



Melanie Johnson led the charge for a South Carolina team that shattered the school record for blocked shots last year.

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General Information

- Location Columbia, S.C.
- Enrollment 23,700
- Founded 1801
- University President Dr. Andrew Sorensen
- Athletics Director Eric Hyman
- Senior Woman Administrator Val Sheley
- Conference Southeastern
- Mascot Cocky
- Colors Garnet and Black

Team Information

- Arena (Capacity) Colonial Center (18,000)
- Arena Press Row 803-777-6182
- Head Coach Susan Walvius
- Alma Mater Virginia Tech, 1986
- Record at South Carolina 114-117 (9th Year)
- Career Record 212-218 (16th Year)
- Assistant Coaches Ken Griffin, Tammy Holder, Michelle Marciniak
- Director of Basketball Operations Robin Muller
- Administrative Assistants Renee Mahaffey, Kaye Hunke
- Basketball Office Phone 803-777-0371
- 2004-05 Overall Record 8-21
- 2004-05 SEC Record/Finish 2-12 (12th)
- Letterwinners R/L 12/0
- Starters R/L 5/0

Program History

- First Year of Basketball 1974-75
- Overall Record 529-386
- SEC Record 47-133
- NCAA Tournament Appearances/Last Eight/2003
- NCAA Tournament Record 8-8
- WNIT Appearances/Last One/1979
- WNIT Record 3-0 (1979 WNIT Champs)

Media Information

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WHY USC?

After two years of fielding a roster comprised almost exclusively of freshmen and sophomores, South Carolina women's basketball coach Susan Walvius now has a roster loaded with game-tested players. Though forward Olga Gritsaeva is the only senior on the team, a total of eight juniors and one redshirt sophomore will take the court for Carolina in 2005-06.

Experience is no longer an obstacle for the Gamecocks, rather, it is a strength. Just looking at the junior class, consider that forward Iva Sliskovic has seen action in 57 career games with 50 starts, guard Lauren Simms has played in 54 games with 53 career starts, guard Stacy Booker has played in 48 career games with 12 starts, forward Larissa Kulcsar has played in 54 games with seven starts and guard Lea Fabbri has played in 48 games with 18 starts. All tolled, the Gamecock juniors have played in 334 games, making 163 starts.

"At this point, the biggest difference from what we have had in the past is experience," Walvius said. "Our junior class has gotten a lot of court time, whereas at a lot of other schools' younger players spend a lot of time on the bench. I am very happy with our size. We are probably one of the biggest teams in the league. Our depth at guard is better.



Olga Gritsaeva is the lone senior on the Carolina roster in 2005-06.

"We'll be quicker on the perimeter and we'll shoot the ball better from the perimeter. The overall execution of our system is a lot better at this point, and a big reason for that is that we now have experienced players and we're not spending a lot of time on the basic things because we went through all of that two years ago. We can be more advanced in what we do."

With a more advanced team to work with, Walvius said she stressed execution of the system that this team has played in for the past two years.

"During our European trip this summer, I could see us doing the little things better," Walvius said. "We were doing things like reading the defender and attacking weaknesses. There were little points of execution that made big differences. Our communication was much better. We had better defensive execution and we had better offensive execution and better shot selection. We're setting each other up for success. We look like a whole different basketball team."

Along with experience comes leadership and accountability, and Walvius said she likes what she sees from her team heading into the 2005-06 season.

"The mindset of the players on this team is very different, and that comes along with the experience that we have gained," Walvius said. "Freshmen come in and often times think about themselves. Sophomores want to play, but once they become juniors, they think more about winning, and that's what we have now. The focus of this team is winning. Everyone is speaking up when needed. The communication is great. We're getting great play from Stacy Booker and Angela Hunter. Melanie Johnson and Lakesha Tolliver are also playing extremely well."

Walvius said she feels that Booker, Hunter and Johnson, in particular, are poised to have breakthrough seasons, respectively.

"Stacy has taken her game to another level and she is using her strengths for the good of the system and that's what we want," Walvius said. "She is attacking the rim well, she's communicating, she's playing defense and she has really emerged and matured.

"It's obvious that Angela Hunter did a lot of work in the summer because she shot the ball extremely well on the European tour and made great passes," Walvius said. "Her assist numbers were up and she has become our best perimeter passer. Melanie was unstoppable when we got her the ball in Europe and she really gained confidence."

Redshirt sophomore Lakesha Tolliver could be another player to watch in 2005-06 if her development in the offseason is any indication.



Head Coach Susan Walvius

"A real bright spot for this team in the offseason is Lakesha Tolliver," Walvius said. "She is winning in sprints and she is another player who has really gained confidence because we relied on her heavily in Europe. She now comes in with the mindset that she is going to be an impact player for us."

Point guard Lea Fabbri is someone who has embraced her role as a team leader, according to Walvius.

"With two years of experience at point guard, you can see that this is now her team," Walvius said. "She is stepping up as a leader and her communication is very clear. She knows what we have to do. Our team knows it can win, and Lea knows this team can win. It is very important that the point guard feels that way."

Perhaps the two most proven players on the team are Iva Sliskovic and Lauren Simms.

"Iva is one of the smartest players on the team and she is very good defensively and knows where she needs to be," Walvius said. "We are still working on taking the ball stronger to the basket and finishing. She loves to pass inside-out and has good court awareness. She has a good understanding of where her teammates are on the court. She can score and rebound. Iva is someone who has had a lot of court time the last two years and that will pay big dividends this year.

"Lauren is still recovering from knee surgery, but she has such a good work ethic," Walvius said. "Her pull-up jump shot looks great. We probably will run both Stacy Booker and Lauren Simms at the point and we'll let them play and give them more freedom. Lauren is really liking the point guard position, so we will see more of her at the point this year."

A trio of players who earned spots on the SEC Winter Sports Academic Honor Roll last year also figure to contribute on the court in 2005-06.

"Larissa Kulcsar had a good summer," Walvius said. "She did the study abroad program, and even though she wasn't able to practice with us, she met us in Europe and played well. She is so smart and is a good athlete. She is a good screen-setter, she runs the floor and she works hard.

"Shannel Harris has stepped up her leadership," Walvius said. "She is communicating well and working hard. She improved the range on her shot this offseason and is using her quick first step to get to the rim more.

"We have noticed a real improvement in Olga Gritsaeva after playing with her national team this summer," Walvius said. "It's obvious that she wants to play. We gave her the choice of playing the three or playing the four and she has worked hard on her skills playing the three and looks really good. We like Olga's size on the perimeter because we can post up smaller defenders and take advantage of her size."

"The mindset of the players on this team is very different, and that comes along with the experience that we have gained," Walvius said. "Freshmen come in and often times think about themselves. Sophomores want to play, but once they become juniors, they think more about winning, and that's what we have now. The focus of this team is winning."

Though not a junior like most of her teammates, sophomore center Ilona Burgrova should also be counted as a player who garnered important minutes early in her career. Burgrova played in 29 games in 2005-06 and posted six double-figure scoring games as a true freshman.

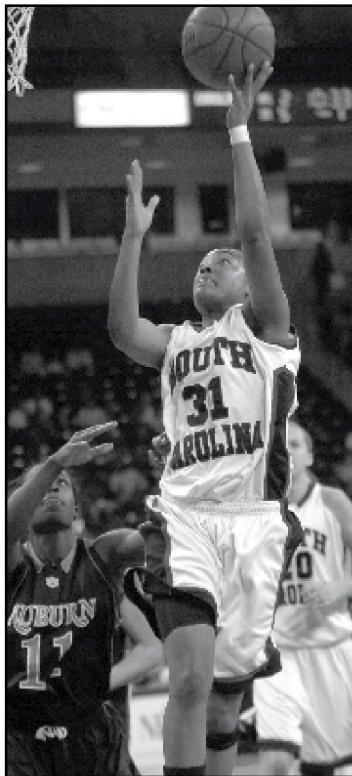
"Ilona has great size and has tremendous moves around the basket," Walvius said. "We are looking for her to take a step in her consistency in putting the ball in the hole. She is strong physically and does a nice job posting up. I feel like we now have the players on the perimeter who can get her the ball inside in a good position to score."

One of the best stories from last season returns for 2005-06 in the person of sophomore guard Ebony Jones. A talented high school player at Aiken HS, Jones came to South Carolina as a team manager, but earned a spot on the roster in late December and scored on a layup in a game against the College of Charleston.

"Ebony continues to work as a shooter," Walvius said. "Her strength is catch-and-shoot and she is doing a good job for us defensively as well."

As for the incoming freshman class of Demetress Adams and Brionna Dickerson, Walvius said patience will be a key. The duo was ranked as the No. 13 recruiting class in the nation by Blue Star Index when they signed to play for Carolina.

"Demetress Adams will be an impact player for this team, but we need to have patience with her," Walvius said. "Her athleticism really shines through and she is a great defensive presence. Right now, she is the best shot-blocker on the team. She has great speed in the post but has a lot to learn. She is taking in a lot every day and I really like what I see from her. Brionna is behind the rest of the team because she had a season off after injuring her knee as a senior in high school, so she is behind the rest of the team. She is very good off the dribble and we will look to put her in situations where she can score off the dribble. She is making the adjustment to the college game. Physically, she looks good. It's just a matter of time."



Guard Stacy Booker

by the **NUMBERS**

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100%

The percentage of points, rebounds, assists, steals, blocked shots and players back from last year's team. The entire roster remains intact, with the addition of freshmen Demetress Adams and Brionna Dickerson.

466

The combined number of games played by players on the Carolina roster in 2005-06.

223

The combined number of games started by players on the Carolina roster in 2005-06.

7

The number of players on the South Carolina roster that are 6-0 or taller.

7

The number of players on the South Carolina roster that are from the state of South Carolina.

7

Returning players who earned spots on the SEC Winter Sports Academic Honor Roll last season.

3.347

The Gamecocks' cumulative team grade point average during the Spring, 2005 semester, establishing a new team record.

ROSTER/SCHEDULE

2005-06 South Carolina Women's Basketball Roster

No.	Name	Hgt.	Class	Position	Hometown/Last School
2	Stacy Booker	5-8	JR	Guard	Lawrenceville, Ga./Collins Hill
5	Lea Fabbri	5-7	JR	Guard	New Zagreb, Croatia
11	Shannel Harris	6-0	JR	Guard	Lawrenceville, Ga./Collins Hill
14	Iva Sliskovic	6-5	JR	Forward	Zagreb, Croatia
15	Iлона Бургова	6-6	SO	Center	Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic
20	Olga Gritsaeva	6-4	SR	Forward	St. Petersburg, Russia
22	Angela Hunter	5-9	RS JR	Guard	Columbia, S.C./Tennessee-Chattanooga
23	Melanie Johnson	6-1	JR	Forward	Barnwell, S.C./Barnwell
24	Demetress Adams	6-3	FR	Center	Bishopville, S.C./Lee Central
25	Ebony Jones	5-6	SO	Guard	Aiken, S.C./Aiken
30	Lauren Simms	5-9	JR	Guard	Columbia, S.C./Spring Valley
32	Brionna Dickerson	5-9	FR	Guard	Columbia, S.C./Heathwood Hall
41	Lakesha Tolliver	6-3	RS SO	Forward	Columbia, S.C./Dreher
55	Larissa Kulcsar	6-1	JR	Forward	Cluj, Romania

Coaches

Susan Walvius - Head Coach
 Ken Griffin - Assistant Coach
 Tammy Holder - Assistant Coach
 Michelle Marciniak - Assistant Coach
 Robin Muller - Director of Basketball Operations

Pronunciation Guide

Lea Fabbri LAY-uh fab-BREE
 Iva Sliskovic..... EE-va SLIZ-ko-vich
 Iлона Бургова il-LOAN-uh berg-ROVE-uh
 Demetress Adams de-MEET-riss
 Brionna Dickerson bree-ON-uh
 Lakesha Tolliver..... la-KEESH-uh
 Larissa Kulcsar..... KOOL-char

Roster Breakdown

By Class

Seniors (1) - Olga Gritsaeva
Juniors (8) - Stacy Booker, Lea Fabbri, Shannel Harris, Iva Sliskovic, Angela Hunter, Melanie Johnson, Lauren Simms, Larissa Kulcsar
Sophomores (3) - Iлона Бургова, Ebony Jones, Lakesha Tolliver
Freshmen (2) - Demetress Adams, Brionna Dickerson

By Position

Guards (7) - Stacy Booker, Lea Fabbri, Shannel Harris, Angela Hunter, Ebony Jones, Lauren Simms, Brionna Dickerson
Forwards (5) - Iva Sliskovic, Olga Gritsaeva, Melanie Johnson, Lakesha Tolliver, Larissa Kulcsar
Centers (2) - Iлона Бургова, Demetress Adams

Where They Came From

South Carolina (7) - Angela Hunter, Melanie Johnson, Demetress Adams, Ebony Jones, Lauren Simms, Brionna Dickerson, Lakesha Tolliver
Georgia (2) - Stacy Booker, Shannel Harris
Croatia (2) - Lea Fabbri, Iva Sliskovic
Russia (1) - Olga Gritsaeva
Romania (1) - Larissa Kulcsar
Czech Republic (1) - Iлона Бургова

2005-06 Schedule

November

14..... Everyone's Internet (exhibition).. 7:00 p.m.
 18..... High Point..... 7:00 p.m.
 20..... Winthrop 3:30 p.m.
 25..... vs. Texas * 3:30 p.m.
 26..... vs. Purdue/George Washington* TBD
 29..... Georgia Southern 7:00 p.m.

December

13..... Minnesota..... 7:00 p.m.
 15..... Ohio..... 7:00 p.m.
 17..... South Carolina State 5:00 p.m.
 19..... Savannah State..... 7:00 p.m.
 21..... Bethune Cookman..... 7:00 p.m.
 29..... Western Carolina..... 7:00 p.m.

January

2..... at Clemson 7:00 p.m.
 4..... Tennessee^ 7:00 p.m.
 8..... at Kentucky^ 2:00 p.m.
 12..... at LSU^ 8:00 p.m.
 15..... Vanderbilt^ 3:00 p.m.
 22..... at Alabama^ 3:00 p.m.
 26..... Georgia^ 7:00 p.m.
 29..... Arkansas^ 3:00 p.m.

February

5..... at Mississippi State^ 3:00 p.m.
 9..... Kentucky^ 7:00 p.m.
 12..... at Florida^ 3:00 p.m.
 16..... at Auburn^ 8:00 p.m.
 19..... Ole Miss^ 3:00 p.m.
 21..... Longwood 7:00 p.m.
 23..... Mississippi State^ 7:00 p.m.
 26..... at Vanderbilt^ 8:00 p.m.

March

2-5 SEC Tournament TBD
 18-21 .. NCAA Tournament..... TBD
 25-28 .. NCAA Tournament Regionals..... TBD

April

2-4 NCAA Final Four (Boston, Mass.) TBD

* Junkanoo Jam (Grand Bahama Island, Bahamas)

^ Southeastern Conference Game

All times listed EST and subject to change

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