



- Men's soccer vs. UMass, Friday, 7 p.m.
- Football vs. New Mexico State, Saturday, 7 p.m.
- Women's soccer vs. N.C. State, Sunday, 3 p.m.

James Thorpe is true athlete of the century

BY JARED KELOWITZ

KELO-WITS
SPORTS COMMENTARY

As the world sits here and readies itself for the 2000 Summer Games in Sydney, I can't help but think about the greatest Olympian of them all. No I'm not talking about Carl Lewis, Bruce Jenner, or even Mark Spitz. I'm talking about James Francis Thorpe.

Forget Michael Jordan, Muhammad Ali, and Babe Ruth. Thorpe truly was the "Athlete of the Century." At the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, Sweden, Thorpe accomplished a feat no one ever has or probably ever will again.

This member of the Sac-Fox Native American tribe won the gold medal in both the pentathlon and decathlon track and field events. Thorpe won the pentathlon comfortably and then, just one day later, he set a world record in the decathlon, compiling 8,412 points, shattering the previous record by 998 points.

After this, King Gustav III of Sweden told him at the medal ceremonies, "Sir, you are the greatest athlete in the world."

Probably the most painful day in Thorpe's life was when the International Olympic Committee stripped him of his medals because they decided he was a professional athlete. He had played semi-pro baseball for a couple of months to put himself through college.

He wasn't even a professional in the sport in which he competed in Stockholm, but that still doesn't change the fact that the committee didn't give the medals back to the Thorpe until 1982, thirty years after his death.

After the Olympics, Thorpe returned to college football where he was named an All-American tailback for the second time in as many years.

Thorpe then decided to end his amateur career as he signed a \$5,000 contract to play outfield for the New York Giants.

Over six seasons Thorpe played with three different clubs, the Giants and then the Cincinnati Reds and Boston Braves. He batted .327 in his last season.

In 1915, Thorpe began to play professional football for the Canton Bulldogs. He led them to a world championship in 1916, 1917, and 1919. His pro football career included stints with Cleveland, Rock Island, the New York Giants, and the Chicago Cardinals.

After his playing career, Thorpe went on to be the first president of the American Football Association, which later became the National Football League.

Thorpe was inducted into the National Track and Field Hall of Fame, the Professional Football Hall of Fame, the Helms Professional Football Hall of Fame, the National Indian Hall of Fame, the Pennsylvania State Athletic Hall of Fame, and the Oklahoma State Athletic Hall of Fame.

There are many other feats this great competitor accomplished, but my column is not long enough to list them. I was just wondering how anyone could deny this amazing man the honor of being named Athlete of the Century.

I mean, come on. ESPN decides that Michael Jordan is the Athlete of the Century. There's no doubt Jordan was a great basketball player, but how can anyone

KELO-WITS SEE PAGE 12

Men's soccer defeats Maryland

BY KYLE ALMOND
THE GAMECOCK

The South Carolina men's soccer team, fresh off an upset of No. 1 Virginia, defeated No. 8 Maryland 1-0 on Sunday in the final game of the Maryland Soccer Classic.

Junior midfielder Tony Vitagliano scored the game-winning goal for the Gamecocks (3-1), who moved from No. 22 in the nation to No. 10 after wins this weekend against the host Terrapins (3-2) and the Cavaliers.

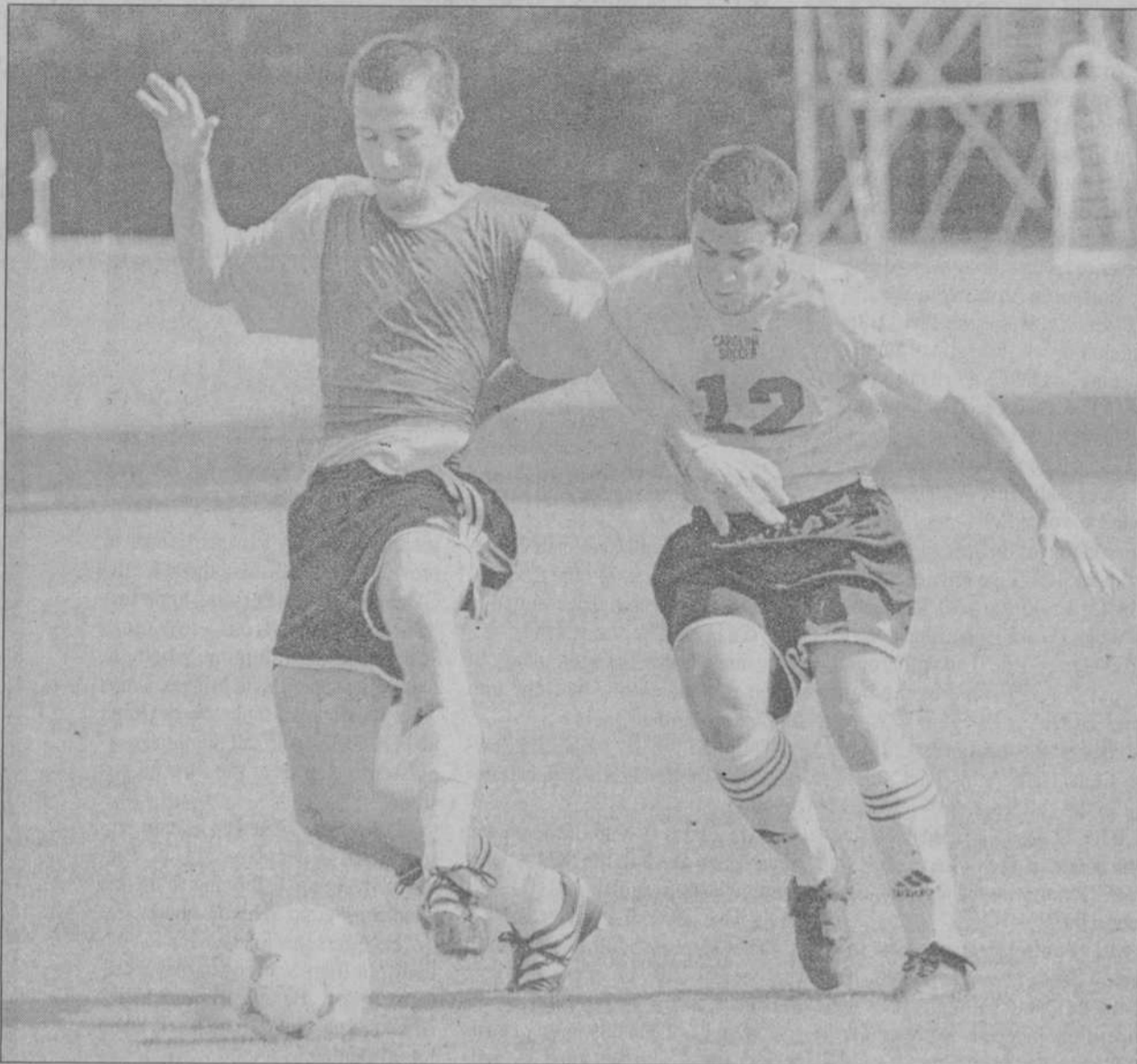
The game between USC and Maryland was a stalemate for most of regulation, and after tough battling back and forth between the two teams it looked as if a draw would be the end result.

But at the 88:53 mark, Vitagliano scored off a corner-kick and put the Gamecocks ahead for good. Jon Rich and Chris Herron were credited with the assists. The goal was only the second goal in Vitagliano's career.

Gamecock goalkeeper Henry Ring was named Defensive Most Valuable Player for the weekend tournament. The red-shirt senior from Franklin, Tenn. paced the Gamecocks, saving 19 shots and allowing only one goal in two games. The Maryland win was his first shut-out of 2000.

"When we came up here, I had a lot of jitters," Ring said. "But as soon as I got my first save I got relaxed and in the zone. The defense played very well in front of me and we worked

SOCCER SEE PAGE 12



SEAN RAYFORD THE GAMECOCK

Junior midfielder Tony Vitagliano (right) battles for possession with teammate Jordan Smith in practice. Vitagliano scored the game-winning goal on Sunday for the Gamecocks in their 1-0 victory over Maryland.

Volleyball team seeks revenge against Clemson

BY RICK JOHNSTON
THE GAMECOCK

Tonight the Carolina volleyball team seeks to gain redemption against Clemson, hoping to avenge last year's loss to the Tigers which head coach Kim Christopher simply called "a nightmare."

After having last year's game delayed due to Hurricane Floyd, and losing a heart-breaking five-game match in the hostile confines of Clemson's Jervey Gymnasium, Christopher says that this year's team is prepared to offer some revenge to the rival Tigers.

"(Sophomore) Cally Plummer was on the bench (due to injury) and we had four freshmen on the floor and we took them to five games."

"We didn't get the 'W,' but then we started thinking about next year and how we wanted to beat them," Christopher said.

Clemson, coming off of a stel-

lar season in 1999, have so far been unable to duplicate last year's success, bringing a 1-5 record into tonight's game. The Tigers returned only two starters, sophomore Jessi Betcher and junior Jodi Steffes, from last year's 31-1 team.

Carolina comes into this game with a 4-3 record after posting a disappointing 1-2 record at last weekend's All Sport tournament in Ann Arbor, Mich., falling to Northern Illinois and host Michigan after beating New Mexico in the tournament opener.

Although the Gamecocks' win-loss record was not what they had hoped for in the tournament, several members of the Gamecock squad did well individually.

Sophomore middle blocker Sam Alban, a Michigan native, achieved a career high with 19 kills in the 3-2 win over New Mexico.

She hit .571 and picked up two digs and block assists. Mandy Quarterman, a senior outside hitter, chipped in with 15 kills and 10 digs

of her own.

"(New Mexico) was a good win for us," Christopher said of the win over the Lobos. "We have to learn to play the entire match with full concentration."

However, it was sophomore setter Megan Hosp who had the best weekend. Against New Mexico and Northern Illinois, Hosp tallied a total of 117 assists and 30 digs.

This was good enough to earn her a nod on the all-tournament team, joining Quarterman and sophomore Berna Dwyer as the only Gamecocks to be named to an all-tournament team this season, as the two were named to the Carolina Classic all-tournament team two weeks ago.

Christopher said Hosp needs a good game against Clemson because "she is the center of our offense."

According to Christopher, Carolina needs to reduce their unforced errors during the game, especially

on serving, citing the errors as the proverbial "Achilles' Heel" this season. Home court advantage will be another key to the Gamecocks' hopes of victory.

"It just soothes the nerves, it's one less thing to worry about when you're at home," Christopher said. Although Clemson is a non-conference opponent, Christopher acknowledges the importance of this game.

"True, it does not help us in the SEC, but this game is important to the fans, which makes it important to us. When you are an athlete at Carolina, the second question asked is 'How did you do in the SEC?' The first is 'Did you beat Clemson?'" Christopher said.

The match starts at 7:00 at the Volleyball Competition Facility adjacent to Carolina Coliseum. The match is free for all USC students.

The sports desk can be reached at gamecocksports@hotmail.com.



SEAN RAYFORD THE GAMECOCK

USC men's golf coach succeeds in rebuilding program

BY GEORGE SIMPSON
THE GAMECOCK

He is arguably one of the best coaches at the University of South Carolina. He vows to bring the school's first national championship in any sport. And his name is not Lou.

That's right, it's Coach William "Puggy" Blackmon of USC's men's golf team. The heralded coach from Georgia Tech came to the University of South Carolina five years ago on the wings of very strong predictions and he has been working to make them as realistic as possible.

And that is a possibility, given the past success of Coach Blackmon.



BLACKMON

William Dempsey Blackmon III was born in Beaufort, S.C., on December 9, 1950. He was a multi-talented student athlete in his days at Ridgeland High School and continued that success at the collegiate level.

He received his B.A. in business administration at Carson-Newman College and also his Master of Science degree in economics at Clemson University. While academic success was essential to "Puggy's" life, his love and desire for golf is what motivated him.

It took time for Coach Blackmon to figure out his career path, so he passed time by working six years for golf resort operations in Florida.

It did take time, but "Puggy" finally found his calling. He discovered that he excelled in instructing and coaching athletes, and set out to become a golf coach.

He certainly had the wisdom and knowledge of the game to share and, coupling that with his personality, created a fierce desire to enrich the lives of collegiate golfers. It is in this field that he claims his highest accolades and most noteworthy praises.

As coach of the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets, Blackmon amassed some of the most impressive and gaudy statistics of any coach in the country.

He turned a struggling Yellow Jacket program into one of the most elite teams in the country. He went on to collect five ACC Championships and appeared in 11 consecutive NCAA Championships.

Possibly his most impressive achievement, however, is the 34 team tournament titles collected by his Yellow Jacket teams.

They totaled nine first or second place finishes in the ACC during his 12 years. He was awarded ACC Coach of the Year four times and coached

two national players of the year, David Duval and Stewart Cink, both of whom have become major successes on the PGA Tour.

Unfortunately for Georgia Tech, Coach Blackmon decided that after the 1994 season it was time for change and a new challenge, thus ending possibly one of the greatest coaching tenures of any sport in NCAA history.

The new challenge given to Coach Blackmon was the coaching position at USC. On June 5, 1995, he was handed the reins of a team that placed ninth in the SEC Championships the previous year. Success seemed too distant for most supporters.

Coach Blackmon ignored the doubts about his team and set out to rebuild the program, saying that an NCAA Championship was not out of reach in the near future. He proceeded to coach the Gamecocks to four NCAA appearances in his first four years. And he did so with mostly inexperienced and young teams.

He has now built the golf program into one of the finest in the SEC, as well as the entire country. Only the future can tell what will happen this season, but it is certain that "Puggy" will only enhance his reputation as one of the finest collegiate coaches in history.

Gamecocks finish second at tournament, Kok takes top honors

The University of South Carolina men's golf team finished second this past weekend at their first tournament of the year, The Ridges Intercollegiate Golf Tournament at East Tennessee State University.

After two rounds of play USC was 6 shots off of the lead. With a blistering team performance on Sunday, the Gamecocks were able to cut the Texas Christian University Horned Frogs lead to three. The Horned Frogs compiled an impressive three day total of 851, and Carolina came finished next with 854.

USC was led by tournament medalist Johan Kok. Kok fired rounds of 71-66-71 for a tournament best 8-under par 208. Along with Kok, two other Gamecocks finished in the top 20 as well. Red-shirt sophomore Scott Feaster finished third with a 4-under par 212, and All-American and U.S. Public Links Semifinalist Kyle Thompson finished 20th, with a 1-over par 217.

Coach Puggy Blackmon's Gamecocks came into the season ranked No. 15 in the nation, but managed to turn some heads by finishing in front of No. 1 ranked Clemson Tigers. Clemson finished third at the Ridges Intercollegiate.

The Carolina men's golf team will travel to Toledo, Ohio, this weekend to take aim at the Inverness Intercollegiate Golf Tournament title.

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