



USC drops last game at home in overtime

BY PRESTON BAINES
THE GAMECOCK

Vincent Yarbrough put home a follow-up dunk off a missed shot with 1:52 remaining in overtime to send the Gamecocks to yet another heartbreaking defeat at home, this time at the hands of the Tennessee Volunteers, 68-67, Tuesday night at Frank McGuire Arena.

Down by a single point with 6.2 seconds left, the Gamecocks (14-12, 6-9 SEC) still had a final chance to win. Michael Boynton lobbed an inbound pass toward the basket to Tony Kitchings only to see the ball glance off Kitchings' hands and into the hands of Rolando Howell, whose fall-away 18-foot baseline jumper bounced off the rim as time expired.

The two teams entered the overtime after Tennessee's Terrance Woods hit an off-balanced three pointer from the left wing at the buzzer to tie the game at 63. The basket by Woods capped off a 9-2 run by the Vols (20-9, 7-8) in the final minute of regulation.

The Tennessee run followed a 17-0 run by Carolina fueled by Jamel Bradley's 10 points. Bradley finished with 23 on the night to lead Carolina in scoring.

"Tennessee is the most athletic, talented team in the SEC," said Bradley, commenting on the physicality of the game. "The refs were really letting us play tonight."

Carolina's Aaron Lucas missed the entire second half and most of the game due to a turf toe injury suffered late in the Georgia game.

"[Lucas] will be ready for Saturday," USC head coach Eddie Fogler remarked. "He has lived with (trainer) Jeff Parsons the last couple of days."

Because of the injury, freshman Boynton received a majority of the minutes at point guard. Boynton finished

with four points and seven assists.

Tennessee was led by Yarbrough's 13 points, 11 of which came in the first 13 minutes of the game, before getting the game-winning dunk. For the second straight week on ESPN, Howell put together a double-double, scoring 12 points and grabbing 12 rebounds.

Tennessee's top four scorers on the season, Tony Harris, Ron Slay, Isiah Victor and Vincent Yarbrough, were contained the entire second half by the Gamecocks' stifling defense. The four players scored only 10 points combined and 28 for the game, 25 below their average scoring output for the season. USC forced 20 turnovers while only committing 12.

The loss most likely damaged any hopes the Gamecocks had of making the NCAA tournament. The Vols, however, increased the chances of making the tournament after only winning three of the previous 11 games since the first meeting between the two schools this season, a 79-71 Tennessee win Jan. 13. This week also marked the first time this season the Vols haven't been ranked by The Associated Press.

Seniors Antonio Grant and David Ross, playing their final regular season home game, scored nine and three points, respectively. It was Grant's 3-pointer, followed by a Bradley layup, which sparked the 17-0 Gamecock scoring run.

"We've been doing it (coming back from tough losses) all year; all you can do is pick up the pieces and go at it again," Ross said. "You can bet we are going to do the same thing down in Starkville."

One of the main reasons for the Gamecocks' demise was the inability to shoot free throws. USC shot 18-34 from the line and missed some key free throws in the final minutes, fueling the Tennessee comeback.

"We lose the game at the free

TENNESSEE	68
USC	67

throw line quite honestly, and that makes it tough," Fogler said. "That (free throw shooting) is a part of the game."

Carolina's next and final game of the regular season is Saturday in Starkville, Miss., against the Mississippi State Bulldogs (15-10, 6-8).

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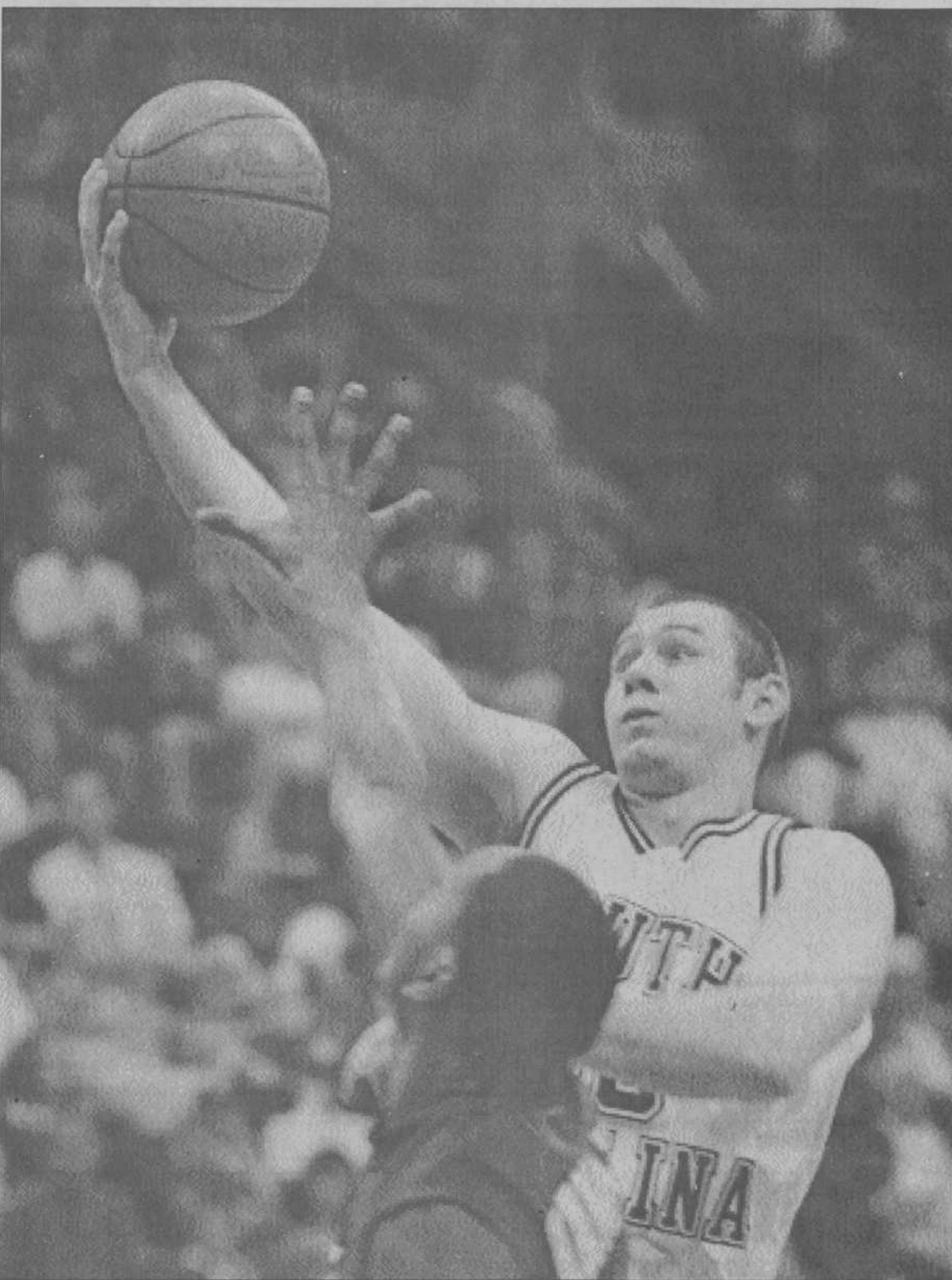
TENNESSEE 68
(20-9, 7-8 SEC)
FG FT R A TO PF TP
Yarbrough 6-13 1-1 7 2 3 3 13
Slay 1-7 1-1 2 0 3 4 3
Victor 4-10 0-4 10 1 1 5 8
Harris 1-6 1-2 2 4 4 2 4
Higgins 4-4 0-0 10 2 3 2 12
Grindstaff 2-3 0-0 1 1 0 1 6
Walker 3-4 0-0 1 1 4 1 7
Haislip 3-6 2-2 2 1 0 3 10
Woods 2-3 0-0 0 0 1 1 5
Hathaway 0-0 0-0 3 0 1 4 0
TOTAL 28-56 5-10 38 12 20 26 68

SOUTH CAROLINA 67
(14-12, 6-9)
FG FT R A TO PF TP
Ross 1-4 0-0 1 0 0 0 3
Grant 4-8 0-3 3 1 1 3 9
Kitchings 3-11 3-6 8 1 6 2 9
Lucas 0-2 0-0 0 0 0 0 0
Bradley 7-16 5-6 4 4 2 2 23
Petravicius 2-7 3-5 9 1 0 1 7
Boynton 1-2 1-4 0 7 2 1 4
Howell 3-8 6-10 12 1 0 4 12
TOTAL 21-58 18-34 41 15 12 13 67

Halftime score: Tennessee 28-27
3-point shooting: Tennessee 11-20 (Yarbrough 0-2, Slay 0-2, Harris 1-4, Higgins 4-4, Grindstaff 2-2, Walker 1-2, Haislip 2-3, Woods 1-1), South Carolina 7-17 (Ross 1-4, Grant 1-4, Lucas 0-1, Bradley 4-6, Boynton 1-2)
Steals: South Carolina 9-8
Blocks: Tennessee 7-2
Attendance: 8,579

GAMECOCK SPORTS SCHEDULE

- Softball vs. Virginia Tech, 3 p.m. Wednesday
- Women's basketball vs. Ole Miss at SEC Tournament, 9:30 p.m. Thursday
- Baseball at Clemson, Saturday, 2 p.m. Saturday
- Men's basketball at Mississippi State, 3 p.m. Saturday



Sean Rayford/The Gamecock

Senior David Ross played his final game at the Frank McGuire Arena Tuesday night. The Fort Lauderdale native had three points in 15 minutes of action.

For the Lady Gamecocks, it's do or die in the SEC tourney

SEC Women's Tournament Bracket



■ USC is looking for revenge against Ole Miss in Memphis

BY CHARLES TOMLINSON
THE GAMECOCK

The first round of the SEC Women's Basketball Tournament begins Thursday at the Pyramid in Memphis, Tenn. and the Lady Gamecocks, who are seeded sixth, will face 11th seed Ole Miss in the first round.

Although Ole Miss is ranked below Carolina in the tournament bracket, the Lady Rebels finished on top in the previous meeting between the two teams. Ole Miss snapped a four-game Carolina winning streak with a 69-53 victory in Oxford Feb. 4.

That night, Ole Miss shot 42.6 percent and held USC to 29.4 percent. USC head coach Susan Walvius attributed the low number to poor shot selection and the fact that the shots simply "would not fall." Tatyana Troina scored 19 points in the loss,

and Shannon Segres added 14. They were the only two Lady Gamecocks to score in double figures in the game.

However, Walvius doesn't think her team will have the same problem again. "I think we are shooting the ball better now," Walvius said. "That was an isolated incident (in the last game)."

On the other hand, the smaller Ole Miss squad spent the game driving inside, leaving its outside scorers open to sink 42.9 percent of their 3-pointers. Senior Becky Myatt was the major factor in the victory with 20 points and eight rebounds.

Walvius described the team's outlook toward the SEC Tournament as one of excitement.

"It's a whole new season, and anything can happen," she said.

Perhaps, she added, the upcoming games could serve as an opportunity for the Lady Gamecocks to get a NCAA Tournament bid.

At the moment, the Carolina strategy is to take things one game at a time.

"We want to put our best foot forward and represent South Carolina in the best way we can," Walvius said.

USC finished the regular season with an 11-16 overall record and a 6-8 SEC record. Its season ended with an 83-72 loss to LSU on Sunday.

Following a 82-64 defeat to Arkansas in their regular season finale on Saturday, the Ole Miss Lady Rebels come into the tournament with a 16-11 overall record and a 4-10 record in the conference.

The Lady Rebels are shooting 42.8 percent this season. Myatt leads the team with 11.7 points per game. Freshman forward Tywana Inmon is scoring 9.4 points a game and leading the team in rebounds with 5.4 a game. Junior Von Kirk has contributed 9.6 points per game to the Ole Miss cause.

Teresa Geter continues to lead the Gamecocks with 11.6 points per game and 6.5 rebounds per game. Shaunzinski Gortman is second in scoring with 11.3 points a game for the season, and Troina average 10.8 points for the Lady Gamecocks.

If the Lady Gamecocks can avenge their earlier loss to Ole Miss on Thursday, they will face a Round Two match-up on Friday with Georgia, who has a bye and is



(6) USC vs. (11) OLE MISS

■ LOCATION:

The Pyramid in Memphis, Tenn.

■ TIME: 9:30 p.m. Thursday

■ RECORDS: USC (11-16, 6-8 SEC), Ole Miss (16-11, 4-10)

■ RADIO: SportsRadio 1400 AM

the No. 3 seed in the tournament.

Tip-off for Thursday's game is 9:30 p.m. If USC wins, it will play the Lady Bulldogs 9:30 p.m. Friday.

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SPORTS COMMENTARY

NBA alienating average fan, losing support



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The NBA is having a rough year.

Attendance is down, ratings are really down and interest in the league is dwindling by the day. In essence, no one seems to care about the NBA anymore.

Why? One could say there's more talent in the league now than ever before.

The answer is in the marketing. Commissioner David Stern and company need to take a good look at who they're concentrating their efforts on and rethink their strategy.

With ticket prices approaching ridiculous heights, the average Joe can get to maybe one NBA game a season. The average ticket price in the NBA this season is \$51. Fifty-one bucks for a single game is insane, and that's not even including parking and popcorn. The only people who can afford to attend these games on a regular basis are rich businessmen and

entrepreneurs, not your everyday die-hard sports fans. If parents can't afford to take their children to games, how is the NBA going to attract the next generation of fans?

Charlotte, with an average of almost \$35 per ticket, is one of the cheapest teams in the league to see. But Hornets fans, beware: Charlotte's owners are asking for a new arena. The math is simple: new arena = ticket price increase. The Miami Heat used to be one of the league's most affordable teams to see. Then they got a new \$210 million stadium, and ticket prices soared 24.7 percent.

This trend seems to be backfiring on Stern and league owners. The weak fan support is becoming evident throughout the league. Just turn on the TV and watch an NBA telecast during the week. Empty seats are abundant, the "crowd" can barely be heard and the players seem to be playing in slow motion. They're not trying very hard because they know no one is watching.

So, if the NBA wants to change things around, it needs to lower ticket prices. It should give substantial discounts to children, families and students. If the owners want to fill up the seats, they need to show they care about us. Show an interest in the real sports fan, and they

will show an interest in you.

Although ticket prices are the primary reason for the NBA's troubles, they aren't the only reason.

When Michael Jordan was playing, the league had it easy. It had its universal superstar, its spokesman, its No. 1 icon. Now, as Jordan toils in the front office of the hapless Washington Wizards, the league has a huge void to fill, with very few candidates available to fill it. If you want people to watch your product, you've got to have someone with drawing power like Jordan. The league doesn't have that.

Sure, there's potential out there, but it seems as if no one in the league wants to step up and assume that role. Kobe Bryant, the league's leading scorer, was also the league's leading candidate to be the next Jordan after leading the Lakers to a championship last season. This year, all he's done is make headlines by arguing with Shaq about who the team's best player is.

Vince Carter was almost a Jordan replica, a UNC grad with the athleticism and charisma of the six-time world champ. Since winning the dunk title, though, he's been scowling in Toronto, seemingly unhappy with his

AROUND THE SEC

Arkansas' Johnson heating up, might be trouble for SEC foes

BY KYLE ALMOND
THE GAMECOCK

A game-winning 3-pointer against South Carolina last week might be all

Arkansas' Joe Johnson needs to get back on track.

Johnson, who was picked as the SEC's Player of the Year in the preseason, has struggled this season to live up to his billing. He's had trouble shooting (3-for-17 vs. Auburn)



JOHNSON

and holding on to the ball (six turnovers vs. LSU). As a result, his confidence has suffered. Hogs head coach Nolan Richardson didn't even start the 6-foot-8 sophomore against USC last Tuesday.

But making a big shot like the one he made against the Gamecocks could do wonders for anyone's self-confidence.

"It was a big shot, and I just stepped up to the table and made it," Johnson said. "I can't say whether it's going to help my game. I don't know."

"[This season has] been tough," he said, "but that's just part of life. And you've got to deal with it. I'm just going to come out and keep playing my game. If it's on,