

NCAA tourney has lost appeal with lackluster play this season

Players leaving school early for NBA, poor fundamentals show up in college teams

I probably watched a total of about 10 minutes of Monday night's national championship basketball game.



TODD GREEN
Graduate student in sports and entertainment management

It came on way too late, featured two teams completely lacking anything resembling great basketball and there was something else that was hard for me to get a grip on at first — I just don't care anymore. College basketball has lost its appeal.

There have been blowouts in the national championship game before.

Sometimes you have a team that is so good that the other team is simply overmatched.

But in the past when the final game was lopsided, you could at least count on the Final Four games to be good.

This year's tournament had the most boring final three games I can ever remember.

"I know it was you Fredo. You broke my heart. You broke my heart!" — Michael from "The Godfather Part II"

I watched the first 10 minutes of the Florida-UCLA matchup before giving up and watching the "Godfather Part II" on AMC. (I had already wasted about two hours earlier in the day watching the first "Godfather" movie.)

It was pretty easy to see early on that Florida was going to have its way with UCLA.

I awoke Tuesday morning to find that my best friend had left a voicemail on my cell phone.

I still had not checked SportsCenter to find out how the game ended.

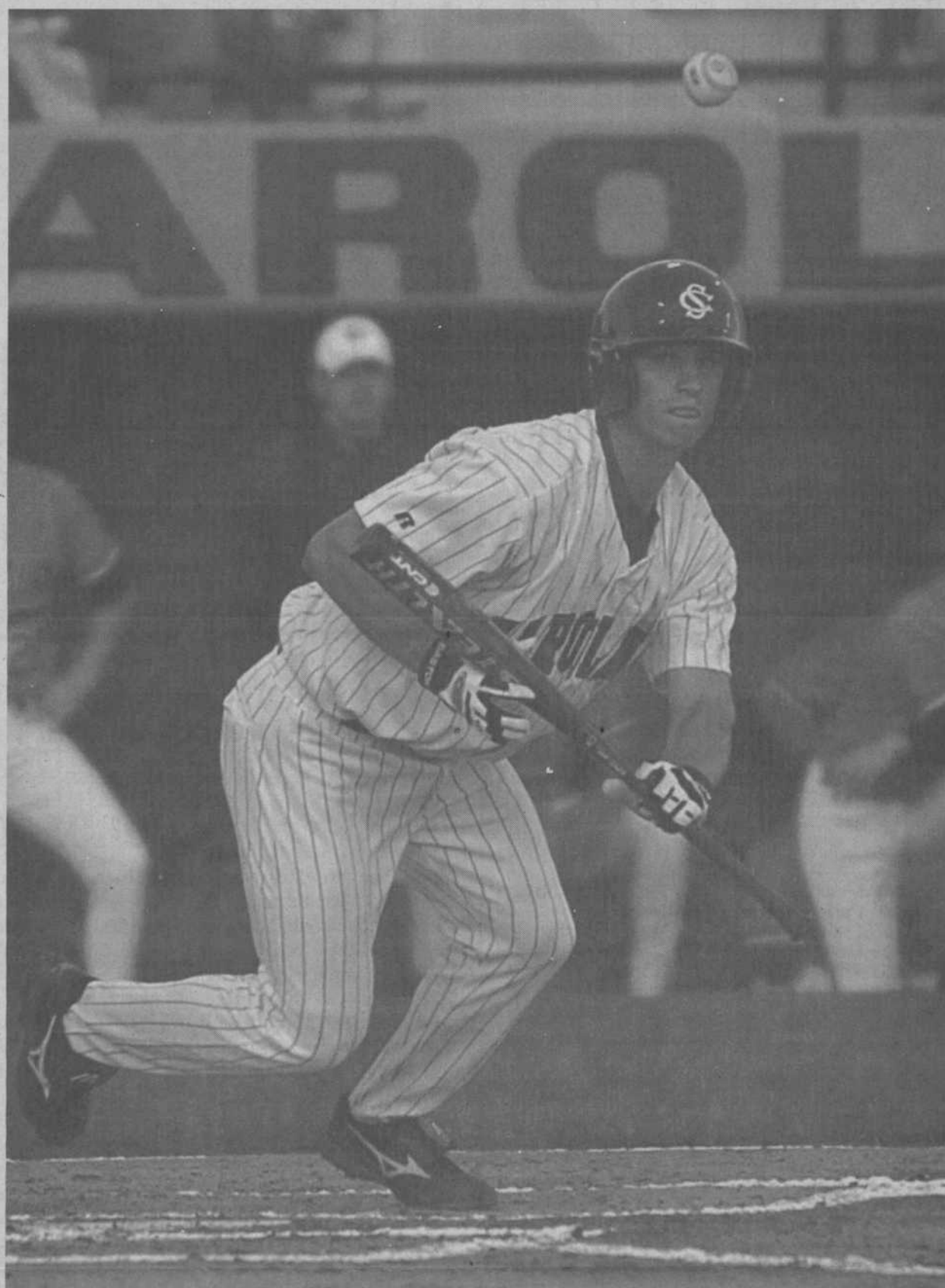
Here is an excerpt from that voicemail, and to all those who know me, beware, you are always on the record.

"A team the Gamecocks beat twice, dominated twice, not only on their home court but also on Florida's home court and should have beat them in the SEC championship, only lost to them by two points, wins the f—ing national title? Are you kidding me?"

My friend is absolutely dead-on in his analysis of the state of college basketball today.

It starts from the top and filters its way down to every level of basketball; kind of like the "trickle

GREEN ● 9



Juan Blas / THE GAMECOCK

A Gamecock baseball player lays down a bunt during the No. 1 team's 3-2 loss at Sarge Frye Field on Wednesday against No. 7 Clemson. The teams meet for a final time at Clemson on Wednesday.

TIGER CLAWED

Gamecocks drop 3-2 contest to rival Clemson at home

Alex Riley
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

There was only one difference, other than the score, in the game between top-ranked USC and No. 7 Clemson on Wednesday night — the amount of runners left on base.

The Gamecocks stranded 10 runners, and the Tigers stranded nine, but it was that one less that ended up being the winner, as Clemson escaped Sarge Frye field with a 3-2 win over USC.

"It was a great college baseball game," USC coach Ray Tanner said. "Both teams

had an opportunity to win, and Clemson did a better job."

Both squads threw freshmen pitchers as Clemson's Ryan Hinson and Carolina's Will Atwood gave solid performances.

Atwood threw over five innings, giving up six hits and two runs while striking out four. Hinson threw five innings, and he gave up six hits and one run. But it was Clemson's Daniel Moskos' relief pitching that sealed things for the Tigers, as his over three innings of no-hit baseball kept the Gamecock attack at bay and gave the Tigers the winning edge.

"Moskos was certainly the

difference at the end of the game," Tanner said. "We knew he was good coming in, and we just weren't able to get anything going off of him. But both freshmen pitched really well."

"I was really comfortable out there," Atwood said. "The crowd makes it a lot easier. It was a lot of fun for me, I'm glad I had the chance to experience it, but you hate to get beat on a night like tonight."

Clemson took a 1-0 lead in the first inning off a Tyler Colvin RBI double and held the lead for the first three innings as USC stranded four men on base

BASEBALL ● 9

SEC West, East leaders to face off in weekend 3-game set

Matt Moore
FOR THE GAMECOCK

The top of the Southeastern Conference East meets the top of the West as Alabama rolls into Columbia for a top-10 weekend series.

No. 10 Alabama (23-9, 7-2 in the SEC) has won seven of its last eight, including a series victory over then-No. 1 Mississippi State, only to draw the team that took MSU's place atop the national rankings.

No. 1 USC (26-4, 8-1 in the SEC) is coming off a close loss to No. 7 Clemson that ended a nine-game winning streak.

One thing Alabama has going for it is that it has not lost a regular season series against a No. 1 team. Since 1985, Alabama has won five-straight series against top-ranked opponents, including Miami (1985), Mississippi State (1989), Auburn (1995), LSU (1997) and Mississippi State (2006). Alabama is 11-11 all-time against No. 1 teams.

The Gamecocks have a streak of their own to keep in tact this weekend. USC has never lost a home series to the Crimson Tide.

Despite USC's home success, the series between these two teams is tied at 19-19. While Alabama has never won a series at Sarge Frye, USC has shared similar road woes, including a series loss last year in Tuscaloosa.

The key for USC this weekend seems to be for the team to continue its hot streak at the plate. The Gamecocks are third in the SEC in batting average (.313), home runs (36) and RBI (220), and third in runs scored (242).

The offense is led by senior infielder Neil Giesler. Giesler is batting .454 with three home runs and 27 RBI. Junior Robbie Grinestaff has provided power in the Gamecock lineup, leading the team with 10 home runs, 40 RBI and 31 runs scored.

The Crimson Tide bats have also lived up, especially as of late. During the past 12 games, Alabama is batting .308 as a team with seven home runs and 66 runs driven in. In the first 20 games of the season, Alabama struggled from the plate with a .256 batting average, 13 home

ALABAMA ● 9

Garnet & Black game marks team's last tune-up of spring



Defensive back Fred Bennett causes tight end Robert Pavlovic to fumble during a scrimmage earlier this year.

Tom Benning
STAFF WRITER

Spring practice will come to a close this Saturday at 2 p.m. when the USC football team holds its annual Garnet & Black spring game. After fifteen practices and three scrimmages, the game will give the public one last chance to watch the Gamecocks before the fall opener against Mississippi State.

All of the scrimmages thus far have been 90 minutes of offense vs. defense, but the spring game will allow the coaches to split the team up into two squads for four quarters of football. While the game will be displayed in a game-like atmosphere, USC head coach Steve Spurrier said earlier this

week, "The spring game we will do like last year and limit formations and plays a little bit."

Close to 40,000 people attended the event last year, and the game was televised by ESPN and ESPNU. Last year's contest provided fans their first glimpse of a now-commonplace sequence — Blake Mitchell to Sidney Rice. The then-unknown receiver had three catches for 65 yards and one acrobatic touchdown catch from Mitchell that made SportsCenter's Top-10 plays. Mitchell went 12-of-23 for 175 yards and one touchdown to position himself in front of Antonio Heffner for the starting job.

This year's game will most likely be more low-key, but as always, new stars will probably emerge

and position battles will become clearer. Despite heavy losses on defense and in the trenches, two of the most intriguing position competitions are at running back and wide receiver.

Coming into the spring, sophomore Mike Davis was pegged as the starting tailback with junior Cory Boyd and sophomore Bobby Wallace behind him. Davis had 100-yard rushing performances to end last season, and he has done nothing to lose his job this spring.

However, Boyd's explosiveness and receiving ability have been hard to miss, and Wallace showed flashes of brilliance last year. In the first two scrimmages this spring, Davis had 166 yards and a TD on

SPRING GAME ● 9