



SPORTS

WOMEN'S SWIMMING vs. Miami (Fla.), 11 a.m. Saturday
MEN'S BASKETBALL vs. LSU, 7:30 p.m. Saturday
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL vs. Kentucky, 2 p.m. Sunday
MEN'S AND WOMEN'S TRACK at SEC Invitational, Gainesville, Fla. Sunday

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Women's Basketball

Carolina suffers 7th straight loss

BY WES WOLFE
 THE GAMECOCK

The USC women's basketball team (8-8, 0-4 SEC) continued on its slide last night with a loss at Florida, 61-56. The Gators improved to 13-5 overall and 3-2 in the SEC. Carolina only trailed by one point at halftime, but Florida managed to hit one more field goal and five more free throws than the Gamecocks in the second half to take the win.

"We had a couple of lulls offensively in the game," said USC head coach Susan Walvius. "One of the things we've gone to in practice is being aggressive yet patient. For the most part today, we did a good job of that. There were periods in this game when the score was close when I thought we got a little quick and tried to force some things that weren't there, but I'm pleased with the way we played offensively and I thought we did a good job, but Florida had an an-

swer for everything we did today."

The star of the game was UF center Vanessa Hayden, who went 9-of-18 from the field and 10-of-14 from the free throw line, tallied up a remarkable 28 points against the Gamecocks.

"Vanessa's a great player. Not only was she able to catch and score, but she works very hard to get second shot opportunities," Walvius said. "She had a great game. We would have two or three people on her and she could turn around and score and shoot over people. That's tough to defend."

The senior from Orlando also notched her 12th double-double of the season and 45th of her career in last night's match-up. Hayden grabbed 17 rebounds in the game, collecting her 1,000th rebound of her career, which makes her the fifth player in Florida history to get 1,000 points and 1,000 rebounds.

Carolina was led in the game by guard Cristina Ciocan, who got 16

points, six rebounds and four assists. Forward Iva Sliskovic also had a relatively good game, scoring 14 points with five rebounds and three assists. Walvius said in the press conference following the home loss against Arkansas that she was putting more pressure on Ciocan to lead the team, which was evidenced in Ciocan's leading the team in points, rebounds and assists.

However, it wasn't enough for Carolina down the stretch against Florida, and USC wasn't able to hit a field goal for the final five minutes of the game.

The Gamecocks had a chance to tie the game at 59 in the final seconds, but guard Kelly Morrone wasn't able to hit the long-range shot.

"We were down three, so we needed to take a three," Walvius said. "We ran the play we wanted. We executed it well. Kelly Morrone is a money shooter for us and she's the person we went to. She took a

good shot, but it just didn't fall."

Hayden nabbed the rebound from the Morrone shot, which was her 1,000th rebound, hit a shot at the other end of the court to provide the final score.

"South Carolina is a much better team than their record in the conference demonstrates," Florida head coach Carolyn Peck said. "They've got weapons. They found different ways to score from shooting the three to the hi-low game. Defensively, they were able to mix up things on us to throw us off balance and make us read a little bit, which slowed down our transition game down at first. I think our team demonstrated a lot of maturity because they didn't lose their composure and that's extremely important in the SEC because team's are going to make runs."

USC returns home on Sunday to take on Kentucky.

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PHOTO BY MARK SCHILLING/THE GAMECOCK

Guard Sarah Burgess lunges for the ball in last week's loss against Tennessee. Burgess had four points against Florida.

USC, UK evenly matched in search for SEC win

BY BRIAN SAAL
 THE GAMECOCK

The USC women's basketball team (8-8, 0-4 SEC) is hoping to snap the current two-game home losing streak against tough in-conference rival Kentucky (8-9, 0-4). Last year's contest between the two teams finished in a 97-51 Carolina victory.

The Wildcats will bring high-scoring 6-foot 4-inch center SeSe Helm and 3-point threat guard Sara Potts to prevent the

Gamecocks from getting their first SEC victory of the season. Potts is currently second on Kentucky's all-time 3-point field-goals-made list. This year's Gamecock leading scorer, guard Cristina Ciocan, hopes to continue her success against the Wildcats as she scored 13 and 21 points in two games against UK last season. She is also leading the country in assists. Forward Iva Sliskovic has been the second-most consistent shooter in the country, making just over 70 percent of her shots. Look

for guard Lauren Simms to light it up as she is averaging 11.7 points in her last four games.

Both teams have struggled scoring points in four SEC games this year, averaging close to 60 points each. Kentucky's defense has been allowing 72.2 points per game while Carolina has given up 71.7 points. The Wildcats have shot very well from the free throw line, leading the SEC in free throw percentage. Both teams are struggling from the field, averaging a little over 35 percent of their shots.

The Gamecocks hope to get their shooting touch back that they had during their eight game winning streak, when they scored 84.6 points per game. The Gamecocks have lost just one game when scoring more than 58 points.

Both teams are looking to have their first tastes of victory in SEC play this year. The Wildcats are currently on a four game losing streak. The Gamecocks hope to continue the chemistry they had in the beginning of the season be-

fore losing seven straight games. Their last victory at home came on Dec. 18, when Carolina beat Louisiana-Lafayette 72-59. The Wildcats' last road victory came Dec. 22 against in-state rival Western Kentucky, when UK won 76-63.

The Gamecocks are hoping to bounce back from their previous home loss to Arkansas last Sunday at the Colonial Center and their latest loss on the road at Florida. Kentucky lost a nail-biter to No. 14 LSU in Lexington,

Ky. on Sunday, 70-69, and dropped Thursday's game at Mississippi State by 80-67. Potts had 16 points and 8 rebounds in the losing cause for the Wildcats on Sunday and 19 points against the Lady Bulldogs on Thursday night.

The USC women's basketball team is set for tipoff against Kentucky at 2 p.m. Sunday at the Colonial Center.

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecocksports@gwm.sc.edu

Gamecocks hope to dominate Tigers, remain in AP poll

BY JAY POU
 THE GAMECOCK

The USC men's basketball team will look to stay on top of the SEC's eastern division Saturday night when the Gamecocks host the LSU Tigers.

No. 25 USC (16-2, 3-1 SEC) will also be looking for its fourth straight conference win, a feat the Gamecocks have not accomplished since midway through the 1997-98 season. USC is continuing on its best start since the 1969-70 campaign when the Gamecocks posted a 14-0 conference record on the way to an ACC title.

The Gamecocks' No. 25 ranking in the Associated Press poll marks the first time USC has been ranked in the national top 25 since the final poll of the 1998 season when they finished the year ranked No. 15. USC head coach Dave Odom is excited about the Gamecocks' return to national prominence, but also wary of his team becoming overconfident.

"It's my job now to keep it up, to keep them grounded because it's not where you start, it's where you finish," Odom said. "When you look at the polls, it's great to be where you are at the present, but it doesn't say where you'll end up. Our competitors might look closer now; it puts a bulls-eye on your chest."

Despite his cautious comments, Odom, who posted his 50th

career victory as USC head coach last Saturday, is becoming engulfed in the growing excitement around the Gamecock basketball program.

"I am delighted and happy for the fans as well. They are starved for something good right now; they want this program to be all that it can be. It's good for the city and the whole state," Odom said. "The Colonial Center will be the place to be for those two hours [Saturday] night in this state. It's going to be great and I expect our crowd to be there with us."

As excited as USC fans are about the Gamecocks' great start, they will face a tough test from the LSU Tigers (12-3, 2-2), which several sportswriters picked as the preseason favorite to win the SEC West. The Tigers have hit a bit of a skid recently, coming off consecutive losses to Mississippi State and Ole Miss. The Rebels defeated LSU 53-49 Wednesday night in a defensive struggle in Oxford.

Leading the way for the Tigers is forward Jaime Lloreda, a senior who averaged over 12 points and 9 rebounds per game last season. Lloreda had a solid effort Wednesday against the Rebels, posting 14 points and grabbing 9 rebounds. LSU's other main contributor is freshman Brandon Bass, another forward who has played well in his inaugural season as a Tiger.



PHOTO BY MARK SCHILLING/THE GAMECOCK

Guard Josh Gonner gets in the face of a Tennessee player in the Gamecock's 85-64 thrashing of the Volunteers last Sunday.

LSU is led by head coach John Brady, who has posted a 3-3 record against the Gamecocks in his six years as LSU head coach. Brady will be looking to return the Tigers to their winning ways in the SEC, hoping to better last year's first-round NCAA tournament exit.

USC's defense, ranked in the national top 10 in several categories, will be the key to this game. The Gamecocks can pick up their fourth straight win if they keep LSU from scoring much, as the Tigers have lost each time this season that they failed to score 60 points. Look for

forwards Carlos Powell and Rolando Howell to match up with LSU's duo of Lloreda and Bass.

Tip-off is set for 7:30 p.m. Saturday at the Colonial Center.

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Alumnus pushes to retire McKie's number

BY JONATHAN HILLYARD
 THE GAMECOCK

A 1985 USC graduate has started an online petition to retire former Gamecock basketball star B.J. McKie's number.

Charles Beanes, who also received a law degree in 1988, started the petition on Monday. McKie played at USC from 1995-1999 and is one of Carolina's most beloved basketball sons.

"There just isn't any interest in doing this anymore and I think that's a bit disappointing," Beanes said. "I think if you are going to honor our basketball team then we should honor its all-time leading scorer."

In the light of the current USC men's basketball team, a little hard court history is being dug up around the Gamecock nation.

McKie's career is full of individual accolades. He finished as the Gamecocks' all-time leading scorer with 2,119 points, topping other USC stars like NBA Hall-of-Famer Alex English, who finished with 1,972 points, and Carolina Athletics Hall-of-Famer John Roche, who is third in scoring at 1,910. McKie

♦ MCKIE, SEE PAGE 9

Mathis, 2 other Americans sign with European soccer leagues

BY WES WOLFE
 THE GAMECOCK

Former USC soccer star Clint Mathis signed with German club Hannover 96 of the German Bundesliga on Wednesday, ending speculation about where he would end up playing. Mathis had tried out for several English teams and Hannover after leaving Major League Soccer team the New York/New Jersey MetroStars. Mathis' contract runs through

June 2006, with an option for another year. Mathis will be replacing the team's star striker, Jan Simak of the Czech Republic. Simak left Hannover several months ago, claiming that he was depressed, and has not returned.

Mathis will not be the only American player on the team, though. He will join Steven Cherundolo, a native of Illinois who attended the University of Portland. Cherundolo has been playing for Hannover since

November 2002.

"He's very excited about playing in the Bundesliga; it has always been his first choice," Craig Sharon, Mathis' agent, said in a telephone interview with the New York Times. "Hannover has been interested in the past and it was a good choice for Clint because Steve Cherundolo is there and the coach speaks English."

Hannover is currently 11th out of 18 teams in the Bundesliga and will return from its six-week win-

ter break on Jan. 30 with a match against Hamburger SV.

"With Clint, we've gotten a good forward," Hannover assistant manager Carsten Linke said to the Associated Press. "I think we're all satisfied with the way we've reinforced the team."

One more American was signed this week, striker Brian McBride. McBride left the Columbus Crew of the MLS to sign with Fulham of the English Premier League. According to an article in the Los

Angeles Times, McBride was going to sign with the Blackburn Rovers of the Premier League, but Fulham offered a larger salary.

"It's tough to leave but this is the right opportunity for us," McBride said in the St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times. "Now we'll take the challenge head-on."

The salary, \$1.5 million, is more than three times his pay while with Columbus. McBride played for St. Louis University before making the move to professional

soccer. He was also the first-ever player drafted by an MLS team and in his time with the Crew, McBride had 71 goals in 183 games. He also had some playing time while on loan to Premier League team Everton last year, where he scored 4 goals in eight matches.

"Brian is a great talent who [will get] his fair share of goals," Fulham coach Chris Coleman

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