

# SPORTS



Complete coverage in Sports Extra

Find scores, photos and more in Sports Extra, our subscriber-exclusive, eNewspaper section.

## SOUTH CAROLINA BASKETBALL



South Carolina coach Dawn Staley high-fives center Madina Okot as she leaves the game against Mississippi on Feb. 22 in Columbia. JEFF BLAKE/IMAGN IMAGES

## Clemson coach pays respect to Holtz

**Derrian Carter**  
Greenville News  
USA TODAY NETWORK - SOUTH CAROLINA

CLEMSON — Clemson football coach Dabo Swinney wasn't aware of Lou Holtz's death until seconds before he took the podium after the Tigers' fifth spring practice.

Swinney reflected on the life of Holtz, a former South Carolina football coach and national champion at Notre Dame who died March 4 at 89. He had been in hospice care since Jan. 29.

"Obviously, one of the greatest coaches, certainly, to ever coach this game, and I would think a lot of people who play for him and know him would probably say one of the greatest people, one of the greatest influences in a lot of people's lives," Swinney said at a news conference.

Swinney competed against Holtz in 2003 and 2004 when he was the wide receivers coach at Clemson. Holtz was South Carolina's coach from 1999-2004. Clemson won both games.

Swinney said he became friends with Holtz's son, Skip Holtz, over the years, too. They got closer when Skip Holtz got a place in Keowee Key, which is near Clemson. Swinney said Skip Holtz also welcomed him to a Birmingham Stallions game in the UFL when he coached the team from 2022-25.

Lou Holtz experienced immense success at Notre Dame from 1990-96. He won 100 games and lost only 30, highlighted by the 1988 national championship where Notre Dame finished with a 12-0 record and victory over West Virginia in the Fiesta Bowl.

Holtz retired for two years in 1997 to work at CBS Sports then returned to take over the Gamecocks program in 1999. He went 0-11 before turning the program around to go 8-4 the following season when he was SEC coach of the year.

"I know he lived a great life. What a life. What a life well-lived," Swinney

See **HOLTZ**, Page 2C

### On 1A

For more on former South Carolina football coach Lou Holtz on **1A**.



Clemson head coach Dabo Swinney during the first spring football practice open to media in Clemson on Feb 27. KEN RUINARD/USA TODAY CO

# Staley gets best out of star Okot

**Lulu Kesin**  
Greenville News  
USA TODAY NETWORK - SOUTH CAROLINA

COLUMBIA — This won't be Madina Okot's first SEC Tournament.

But things are different this time around.

Okot played one season with Mississippi State last year before transferring to coach Dawn Staley's South Carolina women's basketball program.

She started all 34 games, finishing with a combined 26 points and 18 rebounds across two SEC Tournament games, but the Bulldogs weren't the top seed.

This year's Gamecocks (29-2) won the regular season for the fifth year in a row and are playing for a fourth straight tournament title. The hunt begins

March 6 at noon, against either Arkansas, Georgia or Kentucky in the quarterfinals in Greenville.

### Why South Carolina women's basketball needed Madina Okot

At the center of South Carolina's postseason is the 6-foot-6 Okot.

"She probably got more than what she bargained for when it comes to us," Staley said. "It was pressure for (Okot) to perform at a high level at Mississippi State for what their needs are. For our needs, they're a little bit different."

In some ways the pressure she felt was unavoidable from the jump.

South Carolina made it to last year's national championship, losing to UConn, but the 2024-25 roster lacked a true center, a fundamental difference

between the 2023-24 title-winning team.

By May, Staley had Okot, the best option at her position in last year's portal cycle after her first SEC season. She started her college career in Kenya for Zetech University.

Star forward Chloe Kitts tore her ACL in September, increasing the pressure on South Carolina's frontcourt. But Okot was the only one who had yet to put on a Gamecocks jersey.

### The change Dawn Staley made to help Madina Okot

She averaged 15.8 points and 11.2 rebounds in 13 non-conference games, but once SEC play started, things

See **OKOT**, Page 2C

## Swinney hires Bisaccia as Clemson special teams coordinator

**Derrian Carter**  
Greenville News  
USA TODAY NETWORK - SOUTH CAROLINA

CLEMSON — Clemson football has hired veteran assistant coach Rich Bisaccia as special teams coordinator.

Clemson's Board of Trustees compensation committee approved Bisaccia's hire on March 4.

"I love his experience. I love that he cares about me and he loves Clemson in particular," coach Dabo Swinney said in a school release. "I think that's great, but his experience and expertise in all things football — not just special teams — are also a huge value to us."

"He's a leader of men, and I think his perspective and his lens joining our organization will be incredibly valuable even beyond the impact that he'll make on our special teams."

Bisaccia, 65, will replace Will Gil-

christ, who was in the position for two seasons and was among multiple Clemson staffers to join former senior offensive assistant/assistant quarterbacks coach John Grass at Samford this season.

Bisaccia has over 40 years of coaching experience. He spent time at Wayne State (Division II), South Carolina, Clemson and Ole Miss from 1983-2001.

With Clemson, he was the team's running backs and special teams coach from 1994-98 under coach Tommy West. Bisaccia was at South Carolina from 1988-93.

Bisaccia has worked in the NFL from 2002 with roles with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, San Diego Chargers, Dallas Cowboys, Las Vegas Raiders and Green Bay Packers. He was the Raiders interim coach in October 2021 after Jon Gruden resigned. Bisaccia led Las Vegas to a 7-5 record to help the Raiders

make the NFL playoffs.

He was with the Packers, serving as Green Bay's special teams coordinator from 2022-25, before stepping down in February.

"But with the changing of the rules to allow everybody to coach on the field and where he was in his career, he really wanted to finish here at Clemson," Swinney said. "I'm super excited it worked out for us too, because this is as good a special teams coach as there has been in the NFL for a long, long time."

Bisaccia will take over a special-teams unit that had struggled under Gilchrist. In 2024, Clemson had eight blocked field goals/extra points, which was tied for the national lead and led all power-conference schools.

In 2025, the Tigers cleaned up their kicking protections but had other blun-

See **CLEMSON**, Page 2C



Then-Green Bay Packers assistant head coach/special teams coordinator Rich Bisaccia is shown during the third quarter of a game against the Baltimore Ravens on Dec. 27 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wisconsin. MARK HOFFMAN/MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

## Clemson

Continued from Page 1C

ders, including allowing a 100-yard kick return against Duke on Nov. 1 and performing a failed fake-punt attempt against Penn State in the first quarter of the Pinstripe Bowl.

Clemson looks to rebound from a 7-6 record in 2025, which was the second-worst season in Swinney's full 17 seasons.

"After I made the decision to move in a new direction, Coach Swinney approached me with the opportunity to come back to a place that holds special meaning for me and my family," Bisaccia said in a school release. "I'm thrilled to be able to return to the

Clemson community and serve this program in any way I can."

### Rich Bisaccia contract: Salary, details for Clemson special teams coordinator

Bisaccia agreed to a 1-year deal worth \$900,000 with Clemson. His new contract exceeds Gilchrist's deal, where he made \$170,000 in 2025.

Bisaccia's deal will increase to \$1 million if he is still with Clemson by July 1. He would earn a \$100,000 retention incentive.

*Derrian Carter covers Clemson athletics for The Greenville News and the USA TODAY Network. Email him at DCarter@usatodayco.com and follow him on X, formerly known as Twitter, @DerrianCarter00*

## Okot

Continued from Page 1C

shifted.

Across her first seven SEC games with South Carolina, Okot averaged 10.9 points and 9.6 rebounds, shooting 44.8% from the floor after starting the year shooting 64.5%.

In South Carolina's lone SEC loss against Oklahoma, Okot went 3-of-9 from the floor for a season-low six points and four rebounds.

So ahead of then-undefeated Vanderbilt coming to Columbia on Jan. 25, Staley made a change.

Out went Okot from the starting lineup, in went freshman guard Agot Makeer.

"I felt too much pressure and she had to take that pressure off me by taking me out of the starting lineup and it really helped me," Okot said.

"I'm back."

Off the bench, she scored 17 points, had seven rebounds, five steals and a block in the 103-74 victory.

Right after making the switch, Staley lost Makeer and starting guard Ta'Niya Latson temporarily to injury on Jan. 29.

### Why Dawn Staley put Madina Okot back in starting lineup

After experimenting with one more Okot-less starting lineup on Feb. 2 vs. Texas A&M, Staley said there was no choice but to put Okot back in the starting lineup.

Beginning with the Vanderbilt game,

Okot shot 63.5% from the field, 60% from the 3-point line and averaged 14 points, 11.5 rebounds, 1.8 blocks and 1.2 steals across the last 10 SEC games.

"It always makes me feel really good, like almost emotional when you see a young person go through some stuff and they really can't see their way out of it but you just continue to work with them, 'Hey, you're going to hurdle this, you will get through' just each and every day, take the pressure off, and then you apply the pressure," Staley said.

Okot had her 20th double-double (tied for second-most in the nation) in the regular-season finale vs Kentucky, scoring 21 points with 13 rebounds, which accounted for 35% of South Carolina's total points.

She also improved on 3-pointers, going from 1-of-4 in non-conference play to 8-of-15 in SEC games.

She was named All-SEC second team, voted on by the league's coaches, and is second in the SEC in field goal percentage at 59.8%. Her rebounding average of 10.9 is 13th in the nation, first in the SEC.

"She even said she's back and when they're able to verbalize that, you know they're in a really good place," Staley said. "She's the same Madina, she really is the same one. She was still getting double-doubles. She was still doing her thing, but for her, it didn't feel like it. But now she's walking in what she's feeling, which is great."

*Lulu Kesin covers South Carolina athletics for The Greenville News and the USA TODAY Network. Email her at LKesin@usatodayco.com. Follow her on X @Lulukessin and Bluesky @bylulukessin.bsky.social.*

sons in Columbia, including 9-3 in 2001, and went 2-0 in bowl games.

Holtz's six-season tenure ended after South Carolina and Clemson were involved in a 10-minute brawl in November 2004, which led both schools to forgo bowl bids.

*Derrian Carter covers Clemson athletics for The Greenville News and the USA TODAY Network. Email him at DCarter@usatodayco.com and follow him on X, formerly known as Twitter, @DerrianCarter00*

## Holtz

Continued from Page 1C

said. "The impact that he had on people's lives will live on forever and ever and ever and ever.

"No matter how long we live, it's a blink of an eye in the timeline of eternity. Whether you get 99 years or nine years, life is a blur."

Holtz went 33-37 across his six sea-



United States forward Alyssa Thompson takes a shot on goal against Canada on March 4 in Columbus, Ohio. JOSEPH MAIORANA/IMAGN IMAGES

## USA closer to SheBelieves title with win over Canada

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Ally Sentnor's goal lifted the U.S. women's national team to a 1-0 victory over Canada in soggy Columbus, Ohio, on Wednesday night to put the Americans in position to win the SheBelieves Cup.

Sentnor scored from a corner kick by Rose Lavelle in the 55th minute when she settled the ball and on her second touch whipped a shot from 12 yards.

The U.S. is 2-0 with six points and needs only a point in the final match to clinch the Americans' eighth title in 11 years of the tournament. Canada (1-1) and Colombia (1-1) each have three points while Argentina is winless after falling 1-0 to Colombia earlier Wednesday.

On Saturday in Harrison, N.J., Canada plays Argentina in the early match and the U.S. goes against Colombia in the tournament finale.

U.S. coach Emma Hayes made 10 changes from the 2-0 victory over Argentina on Sunday.

The lone holdover was defender Gisele Thompson, who played behind her midfielder sister Alyssa Thompson on the left side.

This was the third time the Thompsons started a USWNT match together and fifth time they played in the same match.

They nearly gave the U.S. the lead going into the break.

Gisele found Alyssa on an overlap and she moved toward the goal before unleashing a shot from outside the box that changed direction after being deflected by a Canadian player.

Canadian goalkeeper Kailen Sheridan made the adjustment for a stretching save with her right hand at the left post and was able to push the ball out of play for her one save of the first half. Phallon Tullis-Joyce also had one for the Americans.

In the second half, Sheridan twice denied Alyssa Thompson's quest to increase the lead.

The U.S. finished with 18 shot attempts, four on goal, while Canada had 14 and one. The Americans dominated possession (65.5%) and took more corner kicks (11-2), while their opponents had more fouls (14-7) and yellow cards (2-0).

The U.S. had its five-year run titles ended last season by Japan. France won in 2017 and England was the champion in 2019.

### IN BRIEF

#### Reports: Bills acquiring WR Moore from Bears

The Buffalo Bills are acquiring wide receiver DJ Moore from the Chicago Bears, multiple media outlets reported on Thursday.

It was not immediately known what the Bears will receive in the deal, which cannot be processed until the new league year begins on March 11.

The reported trade will give former MVP Josh Allen a solid weapon in the Bills' passing game. Moore will join fellow wideout Khalil Shakir and tight ends Dalton Kincaid and Dawson

Knox.

It also reunites Moore with Buffalo head coach Joe Brady, his offensive coordinator with the Carolina Panthers from 2020-21. Moore topped 1,100 receiving yards in both of those campaigns. Chicago was able to move Moore given the ascension of former first-round wide receiver Rome Odunze. The Bears also selected Luther Burden in the second round last year. Moore, 28, recorded career-low totals in catches (50) and receiving yards (682) to go along with six touchdowns in 17 games (all starts) last season.

— Wire reports

### SPORTS ON TV FRIDAY, MARCH 6 (ALL TIMES EASTERN)

#### AUTO RACING

2 p.m.

FS2 — IndyCar, Good Ranchers 250, Qualifying, Avondale, Ariz.

8:05 p.m.

CW — NASCAR, O'Reilly Auto Parts Series, GovX 200, Qualifying, Avondale, Ariz.

#### BASEBALL

5 a.m.

FS1 — World Baseball Classic, Pool C, Japan vs. Chinese Taipei, Tokyo

11 a.m.

FS2 — World Baseball Classic, Pool A, Cuba vs. Panama, San Juan, Puerto Rico

1 p.m.

FS1 — World Baseball Classic, Pool B, Mexico vs. Great Britain, Houston

MLBN — MLB, Spring Training, St. Louis vs. Baltimore, Sarasota, Fla.

3:05 p.m.

MLBN — MLB, Spring Training, L.A. Angels vs. Cleveland, Goodyear, Ariz.

6 p.m.

FS1 — World Baseball Classic, Pool A, Puerto Rico vs. Colombia, San Juan, Puerto Rico

7 p.m.

FS2 — World Baseball Classic, Pool D, Nicaragua vs. Dominican Republic, Miami

8 p.m.

FOX — World Baseball Classic, Pool B, United States vs. Brazil, Houston

MLBN — MLB, Spring Training, Chicago Cubs vs. San Diego, Peoria, Ariz.

10 p.m.

FS2 — World Baseball Classic, Pool C, Chinese Taipei vs. Czechia, Tokyo

**COLLEGE BASKETBALL (MEN'S)**

6 p.m.

CBSSN — Northern Illinois at Akron

7 p.m.

ESPN2 — VCU at Dayton

8 p.m.

CBSSN — UCF at West Virginia

ESPN — Ohio Valley Tournament, Semifinals, TBD vs. Tennessee State, Evansville, Ind.

9 p.m.

ESPN2 — Miami (Ohio) at Ohio

FS1 — St. John's at Seton Hall

10 p.m.

CBSSN — UNLV at San Diego State

10:30 p.m.

ESPN — Ohio Valley Tournament, Semifinals, TBD vs. Morehead State, Evansville, Ind.

11 a.m.

ESPN2 — ACC Tournament, Quarterfinals, TBD vs. Duke, Duluth, Ga.

12 p.m.

BTN — Big Ten Tournament, Quarterfinals, TBD vs. UCLA, Indianapolis

ESPN — SEC Tournament, Quarterfinals, TBD vs. South Carolina, Greenville, S.C.

ESPN2 — Big 12 Tournament, Quarterfinals, TBD vs. Oklahoma State, Kansas City, Mo.

1:30 p.m.

ACCN — ACC Tournament, Quarterfinals, TBD vs. N.C. State, Duluth, Ga.

2:30 p.m.

BTN — Big Ten Tournament, Quarterfi-

nals, TBD vs. Minnesota, Indianapolis

ESPN — SEC Tournament, Quarterfinals, TBD vs. LSU, Greenville, S.C.

ESPN2 — Big 12 Tournament, Quarterfinals, TBD vs. TCU, Kansas City, Mo.

5 p.m.

ESPN2 — ACC Tournament, Quarterfinals, TBD vs. Louisville, Duluth, Ga.

6 p.m.

SECN — SEC Tournament, Quarterfinals, TBD vs. Vanderbilt, Greenville, S.C.

6:30 p.m.

BTN — Big Ten Tournament, Quarterfinals, TBD vs. Iowa, Indianapolis

7:30 p.m.

ACCN — ACC Tournament, Quarterfinals, TBD vs. North Carolina, Duluth, Ga.

8:30 p.m.

SECN — SEC Tournament, Quarterfinals, TBD vs. Texas, Greenville, S.C.

9 p.m.

BTN — Big Ten Tournament, Quarterfinals, TBD vs. Michigan, Indianapolis

**COLLEGE LACROSSE (WOMEN'S)**

5 p.m.

ACCN — Virginia Tech at Syracuse

GOLF

5:30 a.m.

GOLF — DP World Tour, Joburg Open, Second Round, Johannesburg, South Africa

10 a.m.

GOLF — PGA Tour, Puerto Rico Open, Second Round, Rio Grande, Puerto Rico

2 p.m.

GOLF — PGA Tour, Arnold Palmer Invitational, Second Round, Orlando, Fla.

7 p.m.

GOLF — PGA Tour Champions, James Hardie Pro Football HOF Invitational, First Round, Boca Raton, Fla.

11 p.m.

GOLF — LPGA Tour, Blue Bay, Third Round, Hainan Island, China

1 a.m. (Saturday)

FS1 — LIV Golf, Hong Kong, Third Round, Fanling, Hong Kong

#### HORSE RACING

3 p.m.

FS2 — America's Day at the Races

#### NBA BASKETBALL

7:12 p.m.

ESPN — Dallas at Boston

7:30 p.m.

AMAZON PRIME — G League, Windy City at Cleveland

9:35 p.m.

ESPN — L.A. Clippers at San Antonio

10 p.m.

AMAZON PRIME — G League, South Bay at Santa Cruz

#### NHL HOCKEY

10 a.m.

NHLN — Trade Deadline Special

7 p.m.

NHLN — Florida at Detroit

10 p.m.

NHLN — Whip-around coverage of Colorado at Dallas, Vancouver at Chicago, Carolina at Edmonton, Montreal at Anaheim, Minnesota at Vegas and St. Louis at San Jose

#### TENNIS

2 p.m.

TENNIS — BNP Paribas Open, ATP/WTA Second Round, Indian Wells, Calif.