

Beaten at the buzzer, again

Gamecock offense lights up, late Wildcat shots eke out win

Tom Benning
STAFF WRITER

Apparently, March has come early to the world of college basketball.

On a night when all three unbeaten teams were defeated and North Dakota State beat a ranked opponent, the USC men's basketball team came up just short in their upset bid of Kentucky. Even with the 80-78 loss, USC head coach Dave Odom knew he had partaken in a classic.

"This certainly was a great college basketball game," he said after the game. "It was a tight game that clearly shows, in my opinion, that college basketball is the best game going."

The final minute was a flurry of odds-defying events, ending with the Gamecocks falling victim to two three-point daggers. With 39 seconds remaining, USC senior Tarence Kinsey hit two free throws to give Carolina a 76-74 lead.

As the Wildcats brought the ball down the court, UK guard Patrick Sparks noticed the lack of ball pressure and launched a three-pointer from the edge of the "UK" logo at halfcourt.

"I am just glad that it went in," said UK head coach Tubby Smith. "Nobody draws up a shot like that, but he had been shooting the ball well. I tell our guys to take good shots and certainly that was a huge shot."

On the next possession, USC senior Antoine Tisby was sent to the free throw line. Despite being only a 57 percent shooter from the stripe, he nailed both free throws to make the score

78-77.

With only nine seconds left, UK guard Rajon Rondo scrambled up the court, looking to drive to the basket. Kinsey prevented him from entering the lane, so Rondo settled for a desperate, falling-away three pointer.

It went in.

"It was no secret who was going to get the ball unless Pat Riley showed up," Odom said. "Like all great players, (Rondo) didn't give the ball up nor did he give in and he hit the shot."

The frantic ending was indicative of the game as a whole. The contest featured 22 lead changes and eight ties, and despite being two of the SEC's top defensive teams, both USC and UK showed surprising offensive effectiveness. Carolina shot 51.8 percent from the field and 42.3 percent from three, while UK shot 55.9 percent and 50 percent respectively.

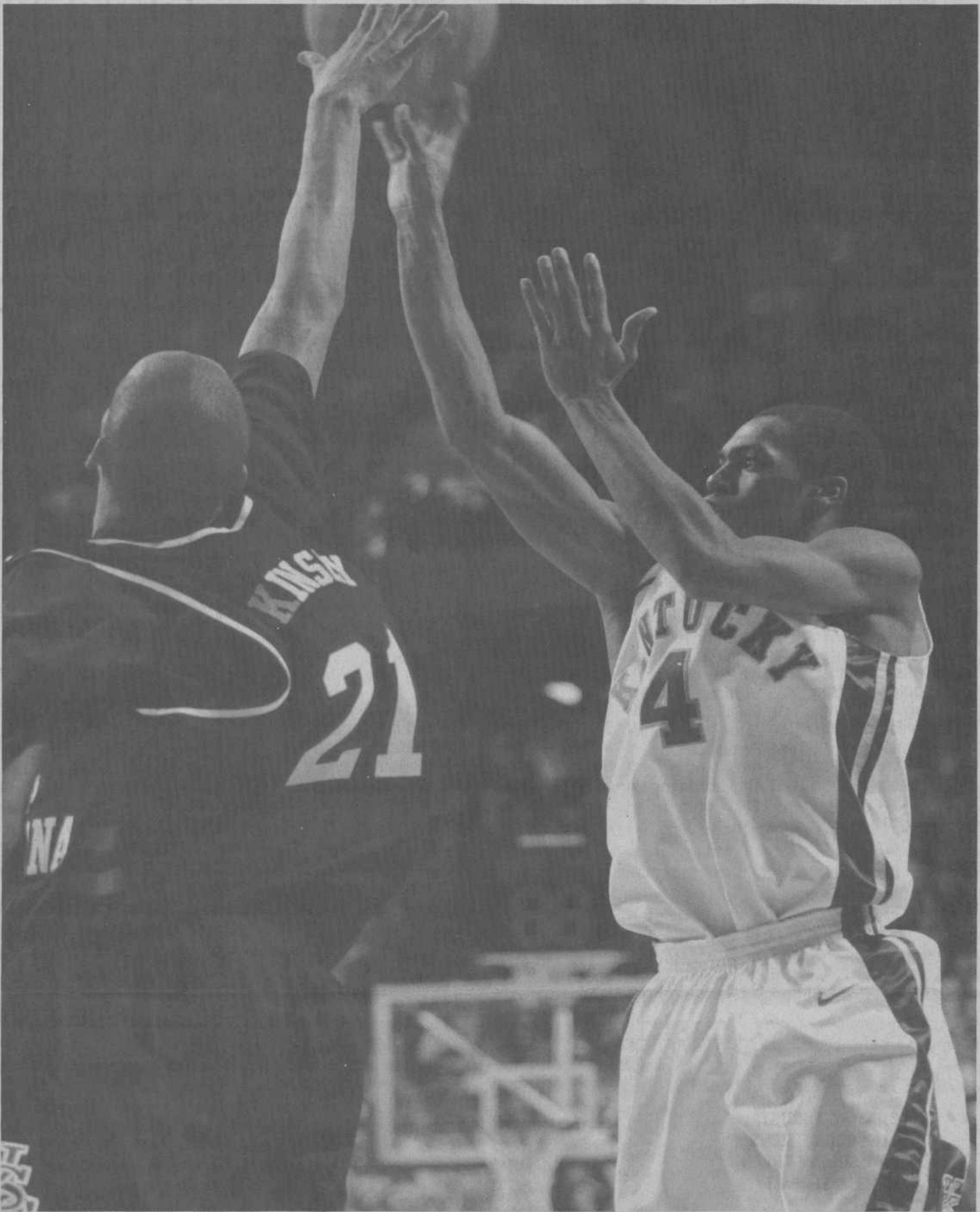
The teams were on pace for 100-point efforts halfway through the first half. Carolina was lead early by guard Dwayne Day, who poured in nine points in the first six minutes. The sophomore finished with 18 points and six rebounds.

Kentucky seemed to gain momentum with three minutes left in the first half, taking a 35-30 lead, but Carolina crawled back behind the play of Kinsey to make the score at halftime 40-38 in favor of UK.

Kinsey led all scorers with 21 points. He also had six rebounds and three steals.

Coming out of the break,

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James Crisp / The Associated Press

Kentucky's Rajon Rondo pulls up for the game-winning 3-point shot against Tarence Kinsey in the Wildcats 80-78 win against the Gamecocks on Saturday. Rondo and guard Patrick Sparks hit back-to-back 3-pointers to win the game.

SPORTS

Briefs

USC settles contract dispute with Thompson

Former USC defensive coordinator John Thompson has reached an agreement with the university in regards to the buyout on his contract.

Thompson agreed to a \$101,000 buyout on his contract that still had two years remaining.

In a released statement, Thompson said he was glad the dispute was settled and looking forward to spending time with his family.

"This matter was simply a contract dispute and this seems like a fair solution to his situation," USC coach Steve Spurrier said. "We wish John and his family the best and we are all ready to move on."

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WOMEN EARN FIRST SEC WIN OF 2006

Stephen Fastenau
SPORTS EDITOR

To overcome an SEC slump, USC had to look no further than a team they have nearly dominated in recent years.

USC found its shooting touch in the second half against Alabama on Sunday, and the result was a first conference win. The Gamecocks have beaten the Crimson Tide in six of their last eight meetings.

The Gamecocks shot nearly 73 percent against the Tide after the break, turning a 22-19 lead into a runaway 67-48 win. It was the Gamecocks' first conference victory of the season.

USC coach Susan Walvius' team went in to the game with a four-game SEC win streak that included losses to top-25 teams Vanderbilt, LSU and Tennessee.



Claire Hughes / THE GAMECOCK

Lea Fabbri dribbles up against her opponent in a previous game. Fabbri finished with 9 points as the Gamecocks beat Alabama 67-48 on Sunday.

Sunday afternoon, the Gamecocks didn't give the Tide a chance.

Up 26-23 in the second half, the Gamecocks went on a 10-2 scoring tear that opened their lead to 36-25 and ensured there would be no let down as there had been in the previous four games.

USC guard Stacy Booker led all scorers with 14 points, going a perfect

4-of-4 from beyond the 3-point line. Booker has converted a 3-pointer in each of her last 12 games. Freshman Demetress Adams finished with 11 points and nine rebounds.

As a team, USC shot 61.5 percent from behind the 3-point line.

The Gamecocks, second only behind Bama in the SEC in rebounding entering

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Rec league refs take jobs far too seriously

Response from officials shows they're scared truth could come out

Stephen Fastenau doesn't know what he is talking about.

Last Wednesday he wrote a column (titled "Have fun despite crummy refs, rules") in which he ripped the student referees who work for campus recreation officiating our basketball games.

He called the refs "horrible" and noted that "these guys and girls couldn't recognize a foul if it kicked them in the crotch." He bemoaned the fact that each team receives a "sportsmanship grade," and referees can actually play on a team in the same league as the one that they officiate.

Well, apparently intramural referees are sensitive people. Since the column ran on Wednesday, both The Gamecock and Stephen himself have received

numerous letters and messages from the referees. Some offered to referee his games for free, some offered to allow him to be a referee for a day to see how hard it is, and one even said: "I can promise you that if you thought the refs never blew a whistle and made bad calls before, wait until your team plays."

Normally I would laugh at Stephen and how his team was going to get totally jobbed this season. But there is a problem with this. I am on his team.

So, let me be the first to say that intramural refs are fantastic. They are so unbelievably accurate and fair, and I appreciate that.

There was the time that I almost got thrown out of a playoff basketball game for pointing at the scoreboard to remind the guy that just fouled me and yelled in my face that my team was, in fact, beating his team by 20 points. Obviously I could have poked an eye out, and I deserved to be ejected and possibly stoned. Great call there.

There was the time that



JAKE BROOM
Third-year political science student

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