

# USC drops heartbreaker at home against Auburn

By ALEX RILEY  
STAFF WRITER

The USC women's basketball squad's struggle with futility continued Sunday afternoon, as the Gamecocks fell to the Auburn Tigers at the Colonial Center, 56-47.

Carolina was already short-handed before the opening tip, as starting guard Lea Fabbri had traveled home to Croatia to see her ill father. With the absence of Fabbri, guards Angela Hunter, Lauren Simms and Stacy Booker all looked to be the leader of the team.

Things did not start well for the Gamecocks, who managed to have only one first-half lead on a Simms runner off the glass in the lane at 19-18. Only four Gamecocks of the nine who played scored in the first half.

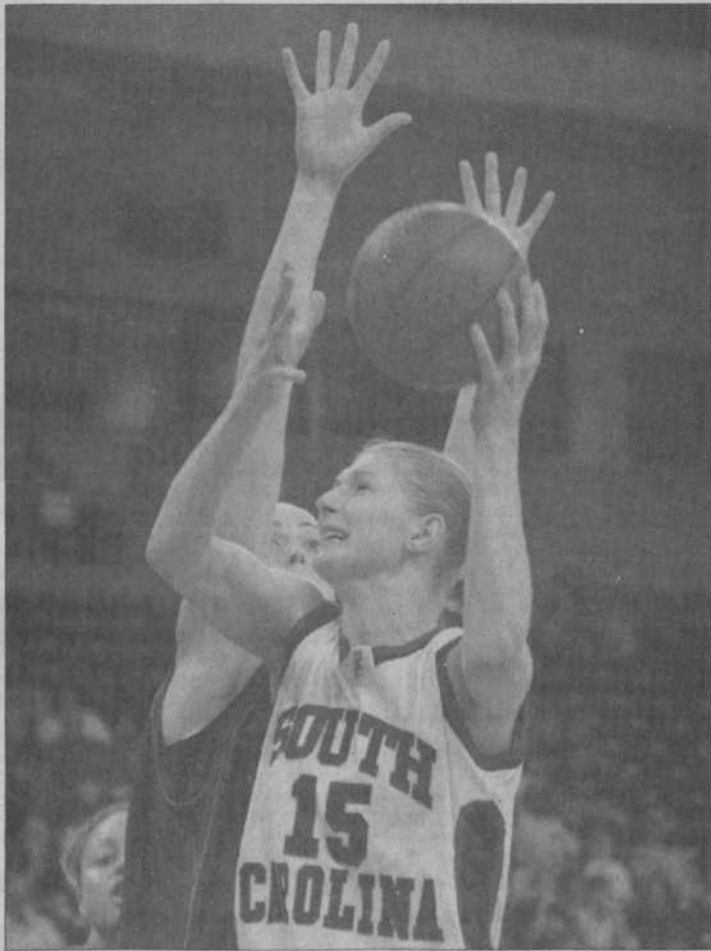
The second half started slow for the Gamecocks, as they found themselves down by seven at 30-23 early in the half. That's when the offense went into overdrive, starting with an Ilona Burgrova fastbreak layup to begin an 8-0 run that would give USC a 31-30 lead with 13:29 left in the second half.

An Auburn layup stopped the run and gave the Tigers a brief 32-31 lead. The Gamecocks ran again, starting with a Booker breakaway layup off a Hunter assist. A steal and run out by Melanie Johnson gave USC its largest lead at three, but the run was just beginning. Carolina went up by eight with less than seven minutes left on another Johnson fast break.

That lead quickly dwindled, as Auburn canned a 3-pointer, then hit a free throw and layup to pull within two at 41-39. Carolina's lead grew back to five as Iva Sliskovic hit a free throw and layup to give the Gamecocks their final lead of more than two at 44-39.

Another Tiger 3-pointer started the run that would seal the deal for Auburn, as the Gamecocks went cold from the field, managing to tie the game only twice starting at the 3:17 mark.

Auburn closed the game out at the free-throw line, hitting its final six free



NICK ESARES/THE GAMECOCK

Freshman center Ilona Burgrova is defended by an Auburn player in the Gamecocks' most recent loss. USC is winless in SEC play.

throws, to take a lead that was 50-47 with 26 seconds left and push it to the final score of 56-47.

No Carolina players hit double digits, while four hit the nine-point mark, including Hunter who hit three 3-pointers in the first half but failed to score the rest of the game. The Gamecocks also failed to use a bit of a height advantage, as they were handled on the boards, 47-31.

"For that not to be there today was disappointing," USC coach Susan Walvius said of her team's lack of inside presence.

Walvius seemed to be speechless as to

why her team continues to fail to close a game.

"Our team's got to learn how to win a game," Walvius said. "That's what it comes down to. We saw a lot of people attempt to be a hero today. You saw it towards the end of the game. Young players tend to drop their heads."

The schedule does not get easier for USC, who plays host to No. 1 LSU on Sunday.

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# Gamecocks finish second in season-opening tourney

By MICHAEL FINNEGAN  
THE GAMECOCK

When people think of a nationally ranked team playing on a diamond, they think USC baseball, right?

This weekend marked the beginning of the season for the other ranked team playing on a diamond, the No. 24 Carolina softball team. USC played host to the Gamecock Invitational and finished second to Coastal Carolina in a rematch of an earlier game.

The Gamecocks opened their season Saturday against Stephen F. Austin in their first game with an impressive shutout, 6-0. USC earned its ninth consecutive home opener shutout. Junior Melanie Henkes led USC on the mound, throwing a two-hit shutout. It was her seventh career shutout but her first since her freshmen year.

The Gamecocks were led by a veteran and a freshman at the plate. Senior Meghan Cornett went 4-for-4 with a double and two runs. Freshman Lisa Longo went 1-for-3 with a double and drove in a game-high three RBIs.

In the second game of the day, USC continued its strong hitting and solid pitching to coast by Coastal Carolina, 8-2. USC struck first again in the bottom of the first to give freshman pitcher Jessica Barnes a 3-0 cushion. Carolina's only potential stumbling block came in the bottom of the fifth with Carolina up 4-1. With the potential tying run at the plate, senior Aleca Johnson relieved Barnes. Johnson got Coastal's Meagen Johnson to fly out into a double play. Coastal managed to get only one run across the plate, and the Chanticleers would get no more the rest of the game. Johnson finished out the rest of the game to pick up her first save of the year.

USC played UNC-Greensboro on Sunday in its last game of round-robin play. Again, Carolina was lead by dominant pitching. Henkes threw her second shutout in as many games, as USC cruised to an 8-0 victory. At the plate, USC was led by sophomore McKenna Hughes, who had a base-clearing double in top of the sixth to seal the victory. She finished the game with 4

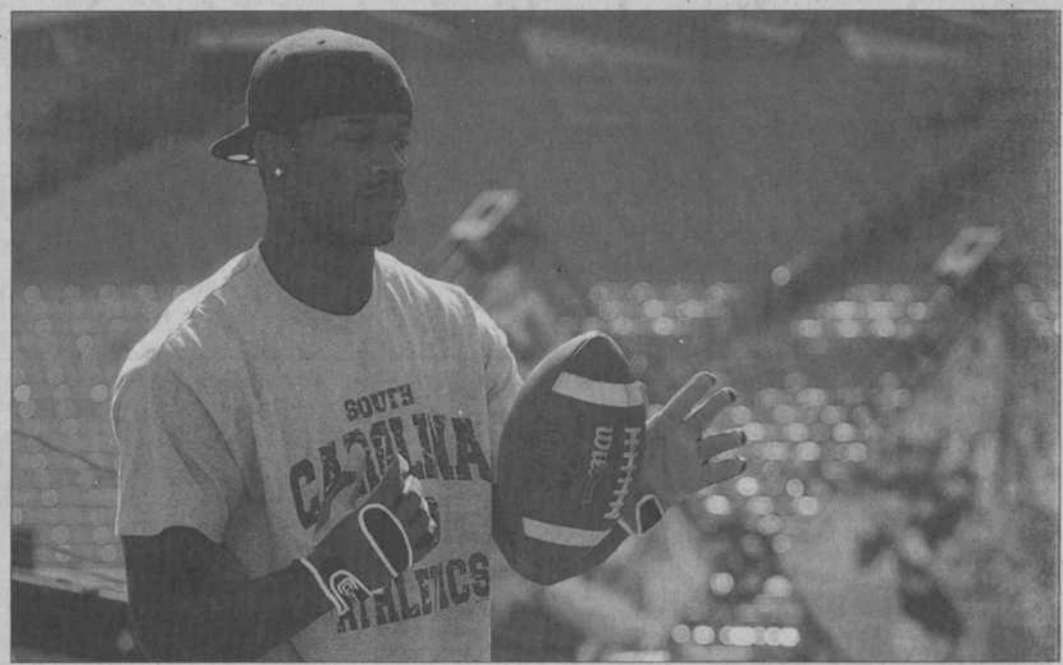
RBIs. By winning this game, USC advanced to the championship game of the Gamecock Invitational against Coastal Carolina.

In the championship game, Coastal jumped out early on the Gamecocks and never relinquished the lead. Coastal scored three runs in the top of the second inning against freshman Kate Pouliot, who was making her first collegiate start. Pouliot was replaced by Barnes in the top of the second. Barnes walked her first batter, but then got the next two batters out.

Junior pitcher Brittany Nelson, who only gave up three hits in five innings, led Coastal. Carolina's bright spot at the plate came from freshman, Jessica Josker, who went 2-for-3.

Carolina's next game is a doubleheader against Charlotte on Tuesday at Beckham Field. The first game is at 3 p.m. with the second one to follow at 5 p.m. Carolina travels to Arizona this weekend for the ASU Tournament.

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J. PAT CARTER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Troy Williamson plays with a football at the College Football All-Star Challenge in Miami last Monday. He was invited to the event at the last minute after Maurice Claret withdrew.

## Williamson shines in all-star challenge

By ALEX RILEY  
STAFF WRITER

Former Gamecock standout Troy Williamson out-performed some of the nation's most highly touted wide receivers in the 2005 NFL Draft at the Capital One College Football All-Star Challenge in Miami, Fla.

Williamson participated in two events in the challenge, the first being the Marines' Speed Competition. The competition features an obstacle course filled with tackling dummies, rope courses and a leaping pad at the end. Williamson beat out Oklahoma's Michael Clayton, Auburn's Carnell "Cadillac" Williams and Michigan's Brayton Edwards to take the event with 21.93 seconds.

Williamson's other competition was another obstacle course, this time featuring not only a speed-based

challenge, but five passes coming from New Orleans Saints quarterback Aaron Brooks. Williamson caught all five passes and completed the course in the quickest time to win again.

Williamson is expected to be one of the biggest pickups for any team in this year's draft with his size and speed. The junior declared early for the NFL after leading in the SEC in receiving yards this season.

## Track teams finish second in New York

The USC men's and women's track teams finished runner-up in the New Balance Collegiate Invitational in New York City on Friday and Saturday.

LSU won the women's competition, finishing just a point ahead of the Gamecocks. Arkansas finished first on the men's side. LSU finished second and Georgia third.

Freshman Natasha Hastings led the women's team. Hastings, a New York

native, had personal bests in the 400-meter both days, concluding with 52.64 seconds Saturday to finish second. She also ran the third leg of the 4-by-400-meter relay that finished second to LSU.

Erica Whipple took first place in the 200-meter with 23.59. Precious Akins landed in fifth in the shot put with 14.88. In the 5,000-meter, Karen Wigal finished in 17 minutes, 50.61 seconds to take ninth.

Senior captain Rodney Martin finished second in the men's 200-meter. Martin was out-paced by LSU's Xavier Carter, who broke the event's record with 20.67. Martin had previously held the record with a time of 20.80.

In the triple jump, Derick Pressley won the event with an indoor personal best with a distance of 14.85 meters. The men's 4-by-400-meters relay team finished second with 3:08.76.

Both teams will head to Arkansas next week to compete in the Arkansas Tyson Invite.

## CAMPUS

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nothing to do with the game itself. She merely needed to watch it for future pop-culture references and to avoid being embarrassed for lack of knowledge.

"I don't even know who's playing," Kimbrell said. "I'm just watching for the outcome. The only

reason I'm watching is so tomorrow when everyone's talking about it, I can say like 'Yeah, what about that game!'"

Viewers were encouraged to stay tuned after the game for a special episode of "The Simpsons" followed by the premiere of new comedy "American Dad."

Many people decided to use other football and party-related situations following the game to keep the mood.

"After the game, I'm going to watch 'The Simpsons,'" Jones said. "But after that, I've got to hit up that 'Madden 2005.' I'm using the Packers and going to show anybody that plays me who the real champ is."

Wishful thinking for a wishful fan, Jones lost the video game to Gilbert. At least there is always next year.

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## GREEN

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Dallas Desperados, San Jose Sabercats and New Orleans Voodoo, are but a few examples.

Arena ball is hard-hitting, fast-paced, pass-happy and high-scoring. It's football for fans with ADD. There are only eight players on the field for each team, and all but two play both offense and defense. Games are televised regionally on Fridays and Saturdays and nationally on NBC Sundays.

Recruiting has long been considered a sport to the college-football-crazy South. Fans can get another fix in March and April when spring football practice rolls around.

In the past couple years, FSN has been televising several SEC teams' spring games.

Warmer weather, a football coach named Steve Spurrier and a few scrimmages to watch in Williams-Brice Stadium promise to bring many of us out of our post-Super Bowl funk. This year's spring game will be free, and it is expected that there will be record crowds out to see what the 2005 version of Gamecock football will look like.

NFL Europe starts its 13th season in April. Many former SEC stars, hoping to make it in the NFL, are sent to NFL Europe to fine-tune their skills before training camp begins.

There is something kind of ironic about exporting football to Europe, where they have this crazy notion of

calling soccer football. Maybe NFL Europe will finally catch hold learn the error of its ways.

Maybe the French will finally start being polite.

That might be too much to ask for.

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