



## GAMECOCK SPORTS SCHEDULE

- Men's tennis vs. Clemson, 2 p.m. Wednesday
- Baseball vs. Furman, 7 p.m. Wednesday
- Men's basketball vs. Mississippi State at SEC Tournament in Nashville, Tenn., 3:15 p.m. Thursday

# USC fighting injuries, Bulldogs

## ■ 'Banged-up' Gamecocks preparing to face Miss. State in first round of SEC Tournament

BY KYLE ALMOND  
THE GAMECOCK

Less than a week after meeting in the final game of the regular season, the USC Gamecocks and the Mississippi State Bulldogs will go at it again Thursday in the opening round of the SEC Tournament in Nashville, Tenn.

The Bulldogs (16-11, 7-9 SEC) held off the Gamecocks (14-13, 6-10) on Saturday 77-73 in Starkville, Miss., and earned the No. 4 seed in the West division. For the Gamecocks, the East's No. 5 seed, it was the 11th loss this season by eight points or fewer.

"Our team continues to have injury problems," USC head coach Eddie Fogler said Monday. "Aaron Lucas, who did not play Saturday, will not practice this week. Hopefully, he can play on Thursday. Tony Kitchings has a strained arch and will not practice today. Of course, we have not had (Chuck) Eidson or Travis Kraft for basically the whole SEC season. So we're still banged up and look forward to trying to beat Mississippi State after a close loss Saturday."

Without Lucas, who injured his foot at Georgia on Feb. 24, the Gamecocks are a team without depth, especially at point guard. Before Lucas' injury, Fogler said he thought his team was a "ball-handler shy." With Lucas on the bench, his team becomes two ball-handlers shy, and freshman Michael Boynton is left to play a significant amount of minutes.

"No question, without Lucas, it hurts [USC]," Mississippi State head coach Rick Stansbury said. However, the Bulldogs' coach remains wary of Carolina.

"I know that takes away some depth as far as having backups, and no question, Lucas is an excellent player, but USC is an excellent basketball team, and we are still going to have to play our best to beat them," Stansbury said. "You skip their record when you look at them because they've lost some very difficult basketball games. They've got a quality basketball team, and we will have to play awfully well to win again."



(E5) USC vs. (W4) Miss. St.

- **LOCATION:** Gaylord Entertainment Center, Nashville, Tenn.
- **TIME:** 3:15 p.m. EST Thursday
- **TV:** Jefferson-Pilot Sports
- **RECORDS:** USC (14-13, 6-10 SEC), Miss. State (15-11, 7-9)

With their win over USC on Saturday, the Bulldogs have now won four of the past five games. Stansbury thinks his team can make the NCAA Tournament and get an at-large bid with two wins in the SEC Tournament.

For USC to get into the "Big Dance," it will have to win the SEC tournament and earn the automatic bid. With a second-round game against Kentucky looming should they get past Mississippi State, the Gamecocks would have to pull off some upsets.

More likely for Carolina is a shot at the NIT Tournament. Since the NCAA Tournament was expanded to 64 teams in 1985, 20 of the 22 SEC teams that finished with losing conference records but at .500 or better overall have received an NIT bid.

The Gamecocks have had trouble winning close games this season and have lost five of their last six games by a total of 18 points.



Sean Rayford/The Gamecock

The Gamecocks might be without the services of starting point guard Aaron Lucas for the SEC Tournament. Lucas is nursing a foot injury.

BASKETBALL SEE PAGE 11

## SPORTS COMMENTARY

# America gives no respect to soccer

That's it. I'm fed up. I'm tired of soccer getting no respect in America. Just hours after the United States won a historic World Cup qualifier against Mexico this past Wednesday night, I was forced to sit through an entire half-hour of SportsCenter just to see a single highlight of the



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game. In the meantime, someone in the high offices of ESPN thought it would be more important for me to watch highlights of such meaningful games as the Coyotes-Islanders and the Nuggets-Clippers.

Though I don't like it very much, the press coverage, or lack thereof, sends a message loud and clear: no one here gives a damn about soccer.

What a shame. Everyone's missing out on one of the greatest sports in the world.

Many Americans have this stereotype of soccer, that it's a bunch of little prissy girlie-men scampering around the field, kicking around a ball for an hour and a half with no real direction.

That's a bunch of crap. Soccer is one of the most intense sports out there, and its athletes are tough, physical and definitely better-conditioned than your average baseball player.

Contrary to popular belief, soccer is a contact sport. Guys get taken out left and right in battles for ball possession and field position. Players do get hurt. Anyone see Brian McBride's eye in the Mexico game? Mike Tyson couldn't have caused an eye to swell like that. Watch a game and see how many times players hit the deck. There are no girlie-men here.

And unlike football, players getting tackled in soccer don't get a break. In most cases, players don't even see a substitution and are forced to play the entire 90 minutes. Timeouts? Not in soccer. Players have to get up, shake off the tackle and continue to play.

Soccer players have just as much skill as players from other sports. Rickey Henderson is fast, but Brazil's Roberto Carlos is just as fast, and he has to outrun people with a ball at his feet. Brett Favre's got tremendous field vision, but so does Portugal's Luis Figo, and he doesn't have an offensive line protecting him. Chris Pronger is a tenacious defender, but so is Holland's Edgar Davids, and he doesn't have a stick to aid his cause. Think Jason Kidd's passes are accurate? England midfielder David Beckham's crosses are just as accurate, and they make 11 players look foolish, not just five. Soccer's best stacks up with anyone else's.

Even off the field, soccer holds more than its own in comparison with other sports.

Soccer fans around the world are truly in love with their teams. They live and die with their team — literally and figuratively. Riots erupt over games. Fans from opposing teams clash, sometimes violently. During last season's UEFA Cup, a pair of supporters from Leeds United were stabbed in Turkey by some fans of Galatasaray.

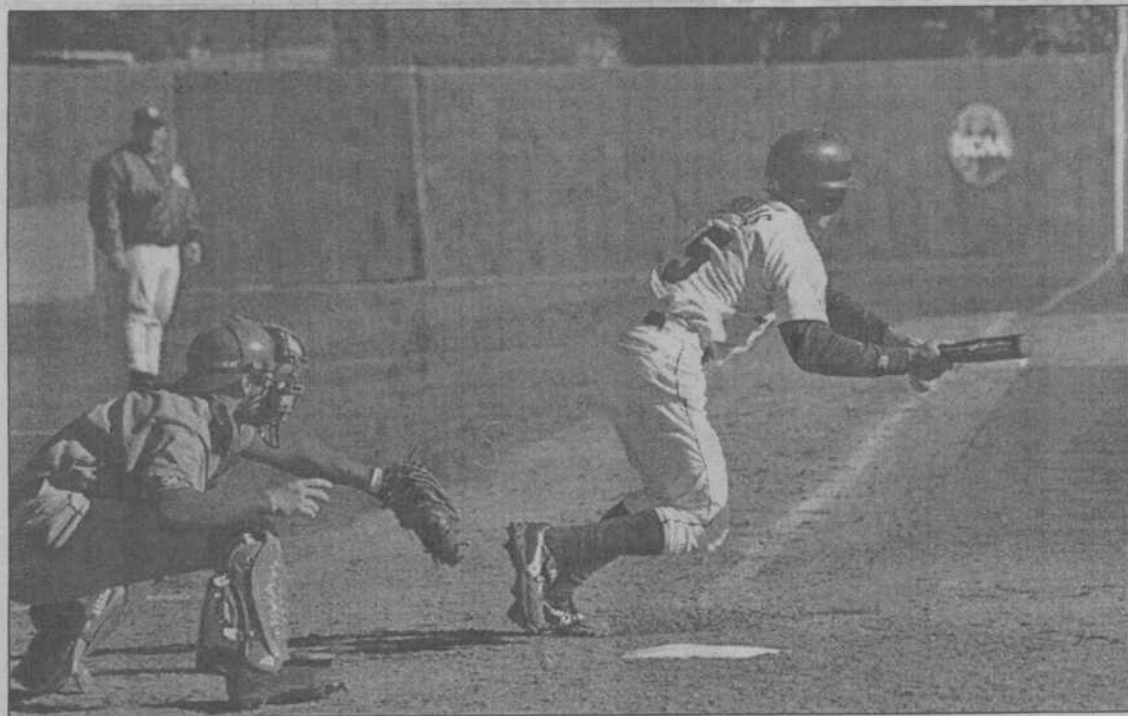
So next time you call yourself a loyal fan, ask yourself if you'd be willing to take a knife for your team. Would you die for your team?

Despite all this, most American sports fans don't seem to pay much attention to soccer. Whether it's because they don't understand the game or because they're skeptical of any sport where you can't use your hands, Americans fail to give soccer a second look. As a result, when the World Cup comes around, the United States takes a beating. In the last World Cup, we finished an embarrassing last out of 32 teams.

I thought all Americans wanted to be No. 1. In the age of Dream Teams, I

SOCCER SEE PAGE 11

## USC Baseball: Getting Back to Basics



Travis Lynn/The Gamecock

Steve Thomas and No. 6 USC look to get back on the winning track against Furman Wednesday.

# Baseball team regroups after first loss of season

BY KEVIN TURNER  
THE GAMECOCK

Though the USC baseball team is coming off its first loss of the season against arch rival Clemson, it has learned to move on and take the season one game at a time.

"You can't dwell on what happened last week against Clemson," junior outfielder Marcus McBeth said. "You just have to focus on the game at hand, and that's against Furman." Tonight, the Furman Paladins (11-6) travel to Sarge Frye Field to take on the sixth-ranked Gamecocks (13-1).

The scheduled starter for USC will be freshman left-hander David Marchbanks, who has already recorded a win earlier this season and is 1-0 on the year. In 8 1/3 innings against George Mason, Marchbanks gave up only four hits and one earned run while striking out four. He seems content

to take a more cautious approach to the game and allow his teammates to do their part to help.

"I'm just going to throw strikes and keep my pitches low so they hit it on the ground and just let the defense do the work," Marchbanks said.

Looking to silence the Gamecock bats will be right-hander John Stallsmith (2-0). In 15 innings of work, the sophomore has been lit up for 10 runs but has compiled 12 strikeouts. Despite an ERA of 6.00, head coach Ray Tanner and company aren't going to take Stallsmith and the rest of the Paladins lightly.

"Stallsmith has been very productive early in the season," Tanner said. "I think he's been one of the hottest pitchers for his team so far. It's also an in-state rivalry, and I know that they would like nothing more than to knock us out of the top ten.

"Our work is going to be cut out for us. We need to play well and we



FURMAN AT USC

- **LOCATION:** Sarge Frye Field, Columbia, S.C.
- **TIME:** 7 p.m. Wednesday
- **RADIO:** WVOC 540 AM
- **RECORDS:** Furman (11-6), USC (13-1)

need to come up with some big hits."

Though the Gamecocks had won 12 games in a row before splitting a weekend series with Clemson, Tanner

BASEBALL SEE PAGE 11

## AROUND THE SEC

# Kentucky faces harsh penalties from NCAA

## ■ Investigation finds more than three dozen recruiting violations

BY KYLE ALMOND  
THE GAMECOCK

An internal investigation has found that Kentucky's football program violated more than three dozen NCAA rules dating back to February 1999.

School officials submitted a 35-page report to the NCAA on Thursday outlining the rules violations, and the NCAA's Committee on Infractions now has the final say on any penalties and sanctions.

The investigation didn't find that former head coach Hal Mumme had any knowledge of the violations, though the report cited Mumme for "failure to exercise appropriate control of the football program."

Most of the scandal involves former UK assistant coach Claude Bassett, who was also the team's recruiting coordinator. Bassett was forced to resign in November when it was discovered that he had inappropriately cashed a check from a booster that was meant for Mumme's football camp.

After resigning, Bassett admitted in a television interview that he sent \$1,400 in money orders to a Memphis, Tenn., high school coach. It was later found that the money was a gift to influence the coach to send players to Kentucky.

The investigation also discovered that Bassett wrote a paper for a current Wildcat player, cashed another booster's check for himself and inappropriately paid for lodging and meals for several prospective recruits, their families and coaches.

"We found that a majority of the allegations in this report are the result of one person's misdeeds," assistant athletics director for compliance Sandy Bell said. "This is not a person who did not know the rules. This is a person who knew the rules probably better than any person I've ever worked with."



The school has imposed penalties on itself already, including a reduction in the number of initial scholarships it offers and a reduction in the number of permissible football coaches they can recruit off-campus in a given week. However, the NCAA will have the final word.

Elsewhere around the SEC: **Georgia:** It's been a great week for Kelly Miller.

The Lady Bulldogs' senior guard hit the game-winning basket in the SEC Championship game Sunday, and this past Wednesday, she was named SEC Player of the Year for the second season in a row.

The senior guard from Rochester, Minn., doesn't even lead her own team in scoring. That would be her twin sister, Coco. But according to Georgia head coach Andy Landers, it's the intangibles and a well-rounded game that make Kelly Miller such a force.

"She may be the best listener that I have ever coached," Landers said. "You go in at halftime and say that we have to rebound, and she will come out in the second half and get five or six rebounds. You go in and say you have to go out and disrupt to knock down some balls, and she is going to go out and deflect and steal the basketball."

"People don't know how much slippage there is from a timeout. Fifty percent of the time you get up from doing something very simple in the timeout, the kids walk on the floor and don't remember it. She does. All of those things, and her desire to want to do the best she can do and to please, has made her the player that she is."

Kelly and Coco Miller were named to the All-SEC first team along with LSU's Marie Ferdinand, Florida's Brandi McCain, Mississippi State's LaToya Thomas, Vanderbilt's Zuzana Klimesova and Chatelle Anderson, and three Tennessee players — Kara Lawson, Gwen Jackson and Michelle Snow. USC's Teresa Geter and Shaun

SEC SEE PAGE 11