

Briefly

Former USC player leads British team

Former USC All-American Megan Matthews led the Great Britain softball team to a win in the Gold Medal game of the International Softball Tournament over Greece earlier this week.

Matthews pitched a complete game in the effort, allowing just six hits while recording three strikeouts, leading her team to a 3-0 victory. She went 2-1 for the tournament.

Great Britain broke a scoreless tie in the sixth inning after loading the bases. Sarah Lockett would come through and drive in two runs, and Sophie Froud would score the third and final run later in the same inning.

Greece loaded the bases in the seventh inning, just to see Lindsay James come to the plate and ground out to Matthews to seal the victory for Great Britain.

USC equestrian set to compete in finals

Traveling to Rome, Ga., for the third time this season is the USC equestrian team, which will compete in the Zone 5 IHSA finals this weekend. The event will begin at 8 a.m. on Saturday and will wrap up on Sunday.

The team has had success in Georgia this season, having won the Western and Hunt Seat competitions October 2003. By finishing second in Rome in February, the Gamecocks qualified for the Zone Finals.

In the field for USC will be Tara Brothers who, in her last IHSA outing, was named High Point Rider in Hunt Seat and in the region, along with a number of other riders.

Following this weekend's competition, the Gamecocks will compete in the Varsity Equestrian Championships on April 23-24. USC will play host to the event with Georgia and Auburn.

Wesley Brown event to cheer on children

In what has become an annual event for the children at Palmetto Health Children's Hospital and the Children's Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders, athletes from USC's Team Gamecocks along with Cocky and the cheerleaders will visit the center for autograph sessions, room visits and photos April 9. Snacks will be provided by Chick-Fil-A.

Wesley Brown, an athlete who graduated from Spring Valley High in 1997 and USC in 2001, passed away in January 2003 after being diagnosed with leukemia just seven months before. Brown's most prized possessions included an autographed football by Lou Holtz and a baseball signed by the entire baseball team following their return from the College World Series.

In his memory, Brown's family decided to push the annual event in partnership with the Palmetto Health Children's Hospital. The hospital was the first of its kind in South Carolina and treats more than 82,000 children each year.

Clemson beats USC for first time in years

For the first time since 1995, the USC men's tennis team was defeated by Clemson last Wednesday, 6-1.

USC's Tom Eklund and Marcus Westman defeated John Boestch and Damiisa Robinson, but were the only doubles team to pull out a victory.

Eklund was also the only Gamecock to win his singles match, which was the No. 2 singles match. Falling in third set tiebreakers were USC's Ben Atkinson and Pedro Rodrigues.

Demus takes SEC honor title after win

After an outstanding indoor season, USC track athlete Lashinda Demus has been named SEC Female Track Athlete of the Week after posting the world's leading 400-meter hurdles time last weekend in Gainesville, Fla.

She ran a time of 55.50 to win the event at the Florida Relays, setting a meet record. The time was good enough to automatically qualify for the NCAA Championships.

This is the third time this year that a Carolina track star has earned SEC weekly honors. Others include male athletes Fred Townsend and Tony Allmond. Demus is the first female athlete to be honored in the outdoor 2004 season.

Van Haren

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"R-E-S-P-E-C-T" Holtz has a hair-line fracture in his left fibula.

Huh? How did that happen? What's a fibula, and how do I keep mine from getting a hairy line?

Lou's not supposed to be taking full-contact Gatorade breaks with Demetris Summers anymore. It seems a little ridiculous that Holtz was injured; after all, he came to USC after one too many Notre Dame leprechaun maulings.

Here we are, halfway between the hell of last season and the potential heaven of a fresh start, and Lou gets creamed by Cory Boyd. They're both fine, and they still bleed garnet; they just want some action any way they can get it.

Frankly, I don't blame them; redemption is a wonderful friend.

Well, "redemption" might be too strong a word. It sounds like something a melodramatic ESPN Classic anchor would say with soft trumpet music in the background. We just want a

winning season, and that's not too much to whine incoherently for. When Dondrial Pinkins is good, he's smoother than silk; when he's bad, he feels like a prison back massage with a Brillo pad. When Demetris Summers, Daccus Turman and Boyd are hot, they're flaming like Richard Simmons; when they're cold, I want to slap them all in a row, Three Stooges style.

Winning will have to wait until opening day at Williams-Brice, when drunken fans and slightly drunker student fans scream like the hillbillies they are in proud salute to a giant chicken.

As I look at the stadium from my dorm window at night, it honestly resembles a dead cockroach turned over on its back, legs in the air. I like to think it's just a trick of the light and not some bizarre omen.

When I don my marching band gear again and turn my bass amp up to 11, we'll all be a little older and a little fatter. Let's hope we gain more than a fibula fracture during spring cleaning, and let's be less awful for the injured Lou.

Web site

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or hurting USC's recruiting. I wrote it because it was a timely column."

McLendon said he's received a lot of feedback to the site.

"We've gotten tons of e-mail," McLendon said. "I think if people will stand firm and actually cancel their subscriptions and voice their opinion in large numbers, we will get a response."

McLendon said he has plans to make FireRonMorris.net bumper stickers, T-shirts and eventually plans to raise money to post billboards in direct competition to The State's Ron Morris billboards that have popped up around Columbia.

As for Morris, he is handling the situation about as well as can be expected and said he respects the opinions of his accusers.

"I can understand where fans

would have that sense in that they have an incredible passion for their team, maybe like no other in the country," Morris said. "What other large group of fans follow their team with such passion even through 100 years of mediocrity? So I can understand how they can feel that way. That doesn't mean it's true, but I can understand that."

As for the personal attacks on site, Morris doesn't seem offended.

"By being a columnist in a town like this, I guess you could say I'm somewhat of a public figure. I have to watch what I do," Morris said. "If that means being personally attacked, then that comes with the territory. Nobody likes that, but I don't know this man and he doesn't know me, so it doesn't bother me too much."

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

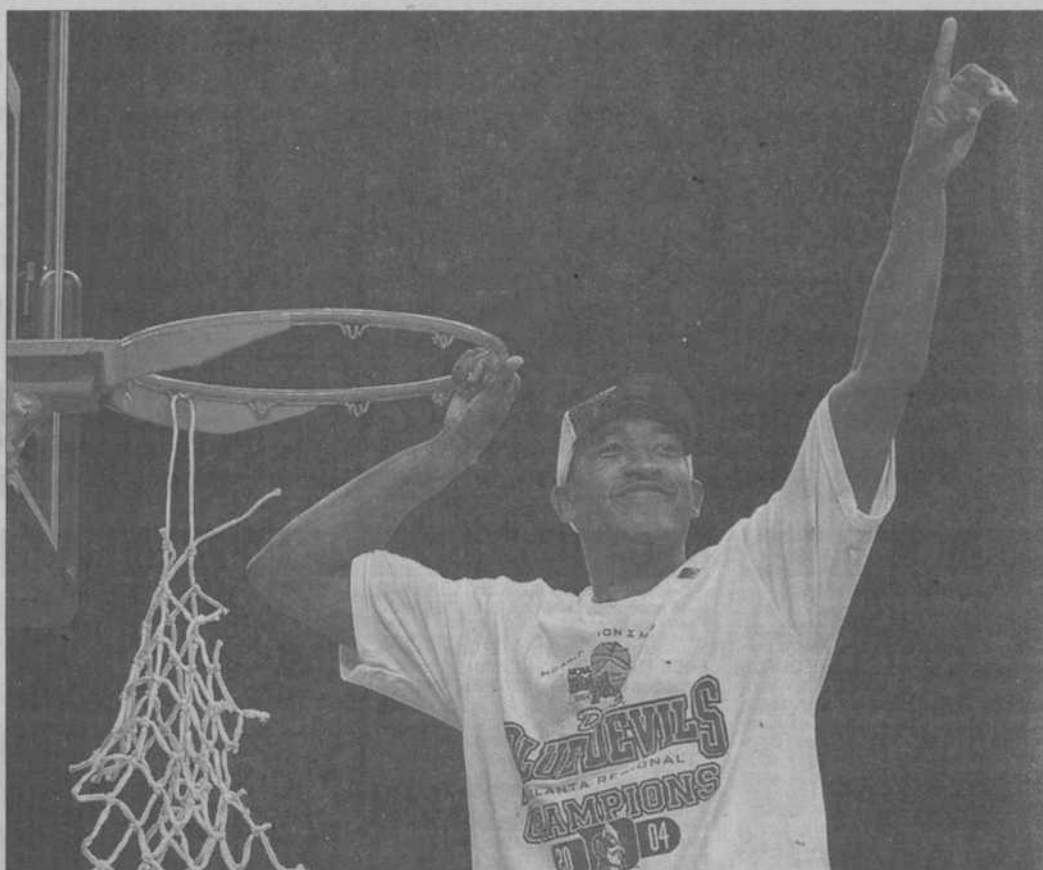


PHOTO COURTESY OF KRT CAMPUS

Duke's Chris Duhon helps cut down the net after the Blue Devils' victory over Xavier Sunday.

Duhon leads Duke's defensive efforts in NCAA Tournament

BY AARON BEARD
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN ANTONIO — Chris Duhon stalks his opponent, swiping at the ball when he sees a screen out of the corner of his eye.

His ribs are sore, bruised from a fall in a game two weeks ago. He could go around and avoid impact, but he's not going to let up. He fights over the screen — wincing with the glancing blow — and stays with the ballhandler.

All season, Duhon's dogged determination has been the motor that powers Duke's aggressive defense. Now, after straying briefly from that shut-you-down mind-set late in the season, the Blue Devils are back to playing the defense that coach Mike Krzyzewski loves heading into Saturday's national semifinal game against Connecticut.

"We've been a really good defensive team all year," Krzyzewski said. "We were playing great defense during (the winning streak). Then, I think we let up because we started to score more. But in the NCAA tournament we've played very well defensively."

The Blue Devils (31-5) have held opponents to 40 percent shooting and 65 points per game this season. Duke has also averaged a school-record 6.6 blocks and forced 17.2 turnovers per game.

During an 18-game winning

streak, Duke's defense overwhelmed opponents and carried the Blue Devils to a midseason No. 1 ranking. But the Blue Devils wavered, losing four of 10 games heading into the NCAA tournament.

They sure seem back to form. In tournament wins against Alabama State, Seton Hall, Illinois and Xavier, they allowed 62 points per game and 39 percent shooting.

Duke's staple all season has been pressure man-to-man defense. When it's working well, the Blue Devils get hands in passing lanes to force turnovers, fueling a potent transition game.

It all starts with Duhon, a freshman on Duke's 2001 NCAA championship team. The 6-1 senior typically chases the opponent's top perimeter player and hasn't let his sore ribs suffered in the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament slow him.

He never wants to let his opponent breathe, partly because the injury makes it hard for him to do the same thing.

"I'm just trying to help my team out as much as possible right now," said Duhon, who has worn a protective wrap under his jersey. "I take pride in my defense. I just want to go out and try to help my team win."

Duhon held the Illini's top scorer, Deron Williams, to seven points on 3-for-13 shooting in the third round, then alternated on

Lionel Chalmers and Romain Sato of Xavier. The duo had combined for 41 — Sato had 27 — in the third round against Texas, but had 27 points on 8-for-26 shooting against Duke in the Atlanta Regional final.

"Each of the kids he guarded went from hot to 'cold,'" Krzyzewski said.

On the inside, the rugged 6-9 Shelden Williams has blocked nine shots, tying UConn All-American Emeka Okafor for tops in the tournament. Duke also has 6-10 reserve Shavlik Randolph — who has blocked four shots in the last three games — and Luol Deng, a 6-8 freshman with the versatility to defend on the wing or inside.

"You'd have to prepare for every player they have," Huskies guard Ben Gordon said. "They have pressure defense. You can't prepare for just inside or outside."

The Blue Devils' defense has overcome a drop in offensive production. After averaging 93 points in the first two rounds, Duke averaged 69 points in its next two wins.

"I've been told that offense wins games and defense wins championships," junior guard Daniel Ewing said. "Even if the offense is not going for us, as long as we keep playing good defense ... we're going to score some buckets. Somehow, someway, we're going to get some points."

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