

# SPORTS



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## What Staley will miss most about Raven Johnson

Lulu Kesin

Greenville News

USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

COLUMBIA — There was no chance the crowd in Colonial Life Arena wasn't going to let Raven Johnson know they appreciated her time with South Carolina women's basketball.

The fifth-year point guard was one of four seniors honored ahead of the 112-71 win over Missouri on Feb. 26 but the only one to spend her entire career with coach Dawn Staley.

Before Johnson made a career-high four 3-pointers to finish with 16 points, five rebounds, five assists, a steal and zero turnovers, the crowd gave her a standing ovation as she walked across the court with her family behind her.

But in true point guard fashion, Johnson was excited for someone else, this time for Ta'Niya Latson, who won her first SEC regular-season championship in her lone season with South Carolina. It was the fifth for Johnson, who will leave without knowing what it's like to not win the regular season.

"I'm so excited for her," Johnson said, sitting beside Latson in matching shirts and hats. "More to come."

The No. 3 Gamecocks (28-2, 14-1 SEC) have been fueled by Johnson's orchestration all season, as she's been a steady force while her teammates battled injuries and illnesses, averaging a career-high 9.8 points.

"This season has been a lot of ups and downs," Johnson said. "I feel like when people go down, we get tighter. I think we learn each other more ... the chemistry gets tighter and people (are) stepping up ... this season has been a roller coaster."

After the 79-72 victory over LSU on Feb. 14 Staley said across all players she's coached, she'll miss Johnson the most.

The wins, the stats, the offense and defense Johnson brings all play into that. But when asked why on Feb. 26, Staley didn't even lead with the basketball element.

"Raven is just really consistent with how she comes in every day, she's incredibly funny without even trying," Johnson said. "Some of the stuff that comes out of her mouth brings me joy ... she's just so mild-mannered, she



South Carolina coach Dawn Staley jokes with guard Raven Johnson earlier this season. JEFF BLAKE-IMAGN IMAGES

doesn't have any ill will to her. She's a joy to be around, she is who she is. She'll actually say if something bothers her ... that's what I like about her, she knows who she is."

Johnson has earned praise from opposing coaches along the way. After the win vs. Ole Miss on Feb. 22, coach Yolett McPhee-McCuin called her the best point guard in the country. Missouri coach Kellie Harper said she's one of her favorite players to watch, calling her a "terrific basketball player" who leads South Carolina.

"There's a certain comfort level you

have with players that bring it every day," Staley said. "They always give you a boost knowing that if they're on the floor we got a really good chance of winning. I'm going to miss that feeling."

Johnson has lost just nine games across five years and according to South Carolina, ranked opponents have shot 38.4% with her on the court compared to 42.4% when she's on the bench this season. She's fifth in the nation in assist to turnover ratio at 3.41.

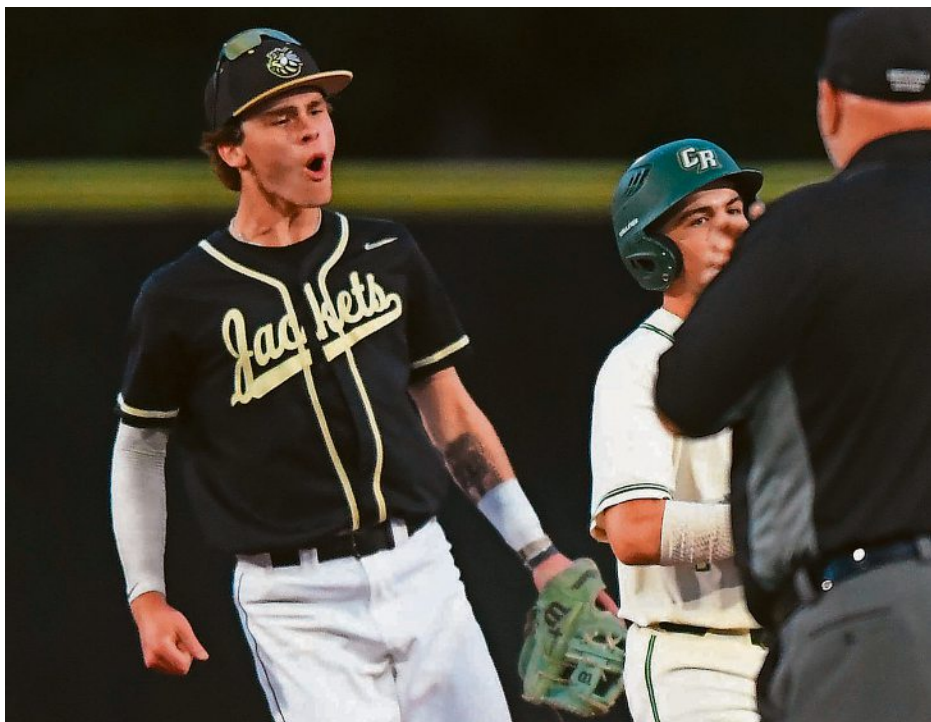
According to CBB Analytics, Johnson's 17 NCAA Tournament games are the most of any active women's player

and she's looking for her fifth Final Four appearance and third national championship. The quest to hoist the hardware starts in Greenville with the SEC Tournament beginning March 4 but there's still one game left in-between all the tournament talk.

The Gamecocks travel to Lexington to play No. 18 Kentucky on March 1 (3 p.m. ET, SEC Network).

"It hasn't really hit me yet," Johnson said. "We have more work to do but it means a lot ... the job is not done."

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T.L. Hanna's Phifer Glenn, who batted .378 with five home runs and five stolen bases last season, is committed to Coastal Carolina. KEN RUINARD / STAFF



Palmetto's Graelyn Adams finished with 27 RBIs, eight home runs, and 10 stolen bases last season. ALEX HICKS JR./GREENVILLE NEWS FILE

## Upstate's top SCHSL baseball players to watch

Todd Shanesy Greenville News

USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

With the start of the 2026 high school baseball season, here are some of the Upstate players to watch in the Greenville, Spartanburg and Anderson areas.

**Carson Bolemon**  
Southside Christian | Sr.

**Position:** Pitcher/first base  
Boleman was the 2025 Gatorade South Carolina Baseball Player of the Year and led Southside Christian to the Class 3A state championship, striking out 19 batters in the title game. In 55 innings, he never allowed an earned run. Boleman went 11-0 with 135 strikeouts to eight walks. He also batted .374 with

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## Upstate's top SCHSL softball players to watch

**Kamryn Jackson**

Greenville News

USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

As we draw closer to the 2026 SCHSL softball season, here are some players to keep your eye on in the Upstate.

**Grace Thompkins, Blue Ridge, So.:** Last year, Thompkins batted .468 with eight home runs, 35 RBIs, and two steals.

**Sayde Parris, Boiling Springs, Sr.:** Last season, Parris batted .512 with 19 RBIs and eight home runs.

**Addy Waters, Byrnes, Jr.:** Waters was vital in Game 3 of the 2025 Class 5A Division 1 state finals after her walk-off in the ninth inning. She had 35 RBIs and eight stolen bases last year.

**Bethany Brown, Fountain Inn, Jr.:** Brown had 20 RBIs and 21 steals in the

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