

THE GAMECOCK

Fire destroys Rockaway club



PHOTO BY AARON HARK

Graham Mitchell, a bartender at Rockaway Athletic Club, finds minibottles among the rubble.

Construction materials made structure highly flammable

BY ADAM BEAM
THE GAMECOCK

A fire that is thought to have started around a heating and air conditioning unit in the attic destroyed Rockaway Athletic Club early Tuesday. The restaurant and bar on Rosewood Drive had been a fixture of Columbia night life since 1982.

The fire was reported at 4:35 a.m., when a Rockaway employee noticed smoke coming from the vents and called 911. The first units to respond found heavy

smoke coming from the roof.

The rescue crew pointed a thermal imaging camera toward the ceiling and "saw nothing but fire," said Battalion Chief Frank Cruz of the Columbia Fire Department.

Additional units were called for as the fire was upgraded to two-alarm and then three-alarm status. Each alarm brings two fire engines, a ladder truck, a rescue company and a battalion chief.

"Three alarms can devastate the city if you think about it," Cruz said. "In order to back up the stations, we had companies out of North Main and I-20 backing up headquarters. We were being exhausted pretty quick."

About 40 firefighters tried to extinguish the fire in the early morning hours. They cut holes in

the vents and realized the fire had spread throughout the roof. By 5:30 a.m., they had called for a third alarm.

At 6:56 a.m., the fire was brought under control, but not before it had destroyed Rockaway, a nearby thrift shop and two vacant buildings. Damage was estimated at \$1.5 million.

"We know that the building itself was worth a million dollars," Cruz said. "So you start looking at contents, and you could easily get up to about a million and a half."

The businesses to the left of Rockaway, including the Gamecock Country Gift Shoppe, received minimal smoke and water damage but "were pretty much intact."

♦ ROCKAWAY, SEE PAGE 3

WEST QUAD DEBATE

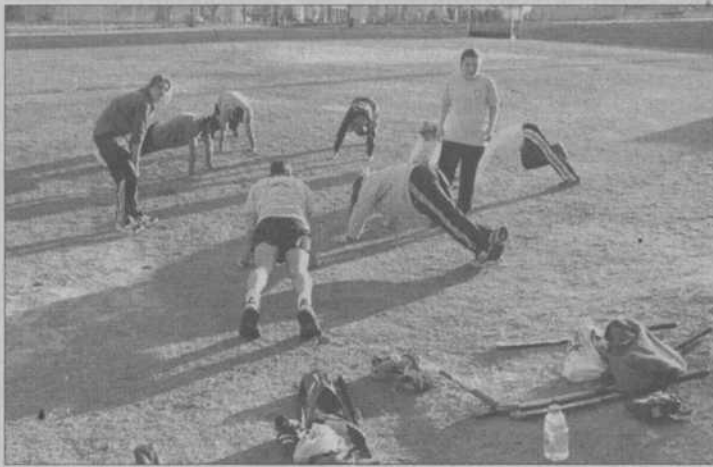


PHOTO BY ROBERT GRUEN

Members of the USC Field Hockey Club warm up on Tuesday. The Field Hockey Club and other groups use practice Field F.

Dorm might replace field

Practice space for band, sports clubs has uncertain future

BY ADAM BEAM
THE GAMECOCK

Marching band and sports clubs members are unsure where they will practice next year because a \$29 million residence hall is projected to turn their practice field into a front lawn.

West Quad, an environmentally friendly residence hall, is to be constructed on the block framed by Sumter, Blossom and Main streets, USC Housing Director Gene Luna said Tuesday.

The block is just across the street from the Blatt P.E. Center and holds the USC Police Station, two parking lots and Field F,

which is used by the USC marching band and the lacrosse, rugby and field hockey club teams.

"It looks like that is the site it will be located on," Luna said. "Most of Field F will be restored back to green space."

Along with this plan, Luna said the administration is looking into building another parking garage near "that area or somewhere else on campus." No plans have been finalized.

Plans for West Quad were announced last August in response to a growing number of students living on campus.

"This is a very important need to bring another dorm on line, so it is moving ahead," USC spokesman Russ McKinney said.

The residence hall will be constructed in accordance with the Sustainable University Initiative, a \$5 million grant to promote more

♦ FIELD F, SEE PAGE 2

Group to address minority health

BY CRISTY INFINGER
THE GAMECOCK

Students came together Monday night and formed a new group to address health issues for minority students.

The Multicultural Health Advisory Council is part of the Multicultural Health Initiative, sponsored by the Health and Wellness Department of Student Services.

The council was formed to deal with health issues most relevant to a multicultural community, with a focus on education and prevention.

Some of those issues include HIV and AIDS; testicular, breast and prostate cancer; cardiovascular disease; obesity; nutrition; stress management; and sexual assault and relationship violence.

Marcus Gardner, a program director for Health and Wellness Programs, said he hopes the Advisory Council will grow every semester.

Facts about minority health

- ♦ In 2001, S.C. was No. 6 in the U.S. for AIDS cases, where 3 of 4 diagnosed cases were in blacks.
- ♦ Blacks make up 30 percent of the state population but 80 percent of new HIV cases.
- ♦ In 2001, Columbia was No. 4 in cities of the nation for AIDS cases.
- ♦ In S.C., blacks and Hispanics are three times more likely to die from diabetes than whites.

"I hope this group becomes a permanent part of the university and that we eventually work in collaboration with other entities

♦ HEALTH, SEE PAGE 2

NCAA rules swimmer ineligible

BY CHRIS FOY
THE GAMECOCK

USC's most accomplished swimmer has been ruled ineligible to compete this season by the NCAA.

Hungary native Zsolt Gaspar will now have to forfeit three SEC titles because of his participation in an organized sports competition in 1998. Gaspar, a two-time All-American, has been one of the strongest forces on the Gamecock swim team. In 2000, he was named the SEC Swimmer of the Year.



Gaspar

According to the NCAA, if a student over 21 competes in an organized sports competition prior to enrolling in college, each 12-month period after the student's 21st birthday counts as one year of eligibility.

Gaspar participated in the 1998 National Championships in Hungary. He enrolled at USC in the fall of 1998, so his eligibility expired at the end of last season.

Gaspar will now have to forfeit all titles he won this season with the Gamecocks. He'll have to give up the three conference titles he picked up last month, which include the 50-yard freestyle, the 100-yard freestyle, and the 100-yard butterfly. In addition, USC will have to give up all of the points Gaspar scored for them in the SEC Championships, which drops the Gamecocks' official fifth-place finish to eighth.

Before this season, Gaspar had earned two SEC titles. He won his first in the 1999-2000 season after swimming the 100 butterfly in 46.58 seconds. Last season, he picked up his second title in the 50 freestyle. Gaspar swam an impressive 19.53 in the event.

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecocksports@hotmail.com

SG attorney general upholds election

BY BRANDON LARRABEE
THE GAMECOCK

Student Government Attorney General Brian Hunter has denied David Bornemann's appeal of the Elections Commission decision to uphold the presidential election.

Bornemann said he would appeal.

Meanwhile, President-elect Ankit Patel appealed two of the three infractions given to him by the Elections Commission.

In a two-page ruling on the appeal, released Tuesday, Hunter denied each of Bornemann's reasons for contesting the decision.



Bornemann

Bornemann had argued that commission members were given insufficient warning to attend the hearing and that the commission should not have combined eight violations to

♦ APPEAL, SEE PAGE 2

U.S. says many Taliban, al-Qaida dead

BY KATHY GANNON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GARDEZ, AFGHANISTAN — Hundreds of Taliban and al-Qaida fighters were killed in fierce fighting Tuesday as U.S.-led coalition forces pressed their offensive in the rugged mountains of eastern Afghanistan, the American commander said.

U.S. forces in the region said as many as 800 opposition fighters had been seen moving toward the battle since the American-led operation was launched Saturday. "We caught several hundred of

them with RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades) and mortars heading toward the fight. We body slammed them today and killed hundreds of those guys," said Maj. Gen. Frank L. Hagenbeck, the commander of the operation near Gardez, 75 miles south of Kabul, the capital.

U.S.-led forces continued inching up the snow-covered mountains, meanwhile, trying to reach hideouts still believed to contain hundreds more al-Qaida and Taliban fighters. Some forces entered at least one cave complex, uncovering weapons caches.

Allied jets flew high over Paktia

province, dropping bombs as well as decoy flares to ward off heat-seeking missiles — defensive measures after two U.S. helicopters were hit Monday in incidents that killed seven U.S. soldiers dead.

Front-line commander Abdul Matin Hasankhiel said hundreds of Afghan and coalition forces have ringed the mountain range and trapped the al-Qaida and Taliban fighters higher up.

"They can't escape. They're surrounded. Slowly, slowly we are pushing in," he said.

Hundreds of al-Qaida and Taliban fighters are believed to be

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ABDUL MATIN HASANKHIEL
FRONT-LINE COMMANDER

holed up in the area, Brig. Gen. John Rosa told reporters at the Pentagon. Bombers and tactical aircraft have dropped more than 450 bombs on the area since the assault began Friday night, he said.

"We've been able to get into at least one of the cave complexes

thus far and we've discovered mortars, rocket-propelled grenade rounds, small arms. And in a different location we found more weapons and ammunition, as well as foreign driver's licenses and foreign passports," he said. He did not say whether there was resistance entering the cave complex.

Neither the former Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammed Omar nor al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden was believed to be in the area, but Afghans say hundreds of their supporters and their families are there.



TODAY'S WEATHER: Mostly sunny. High 66, Low 35.



TOMORROW'S WEATHER: Partly cloudy. High 70, Low 46.