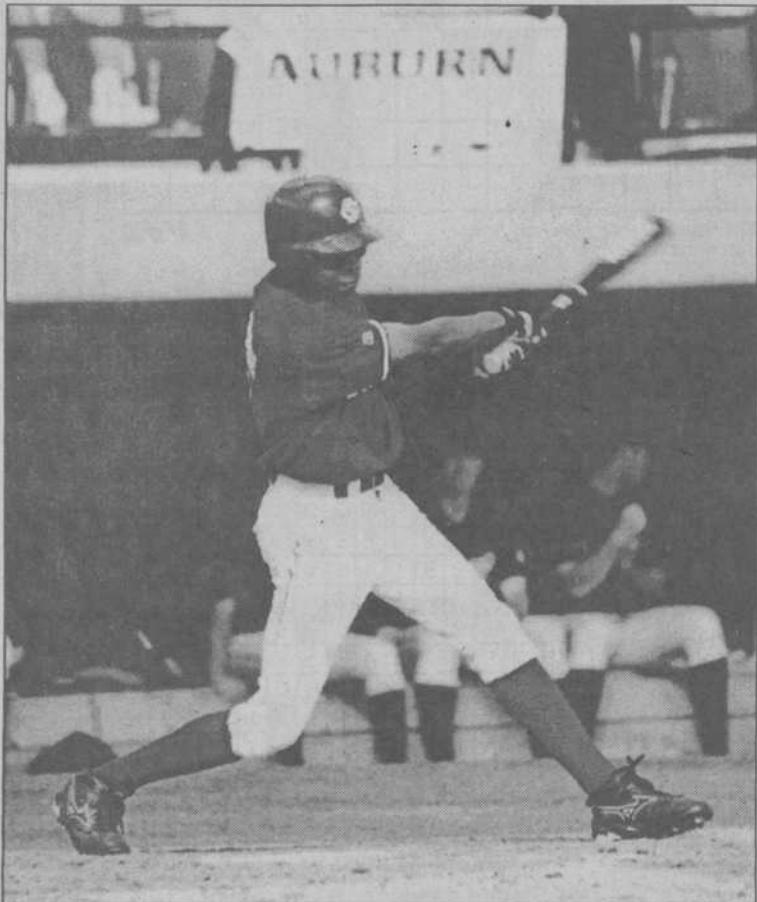


USC senior fullback Jacob Bush to miss 2000 season with torn ACL, Cloninger discusses need for athletic heroes.

- Baseball vs. The Citadel, 7 p.m.
- Track & field at Duke Invitational (Durham, N.C.), Fri.-Sat.
- Women's tennis at Mississippi State, Fri.

# Gamecock baseball tries for 29

No. 2 Carolina welcomes The Citadel tonight for shot at 29th victory of the season



SPECIAL TO GAMECOCK SPORTS  
Centerfielder Marcus McBeth has made outstanding defensive plays for the Gamecocks this year.

BY KYLE ALMOND  
STAFF WRITER

Fresh off a weekend in which they swept Alabama and improved their record to 28-4 overall and 9-3 in the SEC, the South Carolina baseball team will next face a familiar opponent tonight in The Citadel.

The Citadel comes to Columbia with revenge on its mind.

And with good reason.

The two teams played earlier in the season at the Franklin Life Classic in Charleston. The Gamecocks pulled out a tough 4-2 win against the Bulldogs, who are now 21-10 overall and currently second in the Southern Conference with a record of 10-2.

USC first baseman Tripp Kelly went 3-4 with a home run and two RBIs in the game, and Lee Gronkiewicz only allowed three hits in five innings of play, earning the win.

Hoping to reverse the result of its first meeting, The Citadel could start Dallas McPherson on the mound.

McPherson, a sophomore from Randleman, N.C., was tabbed preseason player of the year in the Southern Conference.

He is a double threat because of his performance on the mound and at the plate, and his record as a starter is 6-1. With the bat, he is hitting .394 with 6 home runs and 36 RBIs.

The Citadel could also start Ron Colvard, who is 5-1 with a 2.56 ERA, Kyle Bunn, who lost the first game against Carolina, T.W. Mincey or Eric Talbert.

The Gamecocks' probable starter will be sophomore southpaw Brett Price. USC head coach Ray Tanner will most likely save his top two pitchers, Kip Bouknight and Peter Bauer, for the upcoming series against Mississippi State, starting Friday.

Price has dazzled opponents in his three starts this season. In the most recent one, against Wofford, Price struck out a career-high nine batters in five innings of scoreless baseball en route to a 17-2 Gamecock victory.

Tanner could also go with pitchers Matt Wilson, Steven Whetstone or Ernie Bascuas as he tries to find a permanent midweek starter behind his strong 1-2 punch of Bouknight and Bauer.

As for whomever Tanner decides to start, he can count on getting solid run support behind a Gamecock line-

up that will head to the plate with a .303 team average.

Six of the Gamecocks' regular starters are currently hitting above .300.

Rightfielder Brennan Dees leads the pack with a .358 batting average and 48 hits on the year.

Kelly has hit a team-leading 11 homers. Combined with leftfielder Nate Janowicz, shortstop Drew Meyer, catcher Brandon Pack and second baseman John McHenry, USC has a lethal offensive attack and a run-producing machine.

The Citadel depends on McPherson and first baseman Philip Hartig for the majority of its scoring. Hartig is hitting at a .406 clip in 31 games this season. He also has six home runs and 47 RBIs on the year.

On the base paths, the Gamecocks need to keep an eye on the Bulldogs' leadoff hitter, Chris Morris. Morris has stolen 46 bases, tops in the Southern Conference.

With a win tonight and continued success on the weekend against MSU, the Gamecocks could be well on their way to the elusive No. 1 ranking, which is held by Florida State. USC is ranked No. 2 in the nation.



SPECIAL TO GAMECOCK SPORTS  
Trey Dyson, left, talks with coach Stuart Lake at first base.

## Coquettes heading to nationals

BY CHARLIE WALLACE  
SENIOR WRITER

Florida and Michigan State played for the national championship of the NCAA men's basketball tournament Monday night in Indianapolis.

For the two teams, this final game was the culmination of a lifelong dream. And for many of the players, it was their final dance on center stage in the game of basketball.

Gators and Spartans weren't the only teams dancing out their dreams.

On Main Street, about a block away from the Towers, 15 girls stood outside of the band hall, shivering in the middle of a blustery spring wind, waiting to get inside of the building that for the past few months has been their home.

The USC Dance Team, also commonly referred to as the Coquettes (which means "flirt"), will finish their season in less than a week.

It's been a season of practicing almost every day, bruising their bodies and giving up the majority of their free time all for the chance to compete and live their dream of dancing at the National Collegiate Association Dance Competition, their version of the Final Four, which will be held this weekend in Daytona Beach.

Most USC students don't really know what the dance team exactly does or who the members are. The current team is made up of four seniors, seven juniors, three sophomores and one freshman.

Most students just recognize them as the girls who dance at basketball games and wear tight-fitting clothing.

How hard is that to do?

How much time does it take? "We started camp in August and have not stopped since," junior Jennifer Chinault said.

Officially under the jurisdiction of the band, the dance team has many obligations they must fulfill, and going to the NCAA finals is actually not one of them. Going to competition is something the dancers want to do, so they give up even more of their free time and pay out of their own pockets for certain royalties.

At most Division I-A schools, the dance team is under the athletic department and is coupled with the cheerleaders; thus, most of the dancers are under athletic scholarship.

The Coquettes are not. They are ordinary students.

Impressively enough, more than half the team is on some type of academic scholarship, which helps lighten the burden of paying for what they do.

"It costs \$350 a girl to go to competition," Chinault said. "However, we have had a couple of checks come in that have helped pay for T-shirts and other little expenses."

The dance team's list of obligations includes dancing with the marching band before the football games and at halftime, practicing 10 hours a week (Monday through Thursday), performing at Cockfest, marching in the homecoming parade and finally dancing at some of the basketball games in the spring.

"Most SEC and Division I-A schools don't dance with the band on the football field," squad captain Sheila Hudson said. "They just do cheerleader-type things

like dancing on the sidelines. They don't actually perform on the field. That is the difference with us."

With no coach, someone has to be in charge of the squad, other than the band director. That job falls to Hudson. Along with performing what they are obligated to do, the team members also trains for competitions.

"We go to a dance camp in the summer that's not affiliated with the band at all," Hudson said. "This is the second year we've gone to competition."

The team finished 11th in the largest school division of 24 teams. This year, if the team cracks into the top 10, it will advance to the finals later on in the week.

Even getting a choreographer is a trying process.

"We had someone help us this year from Atlanta," Chinault said.

While the dance is being worked out, the practice schedule continues to increase.

"The closer we got to competition, we moved the practice schedule up to every day and for at least two hours," Chinault said. "This year, hopefully we'll be more prepared because we have experience."

The USC dance team is more than girls strutting around in leather pants and leopard-skin tops, although members do that, too.

What the dance team really is, is a group of dedicated college girls who are committed their goal. And when the music stops for the final time, this group of self-coached, workaholic college girls aim to be the Cinderella of their own big dance.

## USC pitching duo receives weekly conference honors

BASEBALL/SOFTBALL  
ROUNDUP  
GAMECOCK SPORTS

Two South Carolina athletes from the baseball and softball squads are making their mark in the SEC.

For their performances in last week's games, two of the Gamecocks' starting pitchers earned SEC Pitcher of the Week honors.

Right-hander Peter Bauer was named SEC Pitcher of the Week on Saturday for his performance against Alabama.

The junior threw a complete game, 2-0 shutout to help his team earn a three-game sweep over the No. 12 Crimson Tide.

Bauer threw 97 pitches, 76 of which were strikes, while striking out six with no walks.

Alabama batters only got five hits off of Bauer, all singles. Also, only two Crimson Tide players reached second base and none reached third.

This is the second time this year that a Carolina player received a player or pitcher of the week award, as second baseman John McHenry was named the Player of the Week after the series against Auburn. Carolina also swept the then-No. 4 Tigers that weekend.

Also, fellow USC pitcher Kip Bouknight received the National Pitcher of the Week award this season.

On the women's side, Megan Matthews of Greer, has been named SEC Co-Pitcher of the Week for softball.

Matthews went 3-1 with a one-hitter against No. 14 Alabama and added two wins against Tennessee.

Matthews will share the SEC honor with LSU sophomore Britni Sneed, who tossed her first no-hitter against Ole Miss.

This is the second time this season that Matthews has been honored by the SEC and the fifth time in two years that she has earned the honor.

This season, the sophomore is 16-10 with a 1.43 ERA. Matthews has 168 strikeouts in 190.1 innings.

**Spigner cleared to play.** USC pitcher Chris Spigner has been cleared to begin throwing again after a three-week rehabilitation for tenderness in his elbow.

The best-case scenario would have the sophomore right-hander, slated as the No. 3 starter at the beginning of the season, pitching again this weekend against Mississippi State.

If Spigner continues to have pain, however, he might not pitch again this season. He is 0-0 with a 2.84 ERA in three games, including one start. If Spigner starts this weekend, he will take the Sunday matchup. He could also see relief action on Friday or Saturday.



BAUER

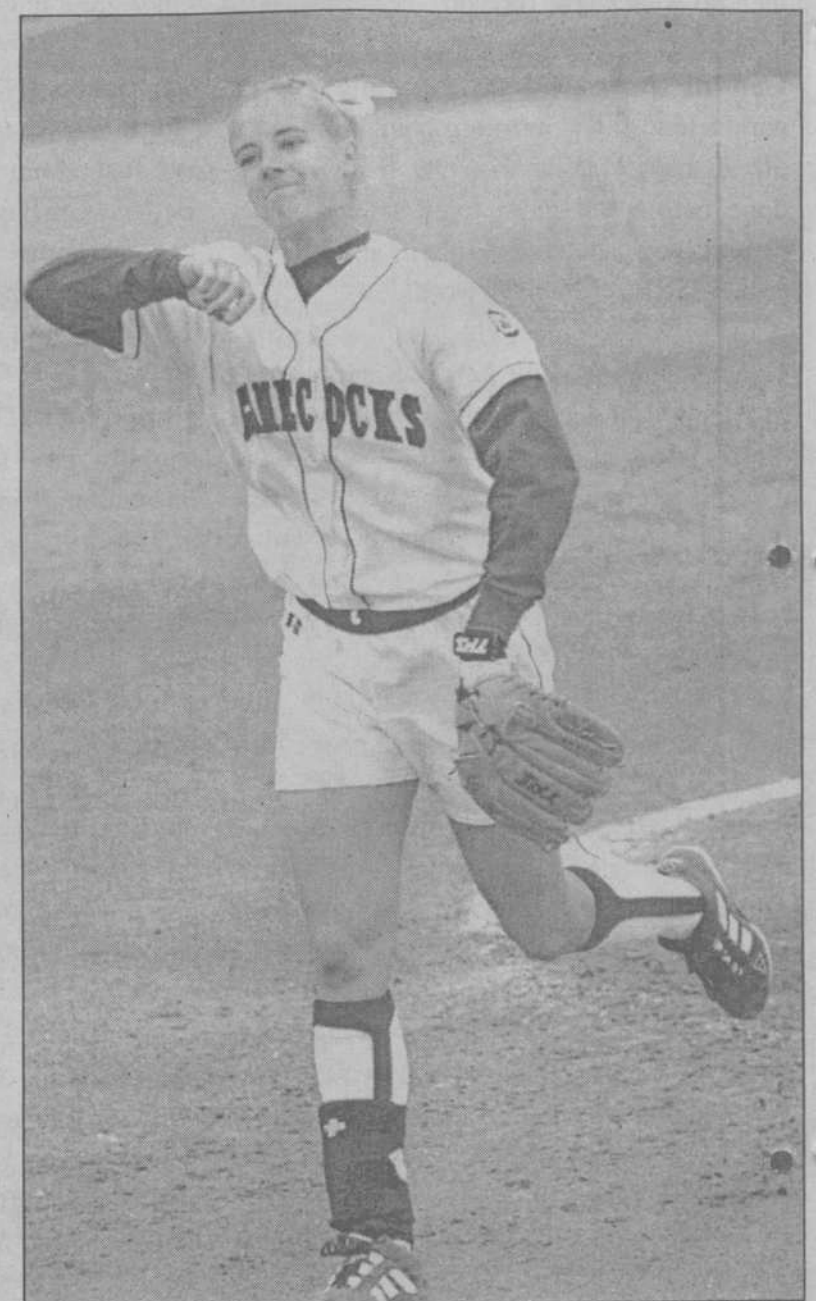
**USC baseball moves up in rankings.** South Carolina is ranked second in the latest *Baseball America* poll and third in

the *Collegiate Baseball Newspaper* and *USA Today/Baseball Weekly* polls.

The 28-4 Gamecocks were ranked fifth in all polls last week, and earned one first-place vote in this week's edition.

In-state rival Clemson, ranked No. 1 ahead of USC two weeks ago in the *Collegiate Baseball* poll, came in at No. 9 in *Baseball America*, No. 8 in *Collegiate Baseball* and No. 7 in *USA Today/Baseball Weekly* poll.

The Tigers dropped from the top five positions as a result of going 1-3 this week. Clemson dropped a Wednesday match to No. 25 Georgia, then lost two out of three at No. 5 North Carolina.



SEAN RAYFORD GAMECOCK SPORTS  
Pitcher Megan Matthews won her second SEC Pitcher of the Week award after throwing a one-hitter against No. 14 Alabama.



SPECIAL TO GAMECOCK SPORTS  
The USC Coquettes pose with school mascot Cocky at Williams-Brice Stadium. The dance team is headed to Nashville for a national competition.