

# 2005-06 Review



*Sebnior Pedro Rodrigues*

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# CAROLINA TENNIS



## 2005-2006 SEASON REVIEW

High expectations hampered by a rash of injuries and a strong finish with yet another appearance in the NCAA Tournament highlighted the South Carolina men's tennis team's 2006 season.

The Gamecocks rode the momentum of a trip to the NCAA Championship Round of 16 in 2005 into the spring 2006 season. With its top six players returning. South Carolina opened the season with a lofty No. 12 ranking and an invitation to the prestigious 16-team ITA National Indoor Championship in Seattle, Wash. DeMars' charges reeled off six consecutive victories to begin the campaign, despite an early injury to junior Pedro Rodrigues. Rodrigues went down with an ankle injury in the season opener versus Troy (Jan. 28), landing him on the sidelines for 11 of the next 12 matches and the entire month of February. Junior Dmitry Babenko was also slowed by a chronic back injury that allowed him to play in just seven dual matches.

Following a 4-2 loss to then-No. 27 North Carolina, the Gamecocks headed west for the ITA Indoors in Seattle, Wash. An undermanned South Carolina team struggled, dropping matches to No. 5 Mississippi (4-1), No. 38 Florida State (4-1) and No. 47 Penn (4-2). The squad returned home and dropped a 5-2 decision to No. 39 NC State. Carolina went back on the road and snapped a five-match losing streak with an emphatic victory at No. 13 Wake Forest. Still playing without a pair of key starters, the Gamecocks rose to the occasion to claim a 4-3 win over the Demon Deacons. At No. 6 singles, senior Adam Adler won a third-set tie break to tie the match and sophomore Jaime Cuellar sealed the Gamecock victory with a third-set tie break triumph of his own.

South Carolina, now 7-5, turned its attention to SEC play. On the first weekend of conference action, the Gamecocks hosted Mississippi State and Mississippi, earning a split of the two matches. In the opener, Carolina knocked off No. 27 MSU, 5-2, but fell to the fifth-ranked Rebels, 7-0. The road did not get any easier. Carolina hit the road to face top-ranked Georgia in Athens. Prior to the meeting with the Bulldogs, senior Geraldo Knorr suffered what would be a season-ending injury with a collapsed lung. Rodrigues returned from his ankle injury for the match, but retired during his singles match and South Carolina fell, 7-0, Georgia. The Gamecocks traveled to Knoxville to face No. 44 Tennessee and dropped a 4-1 decision to the Volunteers.

Carolina took a brief reprieve from conference play. USC played No. 58 UNLV in Las Vegas over spring break, falling 5-2. Rodrigues and Cuellar accounted for the Gamecocks' two points with singles victories. The Gamecocks snapped a four-match losing streak by rolling to a 4-0 win over Charleston Southern in Columbia.

A pair top-20 teams were next on the schedule for the Gamecocks. No. 19 LSU shut down the Gamecocks, 7-0, in Baton Rouge, La. Senior Tom Eklund, the team's mainstay at No. 1 singles, was hurt and retired from his match with the Tigers. At 16th-ranked Arkansas, Eklund was unable to play in singles, forcing the Gamecocks to forfeit a singles point and move each player up a position in singles. The result was a 4-0 loss to the Razorbacks.

Back at home for a three-match homestand, the Gamecocks picked up their play. Carolina opened the home stretch with a 4-3 victory over No. 48 Auburn on March 31. Two days later, USC rallied to pull off a 4-3 victory over No. 40 Alabama. The Crimson Tide won the doubles point and proceeded to take a 3-0 lead with a pair of singles victories. South Carolina fought back to win all four of the remaining singles matches with Eklund clinching the final point at the No. 1 position. Cuellar was victorious at No. 2, Rodrigues won the No. 3 position and Yevgeny Supeko claimed the No. 4 spot.

In their home finale, the Gamecocks turned in an impressive performance to upset No. 21 Kentucky. After splitting No. 2 and No. 3 doubles matches, the Wildcats rallied from a 6-1 deficit to defeat Eklund and Rodrigues at No. 1. The pair rebounded in singles action. Supeko evened the match with a win at No. 4 singles and Eklund pushed the Gamecocks ahead by winning his match at No. 1 singles. Cuellar came out on top at No. 2 before Adam Adler secured victory for Carolina with a win at No. 6 singles. All four of the matches were straight-set wins. The Gamecocks extended their win streak to four with a 5-2 triumph at Vanderbilt to set a school record for consecutive SEC victories on April 9.

South Carolina played its final two regular season contests on the road, falling to 21st-ranked Clemson on the, 6-1, and dropping at 7-0 decision to No. 14 Florida. Next, it was on to Tuscaloosa, Ala., for the SEC Championship. The No. 7-seeded Gamecocks were pitted against No. 10-seed Tennessee, a team it lost to in the regular season, in the first round. The match turned out to be a thriller. The Gamecocks moved ahead by winning the doubles point. Eklund and Rodrigues were victorious at No. 1 and Adler and Thomas Stoddard clinched the point with an 8-6 win at No. 3. Five of the six singles matches went to three sets, but Adler eventually put Carolina into the quarterfinals. With the match tie at three points apiece, Adler prevailed 13-11 in a third-set tiebreaker at No. 6 singles. The Gamecocks' SEC Tournament run ended in the quarters with a 4-1 loss to the Gators. Supeko put South Carolina on the board with a win at No. 4 singles.

A week later, the Gamecocks were invited to the NCAA Tournament for the 13th-straight year. South Carolina was set to face No. 24 Clemson in Chapel Hill, N.C., in the opening round. Despite winning the doubles point, the Gamecocks fell to the Tigers, 4-1.

At the end of the season, Carolina had a 14-15 overall record and finished with a 5-6 mark in conference regular season play. The Gamecocks posted seven wins against ranked teams, and 14 of Carolina's 15 losses came to teams ranked in the top 50 at the time of the match. Nine setbacks were against top-25 teams.

Cuellar was selected second-team all-SEC and Eklund made the SEC's Good Works Team. Eklund also earned South Carolina's Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year Award, CoSIDA Academic All-District honor. In addition, he was selected the school's SEC H. Boyd McWhorter Postgraduate recipient and won the athletic department's Inspiration Award, after playing with near-constant back pain throughout the season.



### 2006 Schedule

**OVERALL RECORD: 14-15 • SEC RECORD: 5-6**

#### JANUARY

28 TROY .....W, 7-0  
28 WOFFORD.....W, 7-0

#### FEBRUARY

4 APPALACHIAN STATE.....W, 5-2  
4 ELON.....W, 6-1  
11 CHARLOTTE.....W, 6-1  
11 DAVIDSON.....W, 7-0  
13 (27) NORTH CAROLINA.....L, 4-2  
17 (5) Mississippi!.....L, 4-1  
18 (38) Florida State!.....L, 4-1  
19 (47) Penn!.....L, 4-2  
25 (39) NC STATE .....L, 5-2  
28 at (13) Wake Forest.....W, 4-3

#### MARCH

3 (27) MISSISSIPPI STATE\* .....W, 5-2  
5 (5) MISSISSIPPI\* .....L, 7-0  
10 at (1) Georgia\* .....L, 7-0  
12 at (44) Tennessee\* .....L, 4-1  
18 at (58) UNLV .....L, 5-2  
22 CHARLESTON SOUTHERN.....W, 4-0  
24 at (19) LSU\* .....L, 7-0  
26 at (16) Arkansas\* .....L, 4-0  
31 (48) AUBURN\* .....W, 4-3

#### APRIL

2 (40) ALABAMA\* .....W, 4-3  
7 (21) KENTUCKY\* .....W, 4-1  
9 at (63) Vanderbilt\* .....W, 5-2  
12 at (21) Clemson .....L, 6-1  
15 at (14) Florida\* .....L, 7-0  
20 vs. (51) Tennessee % .....W, 4-3  
21 vs. (14) Florida % .....L, 4-1

#### MAY

13 vs. (24) Clemson # .....L, 4-1

\* indicates SEC Match

! Match at ITA National Team Indoors (Seattle, Wash.)

% SEC Championships (Tuscaloosa, Ala.)

# NCAA Tournament (Chapel Hill, N.C.)

Home matches in ALL CAPS

## 2005-2006 SINGLES AND DOUBLES RECORDS

### SINGLES

Player	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	Tourn.	Dual (SEC)	Totals
Adam Adler	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	4-4	4-13	0-5	8-17 (3-8)	8-22
Dmitry Babenko	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-1	1-4	1-0	2-2	2-5 (1-0)	4-7
Jaime Cuellar	1-0	9-8	4-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	3-2	14-8 (5-4)	17-10
Tom Eklund	11-14	1-0	0-0	1-0	0-0	0-0	3-3	13-14 (3-7)	16-17
Geraldo Knorr	1-0	0-0	1-0	5-4	2-0	0-0	7-4	9-4 (0-2)	16-8
Kazuya Otani	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	1-7	0-0 (0-0)	1-7
Pedro Rodrigues	0-0	1-2	4-3	2-1	0-0	0-0	2-2	7-6 (3-4)	9-8
Thomas Stoddard	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-1	1-10	3-5	1-2	4-16 (0-9)	5-18
Yevgeny Supeko	0-0	1-1	4-8	9-3	0-0	0-0	4-5	14-12 (5-5)	18-17
Joe Veeder	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-1	2-2	0-1 (0-0)	2-3

### DOUBLES

#### Records By Tandem

Teams	#1	#2	#3	Tourn.	Totals (SEC)
Eklund/Cuellar	2-4	10-2	0-0	0-0	12-6 (2-3)
Eklund/Rodrigues	7-1	0-0	0-0	0-0	7-1 (4-1)
Eklund/Stoddard	0-1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-1 (0-0)
Knorr/Cuellar	0-0	0-1	0-0	5-1	5-2 (0-0)
Knorr/Supeko	6-2	1-0	0-0	0-1	7-3 (1-1)
Stoddard/Adler	0-0	0-0	1-10	0-0	1-10 (0-5)
Stoddard/Veeder	0-0	0-0	3-8	0-0	3-8 (1-5)
Supeko/Babenko	0-0	0-1	0-0	1-2	1-3 (0-0)
Supeko/Cuellar	0-0	3-6	0-0	0-0	3-6 (2-3)
Supeko/Stoddard	0-0	0-0	1-0	0-0	1-0 (0-0)
Rodrigues/Adler	0-0	0-1	0-0	0-0	0-1 (0-0)
Rodrigues/Knorr	3-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	3-0 (0-0)
Rodrigues/Supeko	0-0	1-3	0-0	0-0	1-3 (0-3)
Otani/Veeder	0-0	0-0	0-1	2-3	2-4 (0-0)
Adler/Supeko	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-1	0-1 (0-0)
Adler/Otani	0-0	0-0	0-0	1-1	1-1 (0-0)
Knorr/Stoddard	0-0	0-0	0-0	1-2	1-2 (0-0)

#### Individual Records

Player	Overall	Dual	SEC
Tom Eklund	19-8	19-8	6-4
Jaime Cuellar	17-9	12-7	6-4
Thomas Stoddard	6-20	5-18	1-10
Yevgeny Supeko	13-16	13-13	3-6
Pedro Rodrigues	11-5	11-15	4-4
Kazuya Otani	3-5	0-1	0-0
Geraldo Knorr	15-5	10-3	1-1
Joe Veeder	5-12	3-9	1-5
Adam Adler	2-13	1-11	0-5
Dmitry Babenko	1-3	0-1	0-0



## 2006 Final SEC Standings

### EASTERN DIVISION

Team	SEC	Pct.	ALL	Pct.
Georgia*	11-0	1.000	30-1	.968
Florida	8-3	.727	17-8	.680
Kentucky	7-4	.636	16-10	.615
South Carolina	5-6	.455	14-15	.483
Tennessee	3-8	.273	9-11	.450
Vanderbilt	2-9	.182	7-14	.333

### WESTERN DIVISION

Team	SEC	Pct.	ALL	Pct.
Ole Miss^	8-3	.727	22-6	.786
LSU	7-4	.636	14-10	.583
Arkansas	6-5	.545	18-11	.621
Alabama	4-7	.364	14-13	.519
Auburn	4-7	.364	14-11	.560
Mississippi State	1-10	.091	6-14	.300

\* SEC, Eastern Division and Tournament champion;

^ Western Division champion

## 2006 SEC Tournament Recap April 20-23, Tuscaloosa, Ala.

### Thursday, April 20 (First Round)

Match 1: #6 Arkansas 4, #11 Vanderbilt 3  
Match 2: #7 South Carolina 4, #10 Tennessee 3  
Match 3: #8 Alabama 4, #9 Auburn 1  
Match 4: #12 Miss. State 4, #5 LSU 2

### Friday, April 21 (Second Round)

Match 5: #3 Ole Miss 4, #6 Arkansas 0  
Match 6: #2 Florida 4, #7 South Carolina 1  
Match 7: #1 Georgia 4, #8 Alabama 0  
Match 8: #12 Miss. State 4, #4 Kentucky 2

### Saturday, April 22 (Semifinals)

Match 9: #3 Ole Miss 4, #2 Florida 2  
Match 10: #1 Georgia 4, #12 Miss. State 0

### Sunday, April 23 (Final)

Championship Match: #1 Georgia 4, #3 Ole Miss 2

## 2006 All-SEC Teams

### First Team

John Isner, Georgia  
Antonio Ruiz, Georgia  
Adrians Zguns, Arkansas  
Luis Flores, Georgia  
Erling Tvert, Ole Miss  
Ken Skupski, LSU  
Greg Ouellette, Florida  
Eric Claesson, Ole Miss  
Alex Hume, Kentucky  
Nestor Briceno, Florida  
Strahinja Bobusic, Georgia  
Ryan Preston, Vanderbilt

### Second Team

Matt Roberts, Arkansas  
Juan Pablo Di Cesare, Ole Miss  
Matic Omerzel, Georgia  
Nick Lane, Auburn  
Colin Purcell, Georgia  
Bram ten Berge, Ole Miss  
Ivan Bjelica, Mississippi State  
Pierre Mouillon, Mississippi State  
Vlad Obradovic, Florida  
Blake Strode, Arkansas  
**Jaime Cuellar, South Carolina**  
Danny Bryan, LSU  
Colt Gaston, LSU

### Individual Awards

**Coach of the Year:** Manny Diaz, Georgia  
**Player of the Year:** John Isner, Georgia  
**Freshman of the Year:** Bruno Agostinelli, Kentucky  
**Scholar-Athlete of the Year:** Bran ten berge, Ole Miss

## 2006 SEC Academic Honor Roll

Sammy Struyf, Alabama  
Braden Burks, Arkansas  
Eun Sik "Michael" Jung, Arkansas  
Andrei Nicoara, Arkansas  
Matt Robert, Arkansas  
Brent Goedjen, Auburn  
Nicholas Lane, Auburn  
Jay Swamidass, Auburn  
Nestor Bricen, Florida  
Janne Holmia, Florida  
Vladimir Obradovic, Florida  
Gregory Ouellette, Florida  
Stefan Tell, Florida  
Shaun Young, Florida  
Bradley Benedict, Georgia  
Eric DeRoche, LSU  
Kevin Dessauer, LSU  
Mark Growcott, LSU  
Ken Skupski, LSU  
Paul White, LSU  
Bram Ten Berge, Ole Miss  
Erling Tveit, Ole Miss  
Juan Pablo De Cesare, Ole Miss  
Philippe Frayssinoux, Miss. State  
Florent Girod, Miss. State  
Pierre Mouillon, Miss. State  
**Adam Adler, South Carolina**  
**Dmitry Babenko, South Carolina**  
**Jaime Cuellar, South Carolina**  
**Geraldo Knorr, South Carolina**  
**Pedro Rodrigues, South Carolina**  
**Thomas Stoddard, South Carolina**  
**Joseph Veeder, South Carolina**  
David Baxendine, Tennessee  
Bobby Cameron, Tennessee  
Kaden Hensel, Tennessee  
Ben Rogers, Tennessee  
Andy Mack, Vanderbilt  
Jordan Magarik, Vanderbilt  
Ryan Preston, Vanderbilt  
Nathan Sachs, Vanderbilt



Jaime Cuellar received was named to the All-SEC second team in 2006.