



NICK ESARES/THE GAMECOCK

Freshman midfielder Ramon Paracat, right, dribbles the ball against a Duke defender earlier this season. Paracat and USC will play their final home game of the season Sunday when they take on the Florida International Golden Panthers, a future Conference USA foe.

Men's soccer to play home finale

By MATTHEW NAGY
THE GAMECOCK

The USC men's soccer team will face No. 21 Florida International University in its final regular-season match Sunday at Eugene E. Stone III Stadium. The Gamecocks enter the contest at 11-6-1 and are likely to be selected for the NCAA Tournament.

The Golden Panthers (10-5-0, 4-0-0 ASC) are riding a three-game shutout streak heading into their weekend contests against Hartwick and USC. FIU has won four games in a row and seven of its last eight games. Led by senior Fernando Plentz and junior Carlton Williams, the Golden Panthers are looking for a strong finish in their final season in the Atlantic Soccer Conference. FIU, along with Kentucky and USC, will join Conference USA in the 2005 season.

Williams and Plentz have been solid for the Golden Panthers, each scoring six goals coming into this weekend's games. FIU will also look to junior Lucas Scudeler, who has three goals and a team-leading five assists. Sophomore David Hope will also be in the scoring mix at forward as he is third on the team with five goals this year.

FIU will face a USC defense that has been solid all year long. Led by sophomore Makan Hislop and juniors Greg Reece and Eric Szeszycki, the Gamecock defense has been superb for most of the season. Spectacular goalkeeping by sophomore Brad Guzan has allowed the Gamecocks to stay in every game. Guzan has had five shutouts on the season, and the defense has only allowed three goals or more to be scored twice this year.

Offensively, the Gamecocks will look to sophomores Ayo Akinsete and Mike Sambursky. The duo has

combined for seven goals and seven assists this season. Akinsete, who led the team in scoring a year ago, has continued to play well for Carolina and will look to grab another goal against FIU to tie him for the team lead with freshman Sebastian Lindholm. Lindholm, who has five goals this season, has played strong throughout his first college soccer campaign.

The Gamecocks, who were ranked as high as seventh in the nation midway through the season, have struggled to regain their early-season form. Carolina is only 3-5 since the team's landmark victory against Clemson on Oct. 10. USC's offense has been shut out in three of those games, but the team still managed to get a big shutout win against Duke during the stretch.

With a win, the Gamecocks can position themselves nicely for an NCAA Tournament berth, their fourth

in five years. The Gamecocks have beaten three top-20 opponents this season — Portland, Wake Forest and Duke. With a win against FIU, it would be tough for the selection committee to turn down the independent Gamecocks. Carolina would be making its eighth tournament appearance in 10 years, although the Gamecocks have not made it past the second round since reaching the tournament finals and losing to Virginia for the National Championship in 1993.

The Gamecocks have never lost a match against Florida International in their five all-time match-ups. Carolina has won four and tied one.

The game is set to begin at 1 p.m. at Stone Stadium. Admission is free for students and faculty members.

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

Washington, UNLV await basketball's young squad

By AARON KIDD
THE GAMECOCK

The Gamecocks open the 2004-05 regular season Sunday against Washington in the first round of the WBCA/BTI Classic at Bank of America Arena in Seattle.

Minnesota, a 2003-04 NCAA semifinalist, will join USC, Washington and UNLV in the two-day event. The Gamecocks will not be facing the Golden Gophers on the court, but will take on UNLV Monday at 8 p.m.

After an embarrassing record of 1-13 in the SEC and winning only 10 out of 28 games overall last year, the Gamecocks must feel relieved to have the slate wiped clean for a fresh start this season.

But they'll have a long way to go in their opener against the Washington Huskies, who dominated in their first exhibition game against Baden Sports, winning 86-49. Four Huskies scored in double digits, including rotatable junior Kayla Burt, a 5-foot-11-inch guard who scored 13 points in her first game since suffering from cardiac arrest late last year.

The Huskies proved to be even more effective in their second exhibition game last Monday versus Vanguard University, slaughtering the 2004 NAIA Tournament quarterfinalists, 83-34.

UNLV won't prove to be a cakewalk for the Gamecocks, either. Picked to finish first this year in the Mountain West Conference and boasting a 26-8 record last season, the Lady Rebels mopped the floor with the West Coast All-Stars during a Nov. 5 exhibition game. Even without golden senior forward Sherry McCracklin, who is on the bench for two months after suffering an ankle injury, UNLV won 93-70. Eighty of those points were scored in the final 30 minutes.

Plunging straight into the regular season against such tough opponents with no exhibition games on the schedule should be an eye-opening experience for a young USC team.

USC head coach Susan Walvius begins her seventh season in charge of the Gamecocks. She enjoyed top-20

national finishes at USC in 2001-02 and 2002-03, but injuries and rebuilding caused the team to plummet to the bottom of the SEC. The Gamecocks' performance against two top-notch teams like Washington and UNLV in the WBCA/BTI Classic should be indicative of what fans can expect in the months ahead.

Despite being picked to finish last in the SEC Media Poll and the absence of any seniors on the roster, talent and ability are not lacking on the roster.

Five-foot-10-inch Sarah Burgess, a guard from Brook Park, Ohio, and one of only two juniors on the team, racked up 17 points in last year's season opener against Clemson. The other junior, 6-foot-4-inch Olga Gritsaeva from St. Petersburg, Russia, scored 20 points and 14 rebounds in the same game and conjured up four double-doubles to cap off the year.

Iva Sliskovic, a 6-foot-5-inch sophomore from Zagreb, Croatia, led the team last year with 7.1 rebounds per game and 11.0 points per game overall. In the summer, Sliskovic played for Croatia in the FIBA European Championships alongside USC teammate Lea Fabbri, a 5-foot-7-inch sophomore guard from New Zagreb, Croatia. Sliskovic managed 18 points and eight rebounds against the tournament's defending champion, the Czech Republic, and Fabbri dished out an impressive 17 points against France.

New blood on the roster includes 6-foot-6-inch freshman center Ilona Burgrova from the Czech Republic. Burgrova played for the Basketball Travelers exhibition team and scored 14 points in a win over Mississippi while she was still a high school sophomore. She also led the Czech Republic team to a third-place finish at the FIBA European Championships this summer where she averaged 10.8 points and 7.8 rebounds per game.

The Gamecocks will look to use team chemistry, learning from past mistakes and new talent to boost to a more respectable ranking this season.

Tip-off is at 6 p.m. Eastern time.

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

WHITESIDE

Continued from page 8

same this week to gain an advantage in a hostile environment.

"When we seem to function the best is when we throw caution to the wind," Holtz said. "We throw caution to the wind and open the sucker up."

Holtz said that his strategy coming into the season was to rely on defense and a heavy dose of the running game. An injury to Demetris Summers and the emergence of multiple receivers forced Holtz to change his game plan.

"When we seem to function the best is when we throw caution to the wind."

LOU HOLTZ
USC HEAD COACH

"Going into this year, that wasn't the way we wanted to play (to throw the ball)," Holtz said. "But the development of the receivers has allowed us to change that as we've gone along."

Another factor that might increase the role of Whiteside and other receivers is quarterback Syvelle Newton, who will not be at full strength as he recovers from an ankle injury. Newton, normally dangerous as a runner, will likely stay in the pocket longer and check down his various receivers.

Quarterbacks coach Skip Holtz said Wednesday that Newton had been limping some in practice but should be close to 100 percent Saturday.

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GAMECOCK CHALLENGE

THE CHALLENGE: Every week, The Gamecock's readers and staff test their sports knowledge with game predictions.

	Jonathan Hillyard Sports editor (62-34)	Adam Beam Editor in chief (63-33)	David Stagg Design director (67-29)	Wes Wolfe Viewpoints editor (57-39)	Steven Van Haren Copy editor (69-27)	Albert Sadowski Reader of the week (60-36)
12 FSU at NC State	FSU	FSU	FSU	FSU	FSU	FSU
21 BC at 10 West Virginia	WVU	WVU	WVU	BC	WVU	WVU
19 Iowa at Minnesota	Iowa	UM	Iowa	Iowa	Iowa	UM
4 Wisconsin at Michigan State	MSU	Wisconsin	Wisconsin	Wisconsin	Wisconsin	Wisconsin
5 Georgia at 3 Auburn	Georgia	Auburn	Auburn	Georgia	Auburn	Auburn
17 Miami at 11 Virginia	Virginia	Virginia	Miami	Virginia	Miami	Virginia
25 Tex. Tech at 23 Tex. A&M	A&M	TTU	TTU	TTU	A&M	A&M
Alabama at 15 LSU	LSU	Bama	LSU	Bama	LSU	LSU
North Carolina at Wake Forest	UNC	Wake	Wake	Wake	Wake	Wake
USC at Florida	USC 28-24	USC 35-31	Florida 35-28	USC 9-6	USC 21-7	Florida 21-14

WANT TO BE READER OF THE WEEK? E-MAIL SELECTIONS FOR NEXT WEEK'S GAMES TO GAMECOCKSPORTS@GWM.SC.EDU. LAST WEEK'S RESULTS: Section editors Hillyard and Wolfe tied with 7-3 records. Van Haren extended a hair's breadth lead to two games.

BRIEFS

Coaches name Guzan as trophy semifinalist

The National Soccer Coaches Association of America named USC sophomore Brad Guzan as one of 15 semifinalists for the Missouri Athletic Club Hermann Trophy. The trophy is given to college soccer's national player of the year. Guzan, a Homer Glen, Ill., native, is the only goalkeeper and one of only two underclassmen named to the list.

"We're very pleased and proud for Brad to be nominated for this award and to be considered in such an elite group of the top talent in the country," USC head coach Mark Berson said. "He belongs in that class as a player and as a person. He is certainly an excellent representative of our soccer program both on and off the field."

Hamilton, Thompson lead golf at tournament

The USC men's golf team finished 13th overall at the Carpet Capital Collegiate Tournament in Dalton, Ga., on Sunday. The Gamecocks shot a season-low 288 and finished 43-up. Georgia won the tournament, finishing 15-up.

Seniors Alex Hamilton (77-72-75) and Jake Thompson (80-72-72) finished the weekend tied for 22nd. Robert Svensson (81-78-69) had his best round of the year, 69, and finished tied for 46th.

If you are interested in writing for Gamecock Sports please e-mail gamecocksports@gwm.sc.edu

8TH ANNUAL MLK DAY OF SERVICE



Come join the *Office of Community Service Programs* in celebrating the life of the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by participating in the largest community service event at USC!

What? 8th Annual MLK Day of Service
When? Monday, January 17, 2005
Time? 9:00 am to 4:00 pm meet in the RHUU
How? Registration is November 1st-30th in the Office of Community Service Programs located in Russell House Suite 227V, or online at www.sa.sc.edu/ocsp

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