

*Odom bashers should realize replacements unavailable*

**Instead of taking a turn to Negativetown, fans should appreciate what they have**

That sound you heard coming from the Colonial

Center Saturday afternoon was not overweight NASCAR fans celebrating Tony Stewart's victory in the prestigious Hershey. It was the sound of people

hurling themselves off of the Carolina basketball bandwagon—and landing on the Fire Dave Odom bandwagon.

I couldn't walk 10 feet after the game without hearing an angry "fan" calling for USC coach Dave Odom to be fired. Many people feel that Carolina could simply fire him and hire somebody better to coach the team. These are the same people that confuse being realistic with having low expectations.

Many people complain that Odom can't recruit. If his players were good enough to beat Florida at home and on the road, why aren't they good enough for the rest of the SEC? The talent level at Carolina is at least average in the SEC, probably better than average. If your argument is that Odom hasn't recruited players that can compete in the SEC, then you must feel that he does a fantastic job coaching every time Carolina wins a game. You can't say he is a bad recruiter and a bad coach at the same time.

Many of these same people turned on Odom last year when he discussed taking the job as head basketball coach at Virginia. The discussions were never serious enough that they took away from his ability to properly coach his team at Carolina. If anybody out there thinks there is a coach in America who wouldn't take the time to at least explore his options, then that person is stupid. Every coach does this. Every person does this. Why would you expect a basketball coach to be any different from a lawyer or a teacher?

In games like the one this weekend, there wasn't much more Odom could have done. There is only one reason Carolina lost that game. That reason is about six feet tall, has a shaved head, waddles when he runs and goes by the name Patrick Sparks. I thought he was ugly in HD, but even that doesn't do him justice. When a guy like him gets hot and shots aren't falling for your offense, nine times out of ten, you are going to lose no matter who your coach is.

When I hear people say that Odom isn't good enough to be the head coach at Carolina, Ruben Studdard cannot eat the amount of food that I want to vomit.

If Odom is fired, who would Carolina hire to

BROOM ● 12



**JAKE BROOM**  
Third-year science student



USC's Robbie Grinestaff is congratulated by third-base coach Jim Toman on Saturday after hitting one of his two homeruns. Grinestaff led the Gamecocks to a weekend sweep of Radford, while only allowing two runs in the series.

Juan Blas / THE GAMECOCK

**USC takes 3 from Radford at Sarge Frye**

*Improved bats lead Carolina to sweep against Highlanders*

**Tom Benning**  
STAFF WRITER

The sweep was on at Sarge Frye Field on Sunday.

After breezing through the first two games of their series against Radford, the USC baseball team (5-1) held on for a 2-0 victory. While the Gamecocks did not dominate on the scoreboard, USC head coach Ray Tanner was pleased with the outcome.

"When you get a win in a close game where a lot of things can happen, you do grow a little bit more than if you win by seven or eight runs," he said. "There were a lot of benefits to this weekend."

Throughout much of the game, the Gamecocks could not solve the pitching of Radford starter Eric Evans. Carolina did not get on the board until the fourth

inning when Justin Smoak scored on a sacrifice bunt.

USC did not score again until Neil Giesler sealed the victory in the eighth inning with a solo homer. Giesler is the only Gamecock to safely hit in every game this season. Other than Giesler, the Gamecock offensive production has been erratic so far this season.

"We're swinging the bats a little bit better," Tanner said. "We are probably trying too hard up there, but we are going to hit better as we go."

While the offense was underwhelming, a common denominator in all three victories, and especially this game, was outstanding pitching. Junior Forrest Beverly got the start and win for USC and, in six innings, he struck out six

BASEBALL ● 12

*Kentucky guard Sparks Wildcats' victory against Gamecocks*

*Senior scores 24 second-half points to end USC's 3-game win streak*

**Alex Riley**  
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Patrick Sparks didn't need the throwback uniforms or the heckling from the student section to inspire him on Saturday. All he needed was to be able to see the hoop.

Sparks provided 24 second-half points, including 6-of-6 from behind the arc, to lead Kentucky past USC on SEC Throwback weekend, 79-66.

"We did not have a good day," USC coach Dave Odom said. "It was a difficult day for us. We never got in sync offensively. We didn't get out of the box offensively at all."

The nationally televised contest was tabbed as a chance for each team to improve its stock in a possible NCAA Tournament bid, as the Wildcats (17-9) and Gamecocks (14-11) were listed as teams on the bubble coming into the weekend.

"Despite the loss, we're still eager to go on," senior forward Tarence Kinsey said. "We can't wait 'til the next practice so we can get better."

After a slow start, Kentucky managed to run out to an eight-point advantage midway through the first period, as USC scored only six points in the first 10 minutes of play.

An offensive run by the Gamecocks eventually led to a 28-25 lead at the half.

When both teams went into the locker room, Kinsey was the leading scorer for both teams with 11, and only three of Kentucky's five starters had seen the hoop.

Those numbers quickly changed.

Sparks, who at halftime had only two points, hit his first 3-pointer at the 17:55 mark of the second half to break a tie and put the Wildcats up for good. The guard scored three of the next four baskets for Kentucky, including two 3-pointers from a long distance that sparked a run to put the visiting team up by as many as 16.

"When a player gets 24 points in one half, you're obviously not concentrating on what you're doing," Odom said. "He shot the ball amazingly well. Therein lies the game."

USC would come within eight points near the middle of the second half, but it wouldn't be enough for a rally, as defensive breakdowns allowed for the post play of Randolph Morris to make easy dunks and layups on switching guards to keep the Wildcats ahead.

"I thought we would have come out and played a lot better than we did," Kinsey said. "Hands down, they came out and played



Juan Blas / THE GAMECOCK

USC guard Tre' Kelley defends Kentucky's Patrick Sparks during the second half of Saturday's game against the Wildcats. Sparks finished with 26 points, including six second-half 3-pointers to foil the Gamecocks attempt at a fourth straight win.

harder than we did, and that's a tough thing to say coming out of my mouth."

Kinsey lead the Gamecocks with 21 points, while a lacking performance from Tre' Kelley still managed to add 11 to the Gamecocks' score. The Wildcats finished with four players in double-digits, including two off the bench.

Sparks' 26 points lead all scorers, but it was Morris' double-double of 13 points and 11 rebounds that helped to seal the

win. Kentucky is now 8-2 when Sparks scores over 20 points.

"When you've got guys that can shoot it like that, they don't need but an inch or two," junior USC forward Brandon Wallace said. "Once they make one, they're real streaky. Even 30 feet, if that's what it takes."

Kelley, who finished the day with six turnovers and three assists, took the majority of the heat for the teams lack of leadership on the floor. The junior

guard's biggest concern following the lopsided loss was about his team's trust in him to lead the team both offensively and defensively.

"I played a horrible game tonight," Kelley said. "Those guys were really counting on me tonight and I didn't come through for them. I don't think they trusted me tonight. I wasn't a good point guard for them tonight."

Junior forward Brandon Wallace isn't worried about the Gamecocks' distant

SPARKS ● 12