



INTRODUCTION

2008-09 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL



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THE GOLD STANDARD

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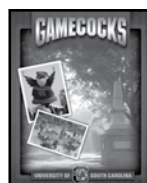
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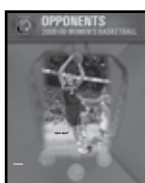


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Credits

The 2008-09 South Carolina women's basketball media guide was published by the University of South Carolina Athletics Media Relations office. The media guide was written, designed and edited by Diana Koval, assistant director for media relations, with assistance provided by the media relations staff. The outside covers were designed by Old Hat Creative (Norman, Okla.), the inside back cover and University section were designed by Grant Hawkins, and the inside front cover was designed by Diana Koval.

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University Information

Location	Columbia, S.C.
Enrollment	27,390
Founded	1801
Team Name	Gamecocks
University President	Dr. Harris Pastides
NCAA Faculty Representative	Dr. Bill Bearden
Athletics Director	Eric Hyman
Deputy Athletics Director	Marcy Girtton
Senior Woman Administrator	Val Sheley
Colors	Garnet (PMS 202) and Black
Conference	Southeastern
Arena/Capacity	Colonial Life Arena/18,000
Press Row Phone	803-777-6182

Coaching Staff Information

Head Coach	Dawn Staley
Alma Mater, Year	Virginia, 1992
Record At South Carolina/Years	0-0 / 1st year
Overall Record/Years	172-80 / 8 years
Assistant Coaches	Lisa Boyer (Ithaca, 1972)
	Carla McGhee (Tennessee, 1990)
	Nikki McCray (Tennessee, 1995)
Director of Basketball Operations	Angela O'Neal (Virginia, 1995)
Basketball Office Phone	803-777-0371

Team Information

2007-08 Overall Record	16-16
2007-08 SEC Record/Finish	4-10 / T-9th
Postseason	WNIT Second Round
Starters R/L	6/6
Letterwinners R/L	2/3

Program Information

First Year of Basketball	1974-75
Overall Record	580-429
SEC Record	64-158
NCAA Tourn. Appearances/Last	8 / 2003
NCAA Tournament Record	8-8
WNIT Appearances/Last	4 / 2008
WNIT Record	5-3

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Media Relations Fax	803-777-2967
Web Site	www.GamecocksOnline.com

2008-09 Roster

Numerical

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Yr.	Hometown/Last School
3	Lauren Falohun	G	5-9	So.	Atlanta, Ga./Pace Academy
4	Samone Kennedy	G	5-4	So.	Birmingham, Ala./Ramsay
10	C.J. Pace	F	5-11	Sr.	Snellville, Ga./Chipola College
11	Lakeisha Sutton	G	5-9	Fr.	Trenton, N.J./Trenton Catholic
12	Charenee Stephens	F	6-1	Fr.	Decatur, Ga./Southwest DeKalb
21	Miranda Tate	G	6-0	Fr.	Bolingbrook, Ill./Bolingbrook
22	Courtney Newton	G	5-10	R-Fr.	Flowery Branch, Ga./Flowery Branch
23	Brionna Dickerson	G	5-9	Sr.	Columbia, S.C./Heathwood Hall
24	Demetress Adams	F	6-4	Sr.	Bishopville, S.C./Lee Central
31	Valerie Nainima	G	5-5	Jr.	Suva, Fiji/Long Island University
32	Tonia Williams	G	6-1	Fr.	Warner Robins, Ga./Houston County
34	Sada Wheeler	C	6-4	Fr.	Gainesville, Ga./East Hall
52	Jewel May	F	6-1	So.	Conyers, Ga./Heritage

Alphabetical

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Yr.	Hometown/Last School
24	Demetress Adams	F	6-4	Sr.	Bishopville, S.C./Lee Central
23	Brionna Dickerson	G	5-9	Sr.	Columbia, S.C./Heathwood Hall
3	Lauren Falohun	G	5-9	So.	Atlanta, Ga./Pace Academy
4	Samone Kennedy	G	5-4	So.	Birmingham, Ala./Ramsay
52	Jewel May	F	6-1	So.	Conyers, Ga./Heritage
31	Valerie Nainima	G	5-5	Jr.	Suva, Fiji/Long Island University
22	Courtney Newton	G	5-10	R-Fr.	Flowery Branch, Ga./Flowery Branch
10	C.J. Pace	F	5-11	Sr.	Snellville, Ga./Chipola College
12	Charenee Stephens	F	6-1	Fr.	Decatur, Ga./Southwest DeKalb
11	Lakeisha Sutton	G	5-9	Fr.	Trenton, N.J./Trenton Catholic
21	Miranda Tate	G	6-0	Fr.	Bolingbrook, Ill./Bolingbrook
34	Sada Wheeler	C	6-4	Fr.	Gainesville, Ga./East Hall
32	Tonia Williams	G	6-1	Fr.	Warner Robins, Ga./Houston County

Head Coach: Dawn Staley

Assistant Coaches: Lisa Boyer, Carla McGhee, Nikki McCray

Roster Breakdown

By State

South Carolina (2): Demetress Adams, Brionna Dickerson.

Georgia (7): Lauren Falohun, Jewel May, Courtney Newton, C.J. Pace, Charenee Stephens, Sada Wheeler, Tonia Williams.

Alabama (1): Samone Kennedy

Illinois (1): Miranda Tate.

New Jersey (1): Lakeisha Sutton.

International (1): Valerie Nainima (Fiji).

By Class

Senior (3): Demetress Adams, Brionna Dickerson, C.J. Pace.

Junior (1): Valerie Nainima.

Sophomore (3): Lauren Falohun, Samone Kennedy, Jewel May.

Freshman (6): Courtney Newton, Charenee Stephens, Lakeisha Sutton, Miranda Tate, Sada Wheeler, Tonia Williams.

By Position

Guard (8): Brionna Dickerson, Lauren Falohun, Samone Kennedy, Valerie Nainima, Courtney Newton, Lakeisha Sutton, Miranda Tate, Tonia Williams.

Forward (4): Demetress Adams, Jewel May, C.J. Pace, Charenee Stephens.

Center (1): Sada Wheeler.

Pronunciation Guide

Demetress Adams	duh-MEE-tree-us	Charenee Stephens	SHAR-nay
Brionna Dickerson	bri-AWN-uh	Sada Wheeler	shaw-DAY
Lauren Falohun	foul-HOON	Tonia Williams	tuh-KNEE-uh
Valerie Nainima	NIGH-knee-muh		

Media Relations Staff and Policies

Intro



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Fax: 803-777-2967



Lynne Beattie

Media Relations Administrative Assistant
(O): 803-777-5204

Review

Game Day Policies

Credentials

Credentials are limited to working daily print and electronic media and to others whose duties make necessary access to press row. Photo credentials are issued only to working photographers and videographers. Photographers are restricted to the baselines and may use natural light only. Flash units are not allowed.

To request credentials, contact Diana Koval by phone at 803-777-7977 or via email at dkoval@mailbox.sc.edu.

Media Services

Press row at Colonial Life Arena has voice and data lines built into the sideline tables. These services are available to media members on a first-come, first-served basis. Wireless internet is available throughout the facility as well. Electrical outlets are available on both the sideline and baseline seating areas.

Complete play-by-play and halftime and final boxscores are provided to the media. Computer monitors are on press row for broadcast and print media locations for immediate updates throughout the game.

The Media Room at Colonial Life Arena is located behind the visitor bench near the lockerroom cluster. This room is open to accredited media with proper credentials only. All game materials are in this room pre-game, and press conferences will be held there following the game.

A buffet will be served in the press room prior to all games. Snacks and drinks will be served at halftime. Soft drinks and coffee may be taken to press row, but all food must be consumed in the press room area.

Visiting Radio

Announce positions for radio and TV broadcasts are at courtside. Under contractual reciprocal agreements, the official designated originating station or network of the visiting team is allowed to originate radio broadcasts without charge. All others will be charged an origination fee. Stations must contact Liz McMillan of ISP at 803-777-7895 for information.

Records

History

Student–Athlete Media Interview Policy

All interviews are to be coordinated through the media relations office. This allows us to arrange the interview when it best suits the student-athlete's and the reporter's schedules. Please contact the media relations office in advance to make your interview requests. Media are not permitted to contact student-athletes on their own.

All interviews will take place at the practice site or at the media relations office.

Dormitory, apartment and cell telephone numbers for student-athletes will not be provided to the media. Should you need to conduct a telephone interview with a student-athlete, a call will be placed to you from the athlete at a mutually agreeable time.

Print

Associated Press

1311 Marion Street
Columbia, S.C. 29201
(O): 803-799-5510 (F): 803-252-2913
Pete Iacobelli (piacobelli@ap.org)

The State

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Bob Gillespie (bgillespie@thestate.com)
SE: Rick Millians (rmillians@thestate.com)
C: Ron Morris (rmorris@thestate.com)
Beat: Joe Person (jperson@thestate.com)
(C): 803-917-8463

Charleston Post & Courier

134 Columbus Street
Charleston, S.C. 29403
(O): 843-937-5598 (F): 843-937-5579
C: Ken Burger (kburger@postandcourier.com)
Beat: Travis Haney (thaney@postandcourier.com)
(C): 404-273-2583

Greenville News

Box 1688
Greenville, S.C. 29602
(O): 864-298-4239 (F): 864-298-4395
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C: Bart Wright (rbwright@greenvillenews.com)

Anderson Independent-Mail

Box 2507
Anderson, S.C. 29622
(O): 864-260-1267 (F): 864-260-1267
SE: Scott Adamson
(adamsonsl@independentmail.com)

Augusta Chronicle

725 Broad Street
Augusta, Ga. 30901
(O): 706-823-3337 (F): 706-823-3408
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(jboyette@augustachronicle.com)
Scott Michaux
(scott.michaux@augustachronicle.com)

Charlotte Observer

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Ron Green, Jr.
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Stan Olson (solson@charlotteobserver.com)

Florence Morning News

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Florence, S.C. 29501
(O): 843-317-7271 (F): 843-317-7292
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Hilton Head Island Packet

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Myrtle Beach Sun News

P.O. Box 406
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SE: Rich Griffiths
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1010 Broughton Street
Orangeburg, S.C. 29116
(O): 803-534-1060 (F): 803-533-5595
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Rock Hill Herald-Journal

Box 11707
Rock Hill, S.C. 29731
(O): 803-329-4074 (F): 803-329-4021
Barry Byers (bbyers@heraldonline.com)
SE: Gary McCann
(gmccann@heraldonline.com)

Spartanburg Herald-Journal

Box 1657
Spartanburg, S.C. 29304
(O): 864-582-4511 (F): 803-594-6350
SE: Burke Noel (burke.noel@shj.com)

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Rick Henry (rhenry@wistv.com)

WLTX-TV (Channel 19)

6027 Garners Ferry Rd, Columbia, S.C. 29205
(O): 803-647-0233 (F): 803-776-1791
Bob Shields (bobshields@wltx.com)

WOLO-TV (Channel 25)

Box 4217, Columbia, S.C. 29204
(O): 803-754-7525 (F): 803-691-4015
Tim Hill (timhill@abcolumbia.com)

WCSC-TV (Channel 5)

Box 186, Charleston, S.C. 29402
(O): 843-402-5750 (F): 843-402-5591
Craig Birnbach (cbirnbach@live5news.com)

WBTW-TV (Channel 13)

3430 TV Road, Florence, S.C. 29501
(O): 803-317-1313

WYFF-TV (Channel 4)

Box 788, Greenville, S.C. 29602
(O): 864-240-5265 (F): 864-240-5297
Geoff Hart (ghart@wyff4.com)

WPDE-TV (Channel 15)

Box 51150, Myrtle Beach, S.C. 29579
(O): 843-234-9733 (F): 843-234-9739
Rick Chrampanis (15sports@wpde.com)

WCBD-TV (Channel 2)

210 West Coleman Blvd.,
Mt. Pleasant, S.C. 29464
(O): 843-216-4894 (F): 843-884-6624
Brendan Clark (bclark@wcbd.com)

WCIV-TV (Channel 4)

P.O. Box 22165, Mt. Pleasant, S.C. 29413
(O): 843-884-8513 (F): 843-849-2519
Josh Morton (josh.morton@wciv.com)

WRDW-TV (Channel 12)

Box 1212, North Augusta, S.C. 30913
(O): 803-278-3111 (F): 803-442-4561
Matt Barnes (mattbarnes@wrwd.com)

WSPA-TV (Channel 7)

Box 1717, Spartanburg, S.C. 29301
(O): 864-587-4497 (F): 864-587-4480
Pete Yanity (pyanity@wspa.com)

Radio

Citadel Broadcasting

P.O. Box 5106, Columbia, S.C. 29250
(O): 803-766-7600 (F): 803-796-9291
Brent Johnson (bjohnson@b106fm.com)
GM: William McElveen
(bill.mcelveen@citcomm.com)

WISW-AM (1320 AM)

(O): 803-796-9975 (F): 803-466-6453

South Carolina News Network

3710 Landmark, Dr., Suite 100
Columbia, S.C. 29204
(O): 803-790-4305 (F): 803-790-4309
Phil Kornblut (philtalk@aol.com)
Kevin McCrayer (kmac000@aol.com)

WVOC (560 AM)

Box 21567, Columbia, S.C. 29221
(O): 803-343-1100
Christopher Thompson
(sports@wvoc.com)

WNKT (107.5 FM)

(O): 803-796-9975
Mike Morgan (mike@1075thegame.com)
Heath Cline (heath@1075thegame.com)
Tommy Moody (tommy@1075thegame.com)
Jay Phillips (jay@1075thegame.com)

WCOS-AM (1400 AM)

Box 21567, Columbia, S.C. 29204
Teddy Heffner (teddy@1400theteam.com)

ESPN (93.1 FM)

(O) 803-361-2309

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Elizabeth McMillan, GM
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P.O. Box 50306, Columbia, S.C. 29250
(O): 803-777-7895 (F): 803-777-7376

Campus/Specialty

The Daily Gamecock

1400 Greene Street
Columbia, S.C. 29208
(O): 803-777-7182 (F): 803-777-6482

Spurs & Feathers

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New-Look Gamecocks Ready for Staley Era to Begin

A youthful squad will be ready to play for new head coach

With nine sophomores and freshmen on the roster, head coach Dawn Staley has used the preseason to prepare her team and herself for the rigors of the elite non-conference and SEC foes that await in 2008-09, including all of the 2008 NCAA Final Four teams.

Preseason and offseason practice and conditioning are important for every team in the country, but maybe none moreso than the youthful Gamecocks and their new head coach. As players and coaches got to know each other, both parties were cramming as if final exams were just around the corner.

"Our team is hungry to win and receptive to everything our coaching staff has to offer," Staley said of the team's preseason workouts. "We're learning new concepts, which they haven't mastered at this point but that they've certainly embraced. When you're trying to put a team together and do things differently, that's half the battle."

Staley and her staff have just three seniors on the roster, but they provide a wealth of experience against Southeastern Conference foes. Demetress Adams and Brionna Dickerson, who have a combined 79 games of SEC play under their belts, will have to show the way for their younger teammates and maybe occasionally their coaches as the Gamecocks face one of the most difficult schedules in recent memory.

"Our seniors will have to be leaders from the standpoint that they have been around the block," Staley said. "They have more experience than I do playing in the SEC and for South Carolina. So, it starts with them and trickles down to the players that are less experienced. They have done a tremendous job already of letting our inexperienced, younger players know that it's tough to come by wins in this conference and that it certainly will be a lot tougher if the work ethic isn't in place."

As she heads into her inaugural campaign at South Carolina, Staley is still evaluating the talent and strengths of her team. Everyone on the roster, regardless of class or experience, has a chance to start and to play significant minutes. There were no preconceived notions about the lineup from the coaches, and the team responded in the preseason with the same open-mindedness and commitment to earning the spots.

"The one constant on our team is hard work," Staley said. "They all want to do well early because no playing time is calculated at this point. Everyone is working hard and not looking over their shoulders at different teammates, so we're getting to see what everyone's commitment and skills are."

The Philosophy

The first season with a new head coach means transition for any team. Players that have been in the program have to adjust to new personalities, expectations and possibly, responsibilities. First-year players have even more to juggle in acclimating to the college environment. Staley knows the challenges that lie ahead, but it does not change her passion or expectations for her team.

"I'm not so much into the win-loss type of results," Staley said. "If we put in the work and compete at the highest level we're capable of, the results will take care of themselves."

"The work" was something Staley was known for as a player, and Coach Staley expects nothing less from those who now play for her. The coach's satisfaction will be in direct proportion with her team's effort on every play of every game. As a result, this year's team will be built to defend as if their lives depended on it. The offensive mentality is just as passionate although slightly less formulated.

"We are going to defend like no other," Staley said. "We're going to disrupt people's offenses and make them a little bit uncomfortable about what they're trying

to do. And, how we react to other teams doing that to us will determine if we are going to be a good team or a great team."

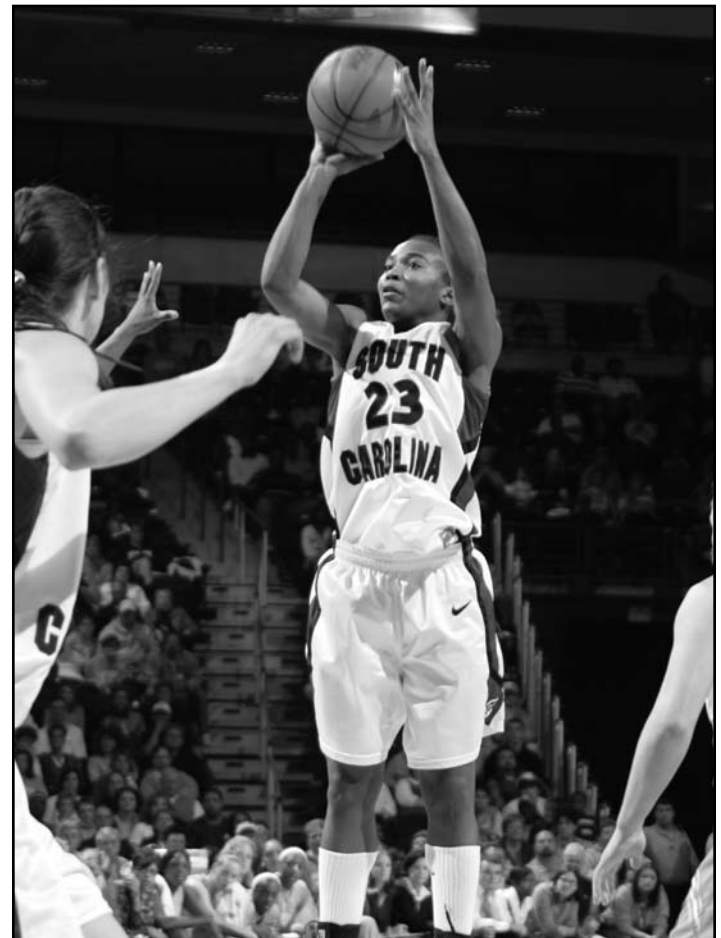
The Backcourt

The consummate point guard, Staley has a roster teeming with guards. Eight guards make up the 13-player roster for the Gamecocks, and none of them has a specifically defined role as they head into the season. The disparity in guards to post players is an advantage for a Staley-coached team, however, when it comes to speed of play.

"We're trying to settle on ways in which to find playing time for everybody," Staley said. "That might mean playing a little small with four guards and a post player on the floor. What we give up in some areas with that lineup, we will make up for in others. We'll instantly be a lot quicker."

Headlining the guard lineup is senior Brionna Dickerson. The team's third-leading scorer last season, Dickerson was a key scorer for the squad while battling an early foot injury throughout the season. She finished the season hitting 32.8 percent from beyond the 3-point line and 10.4 points per game. A proven spot-up shooter, Staley is looking for Dickerson to expand her game this season.

"Brionna can shoot the ball with the best of them, so we're going to find opportunities for her to get a rhythm and shoot shots that are comfortable for her," Staley said. "But, in a change from how she's played in the past, we're working with



Brionna Dickerson is the Gamecocks' sharpest outside shooter with a wealth of playing experience.

her on getting to the basket as well. We need her to score in a lot of different ways for us to be successful. She's capable of doing that, and she's putting in the work to do it."

Redshirt freshman Courtney Newton will have a shot at playing on the wing as well. After a standout high school career as a shooting guard, she was transitioning to point guard prior to the knee injury that derailed her first season as a Gamecock. Staley wants her to go back to her natural position, where her shooting touch and toughness will put points on the board.

"Courtney is going to find a way onto the floor because she is smart, works hard and doesn't back down from anyone," Staley said. "I love a player who is that competitive, who isn't going to give anybody an inch – not even her teammates."

If Staley wants to ramp up the speed of play, she needs to look no further than sophomore Samone Kennedy, who started six of the 31 games in which she played as a freshman. What she lacks in size at 5-foot-4, she makes up for in speed and court vision. Playing just 18.8 minutes per game last season, Kennedy ranked seventh in the SEC with 3.42 assists per game. She was in the league's top 10 with a 1.31-to-1 assist-to-turnover ratio as well.

"Samone is very, very quick and a good floor general," Staley said. "She is someone who can run our basketball team on both ends of the floor. She is working to become more of an offensive threat, and she is going to have to quarterback our defense. We need her to be out front disrupting the other team's point guard, and she is not going to shy away from that challenge."

Providing some power for the guards is sophomore Lauren "Cocoa" Falohun. She saw limited playing time last season after redshirting in 2006-07, but Staley has been pleasantly surprised by what Falohun has shown in the preseason.

"Cocoa works extremely hard," Staley said. "She can defend well and can score, although she doesn't always look to score herself. She can do a lot of thing on both sides of the ball because she is physically so strong."

Three guards are in their first season at South Carolina, not including transfer Valerie Nainima who will have to sit out the season due to NCAA transfer rules, and will have just as much chance to play as any of the returners.

"Our freshmen are going to have to transition quickly from high school and AAU basketball to college basketball," Staley said. "They are very talented, but it's a huge transition. They are going to have to play, though, and they are working hard at finding their comfort zones."

Staley added Lakeisha Sutton to the roster over the summer, and the Trenton, N.J., native brings an air of success to the squad. The 5-foot-9 guard was the New Jersey Gatorade Player of the Year scoring 19.6 points per game as a senior and led her high school team to back-to-back state championships. Her AAU team, the New Jersey Flames, also picked up consecutive New Jersey U17 state titles.

"Lakeisha is a tremendous defender and will be a contributor for us once she gets through the transition to college basketball," Staley said. "She is open to information, though, and will get much better when she stops being afraid of making a mistake."

Tonia Williams is another signee who has had success throughout her high school career at Houston County High in Warner Robins, Ga. Named Class 5A player of the year and first-team all-state, the 6-foot-1 Williams helped the Bears to three straight regional titles, posting 20 points and 14 rebounds per game.

"Tonia can score the basketball," Staley said. "She is a big guard who is receptive to learning in this transition time. She wants to play and is showing us that by working hard to shed some of the bad habits all freshmen have."

Another summer signee, Miranda Tate rounds out the list of guards at Staley's disposal. Her Bolingbrook High School team picked up the state title her sophomore year and got back to the title game the following season. The six-foot tall Tate led the team with 14.4 points per game and 37 3-pointers during the championship season and earned all-state honors as a junior.

"Miranda is another big guard that should be able to score points for us," Staley said. "There's just not enough of her right now. She will have to build up her strength to be able to stay healthy through a season of play at this level."



Demetress Adams is the most experienced post player on the roster, and she will be eyeing a spot on the All-SEC team again in 2008-09.

The Frontcourt

Any discussion of the South Carolina frontcourt begins with senior Demetress Adams. She will need help in the post, though, and Staley will have to find a young player ready to rise to the challenge.

"Demetress has set herself apart from probably the entire team," Staley said. "She sees her career coming to an end, and she has aspirations of playing professionally. Her stats from the last three years show that she is a player who has done some great things in this program, and I don't see it being any different this year."

A second-team All-SEC selection last season, Adams also earned a spot on the league's All-Defensive Team. The 6-foot-4 forward led the Gamecocks and ranked fourth in the SEC with 8.9 rebounds per game and was second on the team (19th in the league) at 10.9 points per game. Capable of putting the team on her back, she was the Gamecocks' leading scorer seven times and leading rebounder in 22 games. She reached double figures in points 21 times and recorded eight double-doubles. Among those double-doubles was her school-record 26-rebound performance against Arkansas.

Defensively, Adams blocked 55 shots last season, the third-highest season total in school history. Her 2.03 steals per game were 10th-best in the SEC as well.

"Demetress is very athletic and has a lot of speed," Staley said. "She is a versatile player, and we'll use her in a lot of different ways on both sides of the ball. She's developing her ability to score with her back to the basket as well as facing up or driving from the high post area. We're going to capitalize on her versatility because there aren't many post players that are as mobile as she is."

Senior C.J. Pace was showing signs of making waves for the Gamecocks last season before missing the second semester for academic reasons. Her 5-foot-11 build puts her somewhere between a perimeter and post player, so she is capable of

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giving the opposition difficulty matching up. In her first season at South Carolina, Pace played in 16 games with highs of nine rebounds against Alabama A&M and 15 points in just 15 minutes against UNC Asheville.

"C.J. has a pretty good basketball IQ," Staley said. "She can give a post player fits if we play her at the four spot. At this stage, she has a shot at playing on the perimeter as well."

The only other returning post player is sophomore Jewel May, who saw action in 28 games last season. At 6-foot-1, the lithe forward posted 3.5 points and 2.3 rebounds per game last season but showed that she was capable of more. Against Florida, May snagged a season-best six boards, and she twice reached double-figure points, scoring 14 against Savannah State and 10 against Kentucky. Staley likes May's natural athleticism on defense and sees her player's willingness to work on her offensive game.

"On players at any position, Jewel has the athleticism, the quickness to keep people in front of her and make them take difficult shots," Staley said. "She is the player I believe can be our defensive stopper. She is still refining her offensive game to get it where we want it to be, but she is still going to be able to score for us. It will just be in a less traditional way with offensive rebounds and put-backs."

A pair of freshmen will have to join the fray in the lane right out of the gate. Sada Wheeler is the only center listed on the roster and is the lone player of the group that is at home playing with her back to the basket. A 1,000-point scorer at East Hall High in Gainesville, Ga., Wheeler guided her team to the Class AAA State Championship as a junior and earned AAA Area Player of the Year honors from the *Gainesville Times* in the process.

"Sada is very skillful for her size," Staley said. "She has a pretty high basketball IQ and great hands. Her challenge will be strength and experience as a freshman in the paint, but she has a chance to immediately help our basketball team."

Charenee Stephens rounds out the group after an all-state caliber career at Georgia's Southwest DeKalb High. The 6-foot-1 forward was tabbed the 33rd-best player in the class of 2008 by *Hoopgurlz.com* and the fifth-best forward in the country by *Scout.com*. She is a raw talent, but one Staley sees developing into an impact player for the Gamecocks.

"Charenee is another freshman making the transition, but she has a very good basketball IQ," Staley said. "She's somewhat undersized for her position, but what she lacks in height she more than makes up for in strength and intellect."

The Schedule

The Gamecocks have their work cut out for them in 2008-09 with a schedule that features 12 teams that advanced to the postseason in 2008, including all participants in the NCAA Final Four. Fortunately, three of those games against Final Four teams are at Colonial Life Arena at least one month into the season.

"The schedule is one that is a challenge but one we can use to measure ourselves," Staley said. "Most people might shy away from a schedule like this. But, for me, I want our players to see that there's another level of basketball being played outside of us. We either compete or get our heads banged in. It's that simple, and I think we'll do the former rather than the latter."

Following a trip to Penn State to open the season, South Carolina opens its 15-game home slate against archrival Clemson. After suffering their third-straight lopsided defeat at the hands of the Gamecocks, the Tigers will be eyeing a team in transition.

Whatever bonds the Gamecocks did not achieve in the preseason will have ample opportunity to form when the team travels to the Cancun Thanksgiving Classic. South Carolina will face a foe familiar to Staley as the Gamecocks take on Fordham of the Atlantic 10 Conference in the tournament opener. They will play either UNC Wilmington or Ohio University on the second day of the event.

After a trip to Wake Forest, South Carolina opens a six-game homestand with High Point and USC-Upsate before the first of the Final Four teams arrives in the form of Stanford on Dec. 19. Staley will battle her former USA Basketball coach, Tara VanDerveer, who returns four starters from last year's national runner-up team.

The Gamecocks take on nearby Charlotte on Dec. 21 before welcoming Connecticut to Colonial Life Arena on Dec. 28. The series of home games ends with the calendar year as South Carolina hosts Jacksonville on Dec. 30.

The New Year begins right where the Gamecocks' 2007-08 season ended with a Jan. 4 game at NC State, which is the team's final non-conference game of the season.

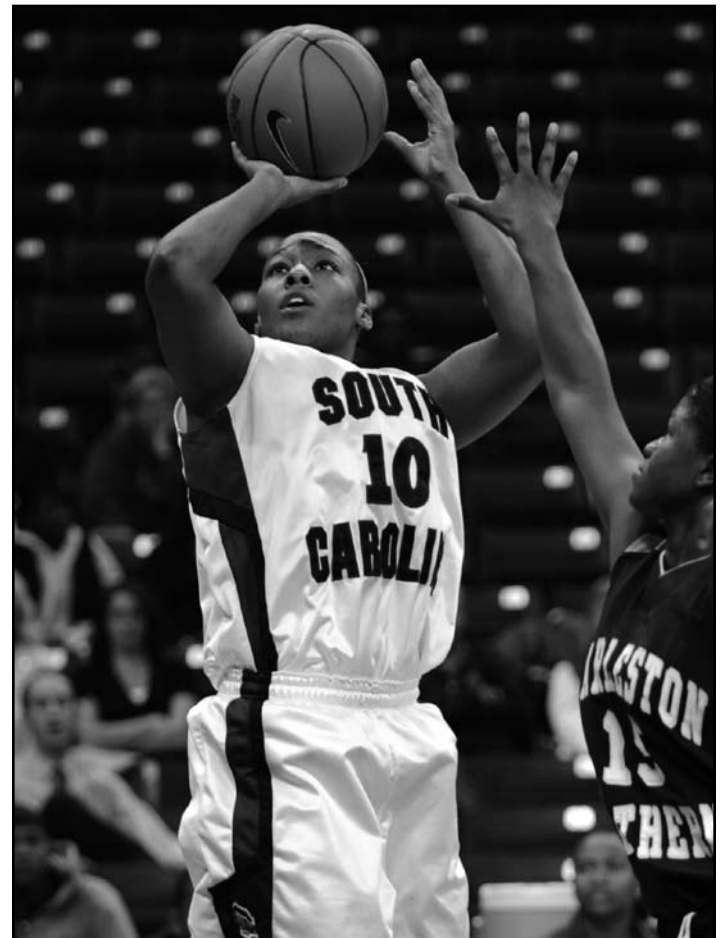
The SEC slate contains the usual suspects with the Gamecocks playing home-and-home contests against Florida, Kentucky and Mississippi. Other visitors to Colonial Life Arena include Auburn, Vanderbilt, national semifinalist LSU and Alabama.

South Carolina will head to North Little Rock, Ark., for the SEC Tournament. The event at ALLTEL Arena tips off on March 5 and runs through March 8.

The Wrap-Up

While there is much still unknown about the 2008-09 season, there are a few hallmarks of a Dawn Staley-coached team that are guaranteed.

Fans and opposing teams alike can rest assured that the Gamecocks will battle passionately every minute on the court. They can expect a team that is disciplined and well-heeled in the fundamentals, particularly on defense. And they will be able to see progress from game to game. With credentials and results like Staley's, anything less would be unacceptable first and foremost to the coach.



Senior C.J. Pace will look to give defenders fits as she plays both in the post and on the perimeter.

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