbilt 9, USC 3
 At neutral sites: USC 1, Vanderbilt 1

McAlexander wins second S.C. Sportscaster of the Year award

BY SHANNON ROOKE
 ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Charlie McAlexander, the play-by-play voice of the Gamecocks, has been chosen by the National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association as the 1999 Sportscaster of the Year in South Carolina.

"This [award] is always a great honor," McAlexander said. "It's important because your peers are the ones that vote for you."

McAlexander, more commonly known as Charlie "Mac," has been in the broadcasting business within the Southeastern Conference for 28 years. He also hosts the Eddie Fogler and Bob Scott television shows and the "Carolina Calls" radio talk show.

McAlexander, who is in his fifth year as the "Voice of the Gamecocks," receives the award for the second time in South Carolina.

He has earned the honor seven times before in such states as Mississippi (1975), Tennessee (1990-91), Kentucky (1992-94), and South Carolina (1996).

McAlexander now joins Hall of Famer Ray Scott as the only four-state winner in the history of the NSSA and he is the first announcer in SEC history to win the award in four different states.

"Even though we haven't dominated in some of the major sports, I've always been a firm believer in Gamecock sports," McAlexander said. "A game is a report, and you try to make it an honest report and throw in some entertainment as well."

After handling the play-by-play at Kentucky, Vanderbilt and Ole Miss, McAlexander was a national president for the NSSA and is a longtime member of the organization.

In 1995, he succeeded Gamecock announcer Bob Fulton. McAlexander was enthusiastic about returning for his sixth season at USC.

McAlexander, a native of Holly Springs, Miss., is a graduate of Delta State University. He and his wife Betty now reside in Columbia and have two daughters, Emily (26) and Carrie (22).

Barron crucial for USC football class



CHARLIE WALLACE SENIOR WRITER

In the recruiting wars, there are certain players who programs will go to great lengths to have.

Recruiters and coaches will do anything and everything in their power to convince high school seniors why their respected university is the place for them.

This recruiting season, USC football has won some of these battles, but has lost some of them, too, as certain missed opportunities have turned into the proverbial "fish that got away."

However, there are still a few prize catches left in the recruiting lake. And Carolina is very close to reeling in a whale of a catch: a 6-8, 298 lb. fish by the name of Alex.

Less than an hour's drive down I-26 in Orangeburg County is the AAA high school of Orangeburg-Wilkinson.

Over the years, the Bruins have sent player after player into major college programs while O-W has dominated its competition.

Barron, who is rated as the No. 14 offensive lineman in the nation, and by far the best in the state, would be the perfect end to a very impressive recruiting season should he commit to the Gamecocks.

National signing day is February 2, and Carolina already has 23 of the maximum 25 commitments.

Even though most recruits don't officially sign until the deadline, Carolina's current catch of incoming freshmen and junior-college prospects is amazing considering their 1-21 record the past two years.

Recruiting has been successful for the Gamecocks, but it has not been easy, and the taming of Barron may be USC's biggest obstacle yet.

"I had a pleasant visit to South Carolina," Barron said. "They didn't oversell the program but they are very enthusiastic, especially Coach Holtz. I am wide open."

These comments were made last week. However, over the weekend, Barron was in Atlanta.