



Juan Blas / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Highly touted freshman infielder Reese Havens warms up during USC's first official practice Thursday. The Gamecocks begin the season against Elon on Feb. 10.

## USC starts season ranked in Top 25

*Gamecocks hope top-ranked recruiting class combined with veterans keeps them among nation's upper-echelon of college baseball programs*

Brian C. Davis  
FOR THE GAMECOCK

A recruiting class with nine players who had the choice to turn pro will determine much of whether No. 14 USC will continue its recent success.

To gain success similar to the last five years, Collegiate Baseball's No. 1 recruiting class must complement the team's veterans.

The recruiting class participated in its first practice Thursday. All-American South Carolinians Justin Smoak, a first baseman, and Reese Havens, a shortstop, head the class.

"We've probably got more youth that is probably going to get immediate playing time than ever before," USC coach Ray Tanner told reporters Thursday.

The class' five pitchers, four of whom are draft selections, will compete for open starting-pitching positions. The Gamecocks lost five pitchers after last season.

Depending on their

preseason performances, Tanner will pick three starters from a large group. "Andrew Cruse, Arik Hempy, Wynn Pelzer, true freshman Will Atwood, Andy Lambert, who finished the year strong, [and] Forrest Beverly (are starting candidates)," Tanner said. "We just have a number of guys who could step into that role and they're going to pitch if they earn it."

Cruse and Pelzer are sophomores, while Hempy and Beverly are juniors.

Fielding these young pitchers will be senior catcher Ian Paxton, who competed in 47 games for USC last season.

The Southeastern Conference is regarded as a perennial baseball power. In Baseball America's preseason rankings, the SEC tallied seven teams in the Top 25. The Florida Gators headed the list.

Smoak and Havens should join senior third basemen Neil Giesler, a two-time draft choice of the Chicago White Sox, in the infield.

With young talent and

senior leadership, Tanner also hopes to find a consistent hitter.

"We're trying to fill the holes that we have from last year," Tanner said. "It is going to be real difficult to replace a guy like Steve Pearce."

Pearce was a career .352 hitter at USC. Senior outfielder Michael Campbell is USC's most experienced player, and certainly has the experience to fill Pearce's shoes. Campbell has played in more games than anyone in collegiate baseball, 251.

Campbell, who batted .315 last season, was undrafted and decided to return to USC for his senior season.

"I don't think we have awesome talent, but we have very good talent," Tanner said.

USC will face rival Clemson, ranked No. 2 in preseason rankings, four times. But first, USC will host Elon on Feb. 10.

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## Carolina gets 1st victory in SEC play at Vanderbilt

*Kelley leads team to road victory with 29 points, hits game-winner to snap 3-game losing skid*



Mark Humphrey / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

South Carolina guard Tre Kelley drives around Vanderbilt's Julian Terrell during the second half of the Gamecocks' 66-64 overtime-win Wednesday in Nashville, Tenn.

Michael Aguilar  
FOR THE GAMECOCK

History repeats itself.

The Gamecock men's basketball team proved that cliché wrong as they rallied in the final three minutes to beat the Commodores 66-64.

The last two games had been disappointing, to say the least, for Carolina. Tennessee had unleashed a scoring frenzy in the final 10 minutes of the game to overcome a 15-point second-half deficit. Georgia forced overtime and then hit a shot at the buzzer to beat the Gamecocks.

This time it was the Gamecocks' turn. Vanderbilt played well in the first half and held what looked like a commanding 11-point lead going into the break. Carolina stepped up its game and found holes in the Commodore defense in the second half. The name that kept filling up those holes with USC points was junior guard Tre' Kelley.

Kelley lit up the Commodores for 29 points to lead all scorers. Twenty-one of those points came in the second half or overtime.

"I was struggling the last few games with my shooting, but it didn't feel off," Kelley told the Associated Press. "So, tonight I concentrated and had my feet set and was able to hit the shots."

USC tied the game with just over 15 minutes left in the second period and the score went back-and-forth for the next six minutes.



Claire Hughes / THE GAMECOCK

USC's Stacy Booker works the ball inside against a Vanderbilt defender. The Gamecocks will travel to Tuscaloosa on Sunday to play against Alabama.

## Gamecocks look to end conference losing streak

Matt Moore  
FOR THE GAMECOCK

The USC women's basketball team is still searching for its first conference win as it heads to Alabama on Sunday.

Since their last win at Clemson on Jan. 2, the Gamecocks have dropped four straight games, three of which were to ranked opponents: No. 1 Tennessee, at Kentucky, at No. 3 LSU and No. 23 Vanderbilt.

"Not many teams have to come out and play No. 1 and No. 3 and then play on the road," said head

coach Susan Walvius, following the loss to the Commodores. "We have confidence in this team. They've got to weather the tough part of this schedule mentally."

The Gamecocks (9-7, 0-4) can attribute this recent drought to offensive play says junior guard Lauren Simms.

"We're a little stagnant on offense," Simms said after the Vanderbilt game. "We'll get better on that, and, hopefully, that will get better as SEC play goes."