

2007 Gamecock

VOLLEYBALL



VOLLEYBALL STAFF



BEN SOMERA

*1st Year as Head Coach
3rd Year at South Carolina
Southern California, 1995*



GAMECOCKS



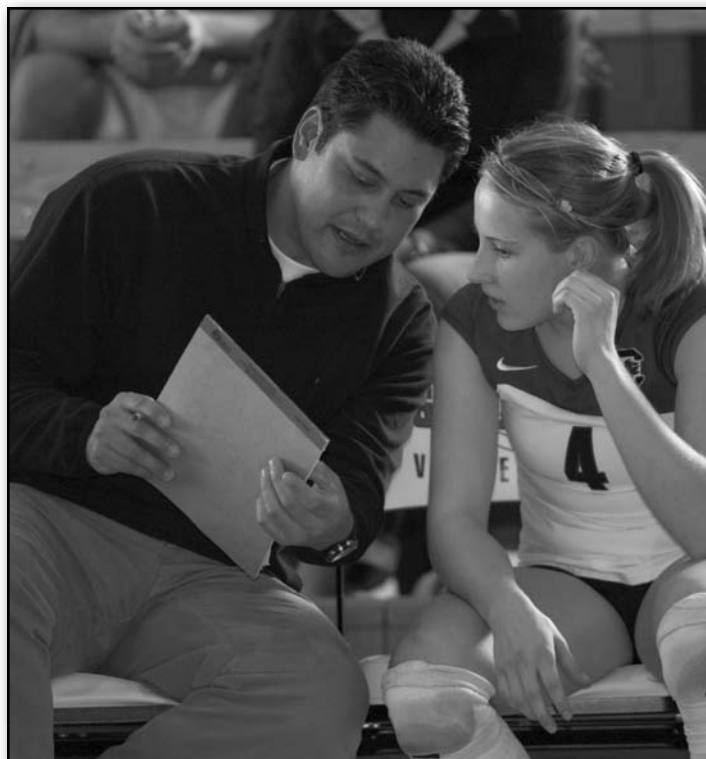
Head Coach

Ben Somera is in his first year as head coach of the South Carolina volleyball program after spending the past two seasons as associate head coach. He took over the reigns from his wife, Nancy, in June 2007 after she made the decision to pursue a business opportunity. Somera coordinates the recruiting efforts of the Gamecock staff and oversees training of the middle blockers and outside hitters.

Somera was named associate head coach for Gamecock volleyball in February 2005 after six seasons as an assistant and associate head coach at Oregon State. The Gamecocks have gone 28-31 (.476) during his two years on staff and are 13-23 (.361) in Southeastern Conference matches. Included in the SEC victories was a 3-1 win over Florida in 2006, which was the program's first against the Gators since 1994. Florida, ranked sixth at the time, is the highest-ranked team South Carolina has defeated in its history, and it marked just the fifth regular-season SEC defeat for the Gators since 1991.

Somera was instrumental in furthering the development of Shonda Cole during her final two years as a Gamecock, as the outside hitter earned All-SEC First Team and AVCA All-South Region Team honors after a record-setting 2006 season. Cole became the Gamecocks' career leader in kills per game and attacks while setting single-season school records for kills, kills per game and attacks. She also hit the 30-kill plateau in six matches her senior year, a feat that had only been accomplished once in school history prior to 2006.

While at Oregon State, Somera coached the middle blockers for four seasons and spent two with the setters. Under his tutelage, one of his setters earned honorable mention All-Pacific 10 honors and two of his middle blockers finished the season ranked among the top 10 blockers in the Pac-10 Conference. Two other Beavers earned honorable mention and one was named first-team All-Pac-10, while two student-athletes



earned spots on the Pac-10 All-Freshman Team from 1999 to 2004. Additionally, seven Beavers received academic praise from CoSIDA and 16 were awarded academic laurels from the Pacific-10 Conference while Somera served as a coach.

During his tenure at OSU the Beavers were 77-98 (.440) overall, and he helped lead Oregon State to the NCAA Tournament in 2001 with a 17-12 record and fifth-place finish in the Pac-10. It was the first NCAA appearance for OSU since joining the Pac-10 in 1987 and only its second in school history after first making the field in 1983. Oregon State finished at .500 or better in one of the toughest volleyball conferences in the country in three of Somera's six seasons on staff. Academically, Oregon State's volleyball program led the athletic department in team GPA for 9-of-15 terms.

Somera's collegiate coaching experience began at Southern California in 1993 as a volunteer coach. He was then promoted to second assistant in 1994 and took the lead in the training and development of the program's middle blockers. While at Southern California, he cultivated three All-Americans at the middle blocker position.

In 1996, Somera left collegiate coaching to pursue a career in sales, but he continued to coach club volleyball. When his wife became the head coach at Oregon State in 1999, Somera returned to collegiate coaching.

Somera hails from LaCrescenta, Calif., and earned his bachelor's degree in political science from Southern California in 1995. Ben and Nancy have a 10-year-old son, Sam, and a 6-year-old daughter, Maile.



SOUTH CAROLINA VOLLEYBALL STAFF



UP CLOSE WITH BEN SOMERA

What would your ideal team be?

My ideal team would be athletic, skilled and have great unity. I lean toward great athletes, regardless of size, who can control the ball and most importantly exhibit abundant competitiveness and a willingness to be a team player. From an athletic point of view, I like to watch players who move and play with great balance, timing and rhythm. In terms of skill, I picture a team that understands how to control the ball on its platform, with its hands or with its arm swings when attacking. My ideal team utilizes speed, tempo and accuracy in both its offense and defense to create advantages and pressure opponents. The players on this team would use a variety of techniques and make the execution of skills and routine plays look easy. Most importantly, the team would be a model of connection and competitiveness. I see a team that displays great chemistry, charisma and a genuine enjoyment of the game and teammates.

Where does your vision of your ideal team come from?

Honestly, it is adopted from many coaches, athletes and my own experiences over the years. I have observed, trained and worked alongside some very talented people in volleyball and athletics in general and have tried to acquire the best practices and procedures from all areas of sports and team building. I have had numerous discussions with coaches about their best teams and each coach, regardless of the sport, talks about two things: the willingness of those team members to work as a unit and the great chemistry these teams have in a social, training or competitive environment.



How do you develop a team with a great VIBE?

I believe it starts with each coach, player and support staff member understanding that we are all part of the equation that makes up our VIBE. Attitude and effort are a personal choice and contagious to those around us. You have to recruit players for their personality and character just as much as you would for their skill and athleticism and then create an environment within the program that allows the vibe to develop. Our staff gives a lot of feedback on body language, communication and how great teammates make team members better.

Where is the program in terms of your intended vision?

We made great strides this winter and spring in developing our identity with the eight players who are returning. We added eight freshmen this season who will be asked to jump on board and follow the example being set by the leaders. The building of this program is not a destination but a process of continuous growth and development. We have a good blend of athleticism and skill, and we will be working hard to maintain positive growth. The foundation is in place to develop a unified team that will consistently compete in the SEC.

How would you describe your coaching philosophy/style?

Coaching style and philosophy have to be adaptable and based in reality. In our gym, we talk about developing good intentions and habits, not perfect form or style. We work to develop players who understand fundamentals and cause and effect.

For example, most coaches will tell young football players to always catch a ball with both hands away from their body. In theory, it sounds great, but in reality if you watch the most productive receivers in the NFL they sometimes catch the ball with both hands, sometimes they trap a ball against their bodies and other times they catch it with one hand. In theory, few would argue with a coach who tells a player to always catch the ball with both hands, but in reality the moment dictates what is appropriate in each situation. An overthrown ball that cannot be reached with two hands might be snared by stretching with one hand. The same is true with volleyball.

Our staff has agreed to using the words ALWAYS and NEVER in teaching moments. I hear coaches say things like, "You never tip on game point." What happens when you have three blockers in front of you and three defenders playing deep looking for a touch off the block on game point? Do you play into the scheme because you are not supposed to tip on game point?

In our program, we use a mantra our assistant coach Damian Elder brought to the program: "There is no mistake until the ball hits the floor." You play the game with disregard to preference and style, and you focus on making the current situation an opportunity or an advantage.

What has your coaching experience taught you?

To be successful as a player or coach, you must find the proper balance in many areas of life. Volleyball learning, development and change are a process. And, that process is influenced by many factors that are not directly related to volleyball. A student-athlete must learn to manage academics, volleyball and a college social life, and as a coach, I have to be sensitive to those needs and create an environment that provides proper balance for our players.

What do you want your players to experience at USC?

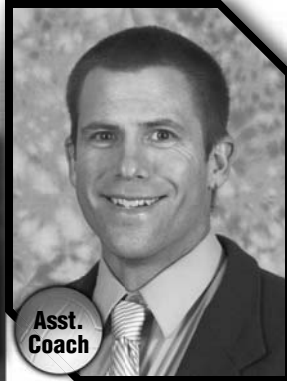
I think our program mission statement sums it up pretty well:

The South Carolina volleyball program will provide a positive college experience, a competitive environment and a value-system built on discipline, consistency and fairness that cultivates players who meet their potential at USC and beyond.



GAMECOCK ASSISTANT COACHES

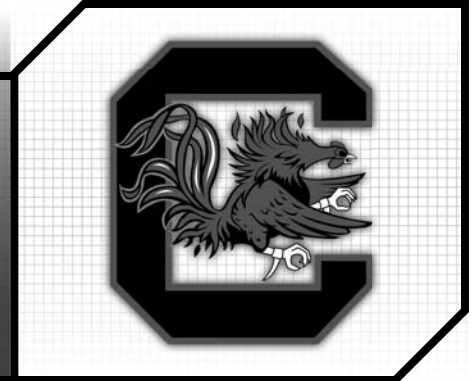
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Asst. Coach

DAMIAN ELDER

*2nd Year as Assistant Coach
2nd Year at South Carolina
Fresno State, 2002*



Now in his second season with the Gamecocks, Damian Elder was named assistant coach for the program in March 2006. With former Associate Head Coach Ben Somera's move to the head coaching position in June 2007, Elder is the top assistant on staff. His primary responsibility is overseeing the training and development of the Gamecocks' setters while assisting in all other phases of the program.

Elder worked with three different setters in his first year, with 2006 senior Iris Santos seeing most of the playing time until a medical condition prevented her from playing the final nine matches. Santos ended her career as only the second player in school history to record over 500 kills and 2,000 assists. She also hit the 60-assist plateau in four matches her senior season, a feat never accomplished in her previous three years as a Gamecock.

Elder's other two setters, Petra Lorenzi and Alexcis Thomas, played significant roles for South Carolina when Santos was removed from the lineup. The two split setting duties and sometimes appeared on the court at the same time in the final nine matches of the season. Lorenzi and Thomas combined to help the Gamecocks

defeat Kentucky and Tennessee, two teams that went on to make the NCAA Tournament.

Elder came to South Carolina from Stanford, where he served for two years as a volunteer assistant coach for the Cardinal's women's program. While at Stanford, Elder assisted on the 2004 NCAA championship staff and helped coach AVCA Player of the Year Ogonna Nnamani.

Prior to Stanford, Elder was an assistant coach at Fresno City College in Fresno, Calif., where he helped his team finish second in its conference with a 25-6 (.806) record. From 1996 to 2003, Elder was a head coach at the Fresno Volleyball Club and served as club director from 1999 to 2002.

Elder got his coaching start at Bullard High School in Fresno, acting as the varsity head coach from 1997 to 2000. His teams compiled a 111-19 overall record during his tenure, good for an .854 winning percentage. Bullard H.S. was crowned section champions in 2000 and placed third in the California Division I State Volleyball Championships.

A graduate of Fresno State, Elder earned his Bachelor of Arts in English in 2002.



SOUTH CAROLINA VOLLEYBALL STAFF

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Asst. Coach

SHANNON PALLARDY

*1st Year as Assistant Coach
2nd Year at South Carolina
USC Upstate, 2006*



Shannon Pallardy is entering her first year with the South Carolina volleyball program as assistant coach. During the 2006-07 academic year, Pallardy was a graduate assistant and team manager for the Gamecocks. She assists in coaching all positions and performs many administrative tasks for South Carolina, such as coordinating team travel.

Pallardy is working toward a master's in exercise science and completed a summer-long internship with the Gatorade Sports Science Institute in 2007 prior to

taking on her role as a full-time assistant coach. She came to South Carolina after earning her Bachelor of Science in interdisciplinary studies with a concentration in physical education and an emphasis in psychology from USC Upstate in May 2006.

A four-year member of the USC Upstate Spartan volleyball team, Pallardy compiled 2,922 assists and 573 digs during her career. As a junior and senior, she was the squad's starting setter, picking up All-Peach Belt Conference honors in her final season. Pallardy was a

four-year letterwinner on the basketball team as well and ran cross country one season.

Pallardy received numerous other honors as a Spartan, including the NCAA Sportsmanship Award in 2005 and the school's highest GPA award for the 2004-05 season. Additionally, she was a member of the Chancellor's Honor Roll for several semesters, made the National Dean's List and was tabbed USC Upstate Female Athlete of the Year.



Dawn Ellerbe **Sports Marketing**

Dawn Ellerbe is in her third year as marketing director for varsity sports. She oversees the marketing efforts for South Carolina's varsity sports programs while directly overseeing the promotional efforts of women's basketball, volleyball, softball and men's and women's soccer. Prior to joining the athletics department, Ellerbe worked at South Carolina's Colonial Center in marketing and public relations. An alumna of South Carolina and 2000 Olympian, Ellerbe was a volunteer assistant track and field coach for the Gamecocks from 2001 to 2004. A four-time NCAA champion, six-time All-American and five-time SEC champion, Ellerbe received her bachelor's degree in journalism from South Carolina in 1996. She earned her master's in communication from Wyoming, where she spent three years as an assistant track and field coach. At Wyoming, she coached in six NCAA Championships and developed eight All-Americans and three Mountain West Conference champions. A native of Long Island, N.Y., Ellerbe is a member of the South Carolina Athletics Hall of Fame and is on the Board of Directors for the United Way of the Midlands.



Erin Hallman-Thomas **Sports Medicine**

Erin Hallman-Thomas serves as assistant athletic trainer for volleyball and softball. She obtained her Bachelor of Science degree from South Carolina in physical education with a concentration in athletic training in May 2005. Hallman-Thomas acquired her Master of Science in sport psychology at Tennessee in December 2006. While at UT, she worked with the Lady Volunteer volleyball program. During her two years with the team, she accompanied them to two post-season NCAA tournament appearances, one of which was the volleyball Final Four in 2005. A native of Gilbert, S.C., Hallman-Thomas married Scott Thomas, an athletic trainer at Batesburg-Leesville High School, in June 2007.



Kelly Lewis **Event Management**

Kelly Lewis is in her 14th year with Gamecock athletics. Lewis manages event operations for volleyball, as well as several other sports at South Carolina. Lewis was the event coordinator for the 1999 NCAA Women's Golf East Regional and served as the Gamecocks' coordinator for the 1997-2001 SEC women's basketball tournaments. She also worked as an event coordinator for the 1997 NCAA Women's Basketball East Regional held at the Carolina Coliseum. Lewis earned her master's degree in sports administration at Eastern Kentucky in 1994. During graduate school, Lewis worked as a sports administration intern, a teaching graduate assistant in the physical education department and worked as an assistant coach with the volleyball team. Prior to graduate school, Lewis taught physical education in Aiken and Kershaw counties. A native of Aiken, S.C., Lewis received a Bachelor of Science in physical education in 1982 from USC-Aiken, where she also coached volleyball and basketball.



Earleen Michels **Academics**

Earleen Michels joined the South Carolina athletics department in July 2003. She is the academic counselor for volleyball, women's basketball and equestrian, and performs other C.A.R.E.S. (Carolina Academic Resources & Enrichment Services) duties assigned to the academic counseling staff. Prior to South Carolina, Michels taught for 10 years in the Midlands/Greater Columbia area and worked in the state office of Fellowship of Christian Athletes, a non-profit organization interfacing with South Carolina public and private middle schools, high schools and colleges.



Val Sheley **Administration**

Val Sheley, who has experience as a former student-athlete, coach, athletics director and several other administrative areas, including compliance, academics and student-athlete development, is in her fourth year as senior associate athletics director and senior woman administrator. Her responsibilities include administration of eight sports and the NCAA compliance office. Her athletics career started in 1988 when she served as head of men's and women's track and field, then added the responsibilities of assistant athletics director/senior woman administrator at UNC Asheville. From there, she went to the NCAA office working as a legislative assistant for the national organization. Sheley is in her third stint with South Carolina during her college athletics career, having served as an associate athletics director for NCAA compliance at the school from 1995 to 2000. In 2000, she left the Gamecocks to become athletics director at Presbyterian College, where she oversaw the school's 13 athletics programs and facility improvements for three years. During 2003-04, Sheley served as the interim associate athletics director for academic support and career development at Maryland. Sheley has a bachelor's degree from Murray State, where she excelled as a track and field athlete. She earned a master's from Houston and is a graduate of the Sports Management Institute. Sheley was a 1984 Olympic qualifier in track and field for Great Britain. Her husband, Mike, was a track and field All-American and NCAA relay champion at South Carolina.



Jon Vaden **Strength & Conditioning**

Jon Vaden became an assistant strength and conditioning coach for the Gamecocks in July 2007 after spending the previous two years as a graduate assistant. He is responsible for the design and implementation of strength and conditioning programs for volleyball, men's and women's tennis, and track. A native of New Kent, Va., Vaden worked with baseball and men's golf as a graduate assistant at South Carolina. He earned his Bachelor of Science in exercise and health promotion from Virginia Tech in 2005 and received a master's in public health from South Carolina in 2007. While at Virginia Tech, he performed an internship with the Hokie football and baseball teams and was also an intern for the Liberty football program. Vaden is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) through the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) and holds the title of Conditioning Coach Certified (SCCC) through the Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches Association (CSCCa).

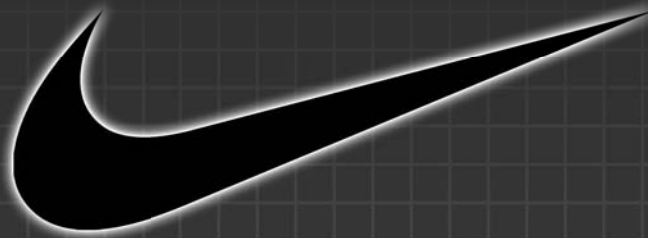


Angie Wolff **Volleyball Office**

Angie Wolff is in her first year with the Gamecock volleyball program as its administrative assistant. She began her duties in June 2007 after an extensive career working for non-profit and community-based organizations. Wolff is heavily involved in the organization of South Carolina's volleyball camps and tournaments while performing other administrative tasks as needed. Among the various organizations in which she has been employed are the Salvation Army, Richland One School District, Department of Social Services, Orphan Foundation of America and YMCA. Over the course of her career, Wolff helped raise nearly \$500,000 and organized thousands of volunteers for her programs. She has also served as president of the Columbia Volleyball Club. Wolff is an avid hiker, most recently hiking to the top of Mount St. Helens, and she has a passion for the environment and recycling. She has a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Marietta College and is working toward a master's in public health at South Carolina. Wolff is the proud mother of two daughters: 10-year-old Julia and 6-year-old Avery.



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