

GAMECOCK BASKETBALL

Gamecock seniors ready to go out on top

BY CHRIS FOY
THE GAMECOCK

USC captain David Ross is not content with another subpar season for the Gamecocks. He's ready to help push his team to the next level.

The senior forward from St. Petersburg, Fla., feels that South Carolina arrived at an optimal playing level late last year, and that it will continue on into this season. With many of the sophomores and freshmen from last year intact with the system, Ross believes the team is ready for always-tough SEC play. The Gamecocks fell to 5-8 against the conference, but came on strong in the SEC Tournament to make the semifinals.

Last year, Ross's role as a leader was to keep the young players motivated; to teach them how to handle the tough SEC schedule and the season as a whole.

"Last year, I kept telling everyone to keep their heads up," Ross said. "It was important with all of our young players that we never lost confidence."

He knows, however, that his leadership role has been altered this season. Now, with a more experienced team, his approach for this season will be to sway from the teaching and focus on the motivation. Alongside co-captains Aaron Lucas and Antonio Grant, Ross knows what style of

leadership will work best.

"Our job will be to keep everybody focused," Ross said.

Ross was attracted to USC, not because of any records or an affiliation, but because of head coach Eddie Fogler. Ross was impressed with Fogler's straightforward approach to recruiting and how he stayed away from promising playing time.

Ross said that so many coaches today try to lure players in with promises of minutes, but Fogler's flat-out honesty encouraged him to attend school here.

"Nothing was promised here. You have to work for what you get in this system," Ross said. "I respect that and the man who implemented it."

Fogler also has equal admiration for Ross. "[Ross] is a good leader. David has the respect of all the players. I honestly believe if we had a great



ROSS SEE PAGE S8

BY MICHAEL HANEY
THE GAMECOCK

Being a college athlete has its perks. For South Carolina's Antonio Grant, he certainly has had his moments, but he's also had his disappointments.

The fifth-year senior from North Augusta has been one of the main fixtures in the USC basketball team's turnaround over the last few years. He has been one of the Gamecocks' best rebounders on and off the court. After suffering through a broken foot in the '96-'97 season, Grant splashed onto the scene in 1998 by banking back-to-back game-winning shots against Florida and Cincinnati. The following year, he struggled because of a nagging groin injury and a foot injury late in the year. However, Grant played injury-free last year and was able to put up the best stats of his career.

"I've been harped by injuries my whole career. I do feel like I could be a better player than I am now," Grant said. "But that's part of the game, you know. I haven't really been able to do the things that I really have wanted to do."

Not usually a top scoring threat, Grant gets recognition because of his hustle. Coach Eddie Fogler calls Grant the Gamecocks' best defensive player, also saying, "He's our strongest player and quite possibly our team's most athletic."

After taking a trip to Spain and the Canary Islands this past summer, Grant said the team is better

and that the trip helped them tremendously as a team.

"I think the trip this summer did a lot for this team. We were able to get further ahead with some extra practice, and time to hang out together," he said.

"The sophomores and freshmen who didn't get a lot of playing time last year got a chance to play. We saw a lot of different things offensively and defensively and were able to try out a lot of new things."

The last time Carolina made a trip to Europe over the summer was the 1996-97 season. That team went on to a 15-1 record in the SEC. Grant thinks this season's team is different than the last team that traveled, but they have a good opportunity to surprise some people again this time around.

"We don't have a whole lot of guys that can penetrate like BJ (McKie) and Melvin (Watson) did, but I think that we do have a better nucleus. We've got guys that can shoot outside and we can score on the inside, which is something we lacked that year," Grant



GRANT SEE PAGE S8

SHOW YOUR USC SPIRIT!

For the best selection of Gamecocks clothing and gifts, visit the
Addam's University Bookstore



- T-shirts
- Hats
- Mugs
- Sweatshirts
- Polos
- Much, much more!

or shop online at:

follett
NEW & USED COLLEGE TEXTBOOKS
.com



**ADDAM'S
UNIVERSITY
BOOKSTORE**

Corner of Blossom & Main

Phone: 803/256-6666

\$3 off any t-shirt*

\$5 off any sweatshirt*

*with coupon. Offer expires 12/15/00. One coupon per person per visit.