

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL INTRODUCTION

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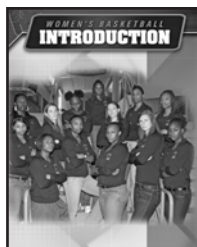
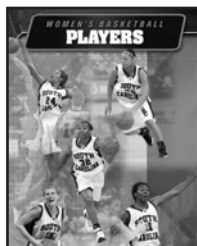


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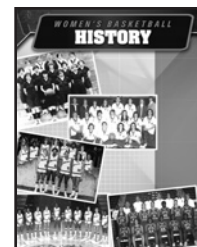
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University Information

Location	Columbia, S.C.
Enrollment	27,065
Founded	1801
Team Name	Gamecocks
University President	Dr. Andrew Sorensen
NCAA Faculty Representative	Dr. Bill Bearden
Athletics Director	Eric Hyman
Senior Woman Administrator	Val Sheley
Colors	Garnet and Black
Conference	Southeastern
Arena/Capacity	Colonial Center/18,000
Press Row Phone	803-777-6182

Coaching Staff Information

Head Coach	Susan Walvius
Alma Mater, Year	Virginia Tech, 1986
Record At South Carolina/Years	149-144/10 years
Overall Record/Years	247-245/17 years
Assistant Coaches	Tammy Holder (William & Mary, 1980) Michelle Marciniak (Tennessee, 1996) Ronald Hughey (Limestone College, 2006)
Director of Basketball Operations	Robin Muller (Kenyon College, 1985)
Administrative Assistant	Kaye Hunke
Basketball Office Phone	803-777-0371

Team Information

2006-07 Overall Record	18-15
2006-07 Conference Record/Finish	6-8/8th
Postseason	WNIT Third Round
Starters R/L	1/4
Letterwinners R/L	5/8

Program Information

First Year of Basketball	1974-75
Overall Record	564-413
SEC Record	60-148
NCAA Tour. Appearances/Last	8/2003
NCAA Tournament Record	8-8
WNIT Appearances/Last	3/2007
WNIT Record	4-2

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2007-08 Roster

Numerical

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Yr.	Hometown/Last School
3	Lauren Falohun	G	5-9	Fr.	Atlanta, Ga./Pace Academy
4	Samone Kennedy	G	5-4	Fr.	Birmingham, Ala./Ramsay
5	Ashlie Billingslea	G	5-7	Fr.	Stone Mountain, Ga./Stephenson
10	C.J. Pace	F	5-11	Jr.	Snellville, Ga./Chipola College
15	Iлона Burgrova	C	6-6	Sr.	Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic
20	Jasmine Payne	G	6-1	Fr.	Bay Springs, Miss./Stringer
22	Courtney Newton	G	5-10	Fr.	Flowery Branch, Ga./Flowery Branch
23	Brionna Dickerson	G	5-9	Jr.	Columbia, S.C./Heathwood Hall
24	Demetress Adams	F	6-4	Jr.	Bishopville, S.C./Lee Central
25	Ebony Jones	G	5-6	Sr.	Aiken, S.C./Aiken
33	Jordan Jones	G	5-9	Fr.	Suwanee, Ga./Collins Hill
41	Lakesha Tolliver	F	6-3	Sr.	Columbia, S.C./Dreher
52	Jewel May	F	6-1	Fr.	Conyers, Ga./Heritage

Alphabetical

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Yr.	Hometown/Last School
24	Demetress Adams	F	6-4	Jr.	Bishopville, S.C./Lee Central
5	Ashlie Billingslea	G	5-7	Fr.	Stone Mountain, Ga./Stephenson
15	Iлона Burgrova	C	6-6	Sr.	Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic
23	Brionna Dickerson	G	5-9	Jr.	Columbia, S.C./Heathwood Hall
3	Lauren Falohun	G	5-9	Fr.	Atlanta, Ga./Pace Academy
25	Ebony Jones	G	5-6	Sr.	Aiken, S.C./Aiken
33	Jordan Jones	G	5-9	Fr.	Suwanee, Ga./Collins Hill
4	Samone Kennedy	G	5-4	Fr.	Birmingham, Ala./Ramsay
52	Jewel May	F	6-1	Fr.	Conyers, Ga./Heritage
22	Courtney Newton	G	5-10	Fr.	Flowery Branch, Ga./Flowery Branch
10	C.J. Pace	F	5-11	Jr.	Snellville, Ga./Chipola College
20	Jasmine Payne	G	6-1	Fr.	Bay Springs, Miss./Stringer
41	Lakesha Tolliver	F	6-3	Sr.	Columbia, S.C./Dreher

Head Coach: Susan Walvius

Assistant Coaches: Tammy Holder, Michelle Marciniak, Ronald Hughey

Director of Basketball Operations: Robin Muller

2007-08 Schedule

November

Tue., 6	Lake Truck (Exh.)	7 p.m.
Fri., 9	Saint Francis (Pa.)	5:30 p.m.
Thu., 15	Virginia	7 p.m.
Sat., 17	Buffalo	3 p.m.
Tue., 20	Penn State	7 p.m.
<i>FIU Thanksgiving Tour. (Miami, Fla.)</i>		
Fri., 23	vs. Illinois	7:30 p.m.
Sun., 25	at FIU/vs. Providence	12/2 p.m.

December

Sat., 1	UNC Wilmington	7 p.m.
Tue., 4	Charleston Southern	7 p.m.
Fri., 7	Jackson State	7 p.m.
Mon., 17	at Connecticut	7 p.m.
Wed., 19	Alabama A&M	5:30 p.m.
Sat., 22	at Clemson	2 p.m.
Sun., 30	at Oklahoma	3 p.m.

January

Thu., 3	UNC Asheville	7 p.m.
Sun., 6	Savannah State	3 p.m.
Thu., 10	at Alabama*	7 p.m.
Sun., 13	Tennessee*	3 p.m.
Sun., 20	at Mississippi*	3 p.m.
Thu., 24	Kentucky* (FSN South)	7 p.m.
Sun., 27	Florida*	3 p.m.
Thu., 31	at LSU*	7 p.m.

February

Sun., 3	Arkansas*	3 p.m.
Thu., 7	at Vanderbilt*	8 p.m.
Sun., 10	Mississippi*	3 p.m.
Sun., 17	at Auburn*	3 p.m.
Thu., 21	Mississippi State*	7 p.m.
Sun., 24	at Florida*	3 p.m.
Thu., 28	Georgia* (FSN South)	7 p.m.

March

Sun., 2	at Kentucky*	3 p.m.
<i>SEC Tournament (Nashville, Tenn.)</i>		
Thu., 6	First Round	TBA
Fri., 7	Quarterfinals	TBA
Sat., 8	Semifinals	TBA
Sun., 9	Final	TBA

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Gamecocks Eye Return to Postseason Play

Experienced core will lead talented newcomers

The 2007-08 Gamecock roster features just five returning players from last year's WNIT team, but head coach Susan Walvius likes what her blend of youth and experience brings to the court.

Coming off back-to-back postseason appearances, South Carolina women's basketball is looking to take the next step. The Gamecocks crave an upper tier finish in the Southeastern Conference and a spot in the NCAA Tournament. To achieve those goals, head coach Susan Walvius will rely on a core group of veterans to meet its potential while helping a stockpile of newcomers acclimate to the college game.

"Early on, we're going to rely on seven or eight players so that our newcomers have time to learn," Walvius said. "That being said, our freshmen have played on extremely good AAU teams, understand the team game and know how to make their teammates look better. They pass the ball well, which will help our interior scorers.

"I also like the leadership on this team," she continued. "The returning players want the team to get better, and they are challenging and encouraging their teammates in practice every day. They talk about the importance of working out, they want to be on the floor, and they have passion for the game. Those are the things that will lead to our success."

The transition for the fresh faces will have to come quickly as Walvius has stocked the non-conference schedule with five teams that played in the postseason last year, including perennial powerhouse Connecticut.

"Our conference is the best in the country, and we need to prepare for that," Walvius said. "We have one opportunity to instill toughness in this young team, and we set a non-conference schedule that will do that. We can't have players going into the SEC schedule with false confidence in who they are. Confidence is good and can carry you a long way, but if we have toughness learned through a difficult schedule, we'll be better prepared for the SEC part of our schedule."

The Gamecocks have focused on the strength of the team in the last two seasons, and the all-for-one mentality and depth of talent has been successful. This year, however, Walvius has the luxury of three experienced players that can dominate in the post, providing a centerpiece for her squad both on offense and defense. She will look to seniors **Ilona Burgrova** and **Lakesha Tolliver** and junior **Demetress Adams** to rise to the challenge.

In basketball, though, the inside cannot thrive unless the perimeter players provide support. Look for the Gamecocks to build a balanced scoring attack in which the interior will be the focal point but the perimeter players will make defenses pay for overcommitting.

On the other end of the floor, the Gamecocks' aggressive style has made them one of the best defensive and rebounding teams in the nation. Walvius expects her post players to live up to that reputation, although the approach may be altered early to accommodate the newcomers.

"You might see us play more match-up zone than in the past because of the personnel changes," Walvius said. "With our newer players just learning our aggressive style, we will be able to rebound and defend penetration better in that set-up. That being said, I've been impressed with the aggressiveness and defensive instincts of the younger players in our early workouts. So, if they can absorb our more aggressive style quickly, we'll play more of a South Carolina up-tempo defensive style."

Frontcourt

Post play is the undisputed strength of this year's squad, as the frontcourt has more returning players with more experience than the perimeter. Based around the core trio of seniors **Ilona Burgrova** and **Lakesha Tolliver** and junior **Demetress Adams**, Walvius will give those players as much court time as they can handle playing at a high level.

Burgrova has seen the most game action of the trio, starting 62 of 91 games in her career. Her experience with the Czech Republic National Team this summer

continued to develop her game. Walvius likes her center's size, defensive style and understanding of the game.

"Ilona gives us so much because she communicates and is always where she is supposed to be when she's supposed to be there," Walvius said. "You simply can't attack the rim when she's in there because she is so fundamental. Ilona can score, is strong and brings a lot of emotion to our team."

As a junior, the 6-foot-6 Burgrova grabbed a career-best 4.6 rebounds per game to go along with 5.6 points per outing. She turned in her first career double-double with 10 points and 12 rebounds against UNC Wilmington and tied a Colonial Center record with five blocked shots in the Gamecocks' win over Florida. She also set a career high with 17 points against Western Carolina in December. Burgrova got better as the season progressed and as SEC play heated up, raising her scoring average to 6.4 points per game against league teams and 7.3 ppg in post-season games.

Tolliver, a 6-foot-3 forward, returns for her senior season despite having already graduated from the University. The fifth-year senior extended her career to help her frontcourt teammates achieve the success for which they have all worked so hard.

"Lakesha has talked about her motivation to help Demetress, especially, have the level of success she deserves from all the work she has done," Walvius said. "That says a whole lot about Lakesha, her motivations and the kind of person she is."

With that giving spirit comes the heart of a lion, the power of a bull and nerves of steel. A fierce competitor with the physical strength to back that up, Tolliver can step up at crunch time and deliver the knock-out punch when needed. In last year's regular-season finale, when the Gamecocks needed a 3-pointer to tie Mississippi State with eight seconds remaining, Walvius called on Tolliver to take the shot. Fouled on the play, the junior calmly stepped to the line, sank all three free throws to send the game, which the Gamecocks eventually won, to overtime.

Tolliver's minutes have increased steadily over the last three seasons and will be maximized this year. She is the team's top returning scorer after netting 7.6 points per game as a junior, adding 4.2 rebounds as well. Like Burgrova, Tolliver raised the level of her game in the postseason, during which she scored 10.3 points and grabbed 5.0 rebounds per game. Those are the numbers Walvius will be looking for throughout the season from her power forward.

"Lakesha can score around the basket, rebounds well and has good feet defensively," Walvius said. "She is an accurate shooter, understands our system and is, all-around, one of the better players in the SEC. If she wants it, she has an opportunity to play at the next level."



Ilona Burgrova



Demetress Adams

The focus of both opposing defenses and Tolliver's return, Adams is the player in which Walvius has noticed the most improvement in the offseason. Not coincidentally, she is the player Walvius has seen putting in the most work as well. The effort has produced seismic changes in the 6-foot-4 forward, from her shooting form to her mental toughness. After seeing her numbers fall off from her freshman to her sophomore year, it was Adams that instigated the extra work – another signal that she is ready to take on a more central role on the team.

"Demetress is our best overall player," Walvius said. "She can score, she can defend and she plays above the rim. She spent the summer developing her outside shot, and I was truly impressed with her work ethic. Demetress also has the ability to read and react to defenders. She doesn't try to force things or play too quickly. Mentally, she has learned that great players sometimes make mistakes and that it's part of the game. She's more focused through those moments now, which is critical to being a good player at this level."

With the three veterans getting a bulk of the minutes, they will mentor the incoming forwards as much by example as counsel. **C.J. Pace** is the early favorite to spell Adams at the small forward, largely because of her experience.

"C.J. comes from one of the top junior college programs in the country and brings maturity," Walvius said. "Plus, I like her game a lot. She squares up strong, she's strong with the ball, and she passes and shoots extremely well."

After being recruited by Walvius out of high school, the 5-foot-11 Pace joins the Gamecocks after two seasons at Chipola Junior College. An All-Conference selection as a sophomore, she was second on the team with 10.8 points per game. Pace helped the Indians to back-to-back Florida Community College Activities Association state championships and a fourth-place finish in the NJCAA National Tournament her freshman year.

Redshirt freshman **Lauren Falohun** will also likely see time at the small forward spot because of her rebounding skills, although Walvius may slot her into the point guard position at times. Falohun is athletic, strong, explosive and attacks the rim. A first-team All-State selection at Pace Academy outside Atlanta, she was named Class 2A Region 5 Player of the Year as a senior, posting 14.2 points, 7.6 rebounds, 4.3 assists and 3.2 steals per game. Falohun sat out the 2006-07 season rehabbing a knee injury suffered in the preseason. Having been around the program for a year already, she brings a better knowledge and experience than her younger teammates.

"I'd like to play Lauren at the three spot because it will be too difficult for her to rebound as the point guard," Walvius said. "Another big role for her will be to defend the best perimeter player on the other team."

Freshman **Jewel May** brings tremendous athleticism and aggressive rebounding to the frontcourt. At 6-foot-1, the lithe May will be a key role player this season with an eye on future greatness in Walvius' system. An All-Metro and All-Area selection at Heritage High in Conyers, Ga., she posted 15 points, 10 rebounds and three blocked shots per game as a senior. As a junior, May was the district Gatorade Player of the Year, recording 18 points and 17 rebounds per game, and was the Gatorade

Rookie of the Year in her district as a freshman. She also won the state high jump title as a sophomore.

"Jewel is going to go in and play hard every time you ask her to," Walvius said. "She can play at the rim, jumps extremely well, is fast running the floor and has great quickness. Jewel has a quick first step, anticipates well and is a great screener and rebounder. Her skills fit our needs well, and she will have an opportunity to play."

Backcourt

The Gamecock roster is awash with guards, but just two that have experience at the college level. Even those two have just 67 games played between them. Still, Walvius believes her team can put together a balanced attack with intelligent play from the backcourt complementing the talent she has in the post. In addition to the two returning players, the six freshmen have the skills to meet the challenge.

"Which freshmen are ready to contribute is an interesting question," Walvius said. "They all of the ability to contribute. It will depend on how quickly they can grow in our system. The biggest trouble for freshmen is that they try too hard. We need to get ours to relax a little bit and play with confidence."

The one from which the newcomers can learn the trade is 5-foot-9 junior **Brionna Dickerson**. Playing in every game last season, Dickerson more than tripled her offensive output with 6.1 points per game, including a career-high 16 points on 8-of-10 shooting against Winthrop. She has a scorer's mentality and can give the Gamecocks points when they need them. Forced into a corner, Dickerson comes out fighting, and Walvius looks for her to sustain that aggression throughout the season.

"Brionna is a great scorer, and I expect her to make a big contribution," Walvius said. "When she gets her back against the wall, when she musters up a lot of determination and pride, she is extremely good. I anticipate that mentality to come out more this year."

Former walk-on turned team leader **Ebony Jones** will be another outstanding tutor for the new class of guards. Originally part of the team as a manager in 2003-04, Jones so impressed Walvius when defending drills that the coach asked her to join the squad. The vocalness and dedication, in addition to her 3-point shooting, that attracted her coach's attention then is what continues to make Jones valuable to the team now.

"Ebony has always provided strong leadership," Walvius said. "She has the skills on the court and the respect of the team off it. She has great leadership ability because she is willing to be honest with her teammates at all times."

One of the first questions Walvius will have to answer is who will run the team from the point guard position. **Ashlie Billingslea** had the inside track on the job before a knee injury sidelined her until at least December. The 5-foot-7 Stephenson High product from Stone Mountain, Ga., was a first-team All-State selection who led her team to a 31-1 record and a No. 5 national ranking as a senior. Additionally, Billingslea ran



Lakesha Tolliver

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Brionna Dickerson

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the point for the Georgia Metros, one of the premier AAU teams in the country.

Courtney Newton took the reins after Billingslea's injury and has been solid in the preseason. Despite never playing the point, the 5-foot-10 Newton possesses the ball-handling skills, poise and intelligence to fill the spot. When asked to challenge herself in a new role, Newton wanted to do whatever the team needed.

Newton was a *Street and Smith's* honorable mention All-America as a senior after recording 24.6 points and 7.8 rebounds per game for Flowery Branch High. She joined Billingslea on the Georgia Metros, who were ranked No. 1 in the country and won both the 2006 USA Junior National in Washington, D.C., and the Nike Nationals in Augusta, Ga.

"Courtney can put the ball on the floor and make open shots," Walvius said. "She has a toughness and a focus about her, and she wants to be successful. She played considerable minutes for her AAU team, and they were always better when she was on the floor."

Another option at the point for the Gamecocks is 5-foot-4 **Samone Kennedy**, the true point guard on the roster. A first-team All-State guard, she helped Ramsay High to four Alabama state championships. As a senior, she ranked among the area leaders in assists and steals and was named regional Most Valuable Player of the state tournament. Despite her slight stature, Kennedy is a tough, physical player who handles the ball well and is a vocal leader.

"A lot of the success Samone's high school team had was because of her leadership," Walvius said. "She is a good floor general, is super quick and has great ball-handling skills. She appears shy off the court, but on it, she is incredibly tough. I have not seen bigger guards be able to post her up because she is so physical."

The Gamecocks added another premier guard late when **Jordan Jones** chose South Carolina over Virginia and Wake Forest. The 5-foot-9 Suwanee, Ga., product is an exceptional 3-point shooter and was rated as the No. 50 player in the nation by *Sports Illustrated*. A first-team All-State selection, Jones led Collins Hill High to the top spot in *USA Today's* final national poll, and the team compiled a 62-1 overall record, including a pair of state championships, during her two seasons there. Jones was also a part of the Georgia Metros AAU team with Billingslea and Newton. Her 3-point prowess fills a void for the Gamecocks and will help ease the defensive pressure on the post.

"Jordan is one of the best 3-point shooters in the game, and we have needed that perimeter presence to free our interior players," Walvius said. "Her stamina is great, and she gets up and down the floor. If you don't guard Jordan, she will make a shot. And, she likes the way we are challenging her to improve defensively."

The final newcomer is 6-foot-1 guard **Jasmine Payne** out of Bay Springs, Miss. She posted 29 points, 14 rebounds and five assists per game as a senior for Stringer High, garnering All-State and District MVP honors. She was named 2006 State Offensive Player of the Year by the *Clarion-Ledger* and was MVP of the state tournament after leading the Red Devils to a 34-2 overall record and the 1A Mississippi State Championship. While Walvius sees Payne as a role player this season, she is keeping an eye on her potential as well.

"Jewel is a good athlete and takes the ball to the rim extremely well," Walvius said. "There are things she needs to improve on, but she is comfortable being a role player in her first year. I like that she is a sponge right now and just wants to learn as much as she can."

Schedule

As usual, the Gamecocks will face a myriad of post-season caliber teams. In addition to those awaiting South Carolina in SEC play, Walvius added Connecticut, Oklahoma, Virginia, UNC Asheville and Jackson State – all of which played in the post-season in 2006-07. Additionally, there are a handful of less well-known names that will provide stiff competition.

The challenges come early as Virginia is the second game on the docket, followed immediately by a senior-laden Buffalo squad and Big Ten contender Penn State. The Gamecocks travel to Florida International for a Thanksgiving tournament, facing Illinois and either host FIU or Providence. WNIT participant Jackson State visits the Colonial Center before Carolina faces its first true road test at UConn. A showdown with rival Clemson precedes a holiday break, from which the Gamecocks return to face Oklahoma and NCAA participant UNC Asheville.

In SEC play, South Carolina faces Florida, Kentucky and Ole Miss twice. The Gamecocks host reigning national champion Tennessee in the second league game of the season, while Arkansas, Mississippi State and Georgia all come to Columbia.

In the nation's top women's basketball conference, there are no nights off, and Walvius looks for her team to compete in every matchup.

"The last two years we've been in the middle of the pack at the end of the season," Walvius said. "We've only been a game or two away from breaking through that, and I believe we can do it this year. Our returning players know we are relying on them to be good, and they have the ability to respond to that challenge. Our young players also took on a challenge when they signed to play at this level. They did it because they wanted a challenge, and we are confident that they can rise to it."

With 17 games on the home schedule, the Gamecocks will look to take advantage of their vocal following.

"Winning at home is so important, especially in SEC play," Walvius said. "You always want to win at home then steal a couple of games on the road. Our fans are extremely supportive both at home and on the road. At the Colonial Center, they are fantastic – loud and into the game. They are a tremendous boost."

Summary

For all the unknown surrounding her youthful squad, Walvius has already seen one thing that buoyed her confidence before practice even officially started. In just weeks together, the group has the positive attitude and leadership necessary to be successful. It is the foundation on which success is best built.

"Our players have shown that they want to be in the gym and want to do all the off-court work necessary to be the best players they can," Walvius said. "A lot of players don't want to work on their weaknesses, and I don't see that with this group. I see enthusiasm and energy in the gym. Everyone is committed to doing what the team needs to win, and that chemistry at this point is invaluable."

"Things aren't always going to go well. In this league, teams are going to make runs at you, and you have to handle those runs with determination and an enthusiasm to get your job done. That is the attitude I have seen on this team, and what makes me so confident going into the season."