

SPORTS



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ANALYSIS



Tessa Johnson reacts during the national championship game against UCLA on April 5 in Phoenix. SARAH STIER/GETTY IMAGES

CLASH OF THE CAROLINAS & NORTH-SOUTH

All-star soccer rosters

Todd Shanesy

Greenville News
USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

Powdersville boys and Eastside girls each had two players named April 21 to the Clash of the Carolinas high school all-star games.

Brody Pike and Jud Scrivner will represent Powdersville in the June 20 game featuring South Carolina against North Carolina in Pineville, North Carolina. Eastside's Emmy Rikard and Jayden Irby were among 10 area players to make the girls team.

In addition, North-South all-star rosters were announced, and they were packed with Upstate players for the June 13 games at Anderson University. These are the best seniors not selected for the Clash.

Pike has 24 goals and Scrivner 14 goals for a defending Class 3A state championship team that is 18-2. Rikard has 59 saves and allowed only four goals in 17 games for Eastside (15-2) in Class 5A. Irby has scored nine goals.

Playoffs are set to begin on May 6.

Also making the boys roster for the Clash of the Carolinas were Smith Darby of J.L. Mann, Luka Kucinic of St. Joseph's.

For the girls, Ava Brown of Southside Christian, Ava Buchanan of Mauldin, Rose Finnegan of Greer Middle College, Emerson Hamilton of Greenville, Lola Kelly of St. Joseph's, Kelsey Merriman of Riverside and Bella Spadavecchia of Wade Hampton each made the roster.

Clash of the Carolinas rosters South Carolina boys

Mohammad Alahmad, Wando; Jacob Braden, Chapin; Cohen Brinkley, Clover; Oliver Cannon, James Island

See **SOCCER**, Page 2C



Eastside's Jayden Irby (13) tackles Wade Hampton's Bella Spadavecchia on April 9. ALEX MARTIN/GRENVILLE NEWS

GETTING BACK TO THE TOP

Where South Carolina needs to improve following two consecutive title game losses

Lulu Kesin

Greenville News
USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

COLUMBIA – The memories of missing open shots will likely stick with South Carolina women's basketball for awhile.

In the national championship against UCLA, the usually-efficient Gamecocks' offense just couldn't score.

It's potentially misleading however that the 79-51 loss was the final display of coach Dawn Staley's 2025-26 team. The same group that shot 16.7% in the first quarter in the title game finished with the best

offense in program history, averaging 85.6 points, which was fourth in nation.

The Gamecocks also averaged a program-best 46 points in the paint, 21.4 points off turnovers and 19 fast-break points per game.

South Carolina is also the only SEC women's basketball team to not lose a player to the transfer portal this year.

That roster retention is meaningful coming off what was statistically an impressive season.

They finished fourth in the nation in field goal percentage (50%), sixth in FG% defense (34.8%),

See **SOUTH CAROLINA**, Page 2C

Fever rookie Johnson to be 'a gnat on a ball' for 'D'

Chloe Peterson

Indianapolis Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

INDIANAPOLIS – Raven Johnson has one goal every defensive possession: force her opponent to turn the ball over.

Johnson, the No. 10 pick in the WNBA draft by the Indiana Fever, has long been known for her defense. She was the SEC Defensive Player of the Year in 2025-26, averaging 1.5 steals per game, and specializes in being a point-of-attack defender.

She prides herself on doing whatever it takes to get in front of her opponent, slipping between screens and getting in her opponent's face, all without fouling – she averaged only 1.6 fouls per game in her senior season at South Carolina.

"I'm like a gnat on a ball every time," Johnson said at Fever training camp April 20. "I want to be the person to turn people over and get my teammates extra possessions to shoot the ball, or whatever that may be. When it comes to defense, I think that's what I got, which is



UCLA guard Kiki Rice (1) controls the ball against South Carolina guard Raven Johnson (25) in the second half on April 5 at Mortgage Matchup Center in Phoenix. KIRBY LEE/IMAGN IMAGES

getting defensive stops."

And that's exactly the type of player coach Stephanie White is looking for.

White knows the Fever have the offensive firepower, especially with Caitlin Clark healthy again. So she wants to

focus on the defensive intensity for which she and her coaching staff have been known.

In the two years White spent in Connecticut, the Sun ranked second in the league with a 100.7 defensive rating in 2023 and first with a 96.4 defensive rating in 2024. When she was hired for her second stint with the Fever following the 2024 season, she wanted to bring that same intensity to Indiana.

For a variety of reasons, including the chaos of multiple injuries, White didn't get the dominating defense she wanted in 2025. The Fever had a 104.3 defensive rating, which ranked seventh in the league.

It was much better than the Fever's ratings of 108.1 and 109.3 in 2023 and 2024, respectively, under former coach Christie Sides, but it wasn't enough for White.

She knows her team can do better. So, the portions of practice open to the media on the first two days of training

See **WNBA**, Page 2C

SPORTS ON TV FRIDAY, APRIL 24 (ALL TIMES EASTERN)

COLLEGE BASEBALL

8 p.m.

ESPN — UTSA at Tulane

SECN — Arkansas at Missouri

COLLEGE LACROSSE (MEN'S)

2:30 p.m.

ACCN — Drexel at Virginia

7 p.m.

CBSSN — Loyola (Md.) at Navy

COLLEGE LACROSSE (WOMEN'S)

3 p.m.

BTN — Big Ten Tournament, Semifinal, Northwestern vs. Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.

5 p.m.

ACCN — ACC Tournament, Semifinal, North Carolina vs. Syracuse, Charlotte, N.C.

6 p.m.

BTN — Big Ten Tournament, Semifinal, Maryland vs. Johns Hopkins, Ann Arbor, Mich.

8 p.m.

ACCN — ACC Tournament, Semifinal, Stanford vs. Clemson, Charlotte, N.C.

COLLEGE SOFTBALL

6 p.m.

SECN — Texas at Kentucky

7 p.m.

ESPN2 — Texas A&M at South Carolina

9 p.m.

ESPN2 — Texas Tech at Arizona State

10 p.m.

BTN — UCLA at Washington

COLLEGE VOLLEYBALL (MEN'S)

11 a.m.

BTN — MPSF Tournament, Semifinals, Teams TBD, Huntington Beach, Calif.

1:15 p.m.

BTN — MPSF Tournament, Championship, Teams TBD, Huntington Beach, Calif.

GOLF

11 a.m.

GOLF — PGA Tour, Chevron Championship, Second Round, Houston

3 p.m.

GOLF — PGA Tour, Zurich Classic of New Orleans, Second Round, Avondale, La.

6 p.m.

GOLF — PGA Tour, Chevron Championship, Second Round, Houston

9 p.m.

GOLF — PGA Champions Tour, Mitsubishi Electric Classic, First Round, Duluth, Ga. (tape delay)

12:30 a.m. (Friday)

GOLF — DP World Tour, Volvo China Open, Third Round, Shanghai, China

HOCKEY

10 a.m.

NHLN — IIHF U-18 World Championships, Denmark vs. United States, Bratislava, Slovakia

HORSE RACING

1 p.m.

FS2 — America's Day at the Races

MLB BASEBALL

7:07 p.m.

PEACOCK — Cleveland at Toronto

7:15 p.m.

APPLE TV — Philadelphia at Atlanta

7:40 p.m.

ESPN UNLIMITED — Pittsburgh at Milwaukee

8:10 p.m.

MLBN — N.Y. Yankees at Houston

10:15 p.m.

APPLE TV — Chicago Cubs at L.A. Dodgers

ESPN UNLIMITED — Miami at San Francisco

NBA BASKETBALL

7 p.m.

AMAZON PRIME — Playoffs, Eastern Conference, First Round, Boston at Philadelphia, Game 3

8 p.m.

AMAZON PRIME — Playoffs, Western Conference, First Round, L.A. Lakers at Houston, Game 3

10:30 p.m.

AMAZON PRIME — Playoffs, Western Conference, First Round, San Antonio at Portland, Game 3

NFL FOOTBALL

7 p.m.

ABC/ESPN/HULU/NFLN — 2026 NFL Draft, Rounds 2-3, Pittsburgh

NHL HOCKEY

7 p.m.

TNT/TRU TV — Playoffs, Eastern Conference, First Round, Tampa Bay at Montreal, Game 3

9:30 p.m.

TBS — Playoffs, Western Conference, First Round, Vegas at Utah, Game 3

10 p.m.

TNT/TRU TV — Playoffs, Western Conference, First Round, Edmonton at Anaheim, Game 3

10 p.m.

TNT/TRU TV — Playoffs, Western Conference, First Round, Edmonton at Anaheim, Game 3

NWSL SOCCER (WOMEN'S)

8 p.m.

AMAZON PRIME — Kansas City at Washington

SOCCER (MEN'S)

3 p.m.

USA — Premier League, Nottingham Forest at Sunderland

7 p.m.

FS2 — CPL, HFX Wanderers at Supra du Quebec

TENNIS

5 a.m.

TENNIS — Madrid Open, ATP/WTA 2nd Round

UFL FOOTBALL

8 p.m.

FOX — D.C. Defenders at Birmingham

Soccer

Continued from Page 1C

Charter; Savvas Chionakis, South Aiken; Smith Darby, J.L. Mann; Joshua DeSouza, Ashley Ridge; Nathanael Finley, Catawba Ridge; Juan Jose Gomez, Fort Mill; Trey Hall, Bishop England; Luka Kucinic St. Joseph's; Cullen Maas, A.C. Flora; Wels McLeod, Lucy Beckham; Brody Pike, Powdersville; Jud Scrivner, Powdersville; Evan Tubilio, Clover; Jalen Tucker, Chapin; Owen Wilcox, West Ashley Coaches: Brian Gamble, Dixie; Bob Taylor, Chapin

South Carolina girls

Lila Bowers, Chapin; Ava Brown, Southside Christian; Ally Buchanan, Mauldin; Bela Charriez, River Bluff; Adriana Dunat, Lexington; Rose Finnegan, Greer Middle College, Natalie Gullo, Wando; Emerson Hamilton, Greenville; Jayden Irby, Eastside; Keira Jeffries, Wando; Lola Kelly, St. Joseph's; Kelsey Merriman, Riverside; Brooke Ogorek, River Bluff; Ella Petry, Ocean-

side Collegiate; Emmy Rikard, Eastside; Bella Spadavecchia, Wade Hampton; Sydney Stoner, Chapin; Katie Villiger, J.L. Mann

North-South rosters

Boys

North

Brandon Jaramillo, Eastside; William Ossman, Christ Church Episcopal; Lawson Ardrey, Andrew Jackson; Jeffrey Bao, Riverside; Johnny Bunecke, St. Joseph's Catholic; Julio Cruz-Zepeda, Dorman; Chase Fandel, Fort Mill; Mateo Gartner Lavina, Christ Church Episcopal; Alex Hand, Wade Hampton; Erik Martinez Forward, Southside; Steele Miller, Wren; Kyle Monte, Mauldin; Eric Perez, Woodruff; Zach Pollard, Dorman; Rhys Roberts, St. Joseph's; Seth Williamson, Pendleton; Asher Wilson, Eastside; Coen Wilson, Indian Land Coaches: David Schroer, A.C. Flora; Todd Lea, Greer Middle College

South

Rafael Gusmao, Fort Dorchester; Keith McCune, Ashley Ridge; David An-

drade, Gray Collegiate; Andres Campo, Gray Collegiate; Wade Douroux, River Bluff; Hampton Eirvin, Waccamaw; Enzo Fania, Hanahan; Blake Fuss, North Augusta; Jason Green-Adams, Waccamaw; Austin Ipock, Lexington; Ernesto Marceleno-Brazell, Swansea; Caelen Michner, Lucy Beckham; Cris Morales, Phillip Simmons; Christian Ott, Myrtle Beach; Cesar Ramirez, Academic Magnet; Christian Sanchez, St. James; Dominic Smith, Bishop England; Blake Yarborough, Academic Magnet

Girls

North

Sophia Tzouvelekas, Christ Church Episcopal; Sophia Banzon, Nation Ford; Laura Boggs, A.C. Flora; Haley Campbell, Wade Hampton; Landry Franklin, Riverside; Emma Hilsmier, Fort Mill; CJ Johnson, Indian Land; Kinsie Kulig, Hillcrest; Corrine Langston, J.L. Mann; Jillian Muir, Dreher; Annie Newton, Nation Ford; Lydia Parker, Eastside; Emerson Shelton, Fort Mill; Alyssa Singh, Greer Middle College; Berkeley Slepokura, Indian Land; Madison Stanley, Wren; Kate Tiller, Greenville; Hayleigh

Winkler, Gaffney

South

Addison Rollison, Summerville; Anna Bart, Lexington; Elizabeth Brady, Bishop England; Maliha Brown, River Bluff; Brynn Calendine, Bluffton; Charlotte Cline, Bishop England; Vanessa Coleman, Gray Collegiate; Victoria Coleman, Gray Collegiate; Fay De Los Santos, Carolina Forest; Omi Griffin, James Island; McKenna Igoe, Cane Bay; Lilah Jennings, Waccamaw; Emily Lorenzo, Waccamaw; Avery Morgan, Fox Creek; Madeline Moye, Academic Magnet; Madeline Runyon, Carolina Forest; Adriana Sansonese, South Aiken; Eiliyah Tomes, Cane Bay

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South Carolina

Continued from Page 1C

third in winning percentage (90%) and fourth in scoring margin (27.8).

There's no total revamp needed but rather some big picture things that should carry over, in addition to slight fixes or improvements when trying to go from two national championship losses in a row to a win.

Joyce Edwards fuels South Carolina offense but 2 key guards are gone

There were many elements that played into how productive South Carolina's offense was like strong ball movement and all five starters nearly averaging double-digits. There also was Joyce Edwards, who made a leap from her freshman to her sophomore season.

She went from 12.7 points per game to 19.2, setting a program single-season scoring record with 768 points.

She helped South Carolina shoot 54.2% on two-pointers (10th in the nation) but she had guard talent around her to help when she or 6-6 center Medina Okot were swarmed around the rim.

Midway through the season, particularly after the Oklahoma loss on Jan. 22, it felt like Edwards was more comfortable kicking it out to guards like Ta'Niya Latson, Raven Johnson and

Tessa Johnson instead of trying to force it inside to draw a foul.

The scouts Edwards faces won't get any easier. So with Latson and Raven Johnson now in the WNBA, a few things need to happen to carry over that offensive success.

Point guard Maddy McDaniel will be even stronger if she develops as a mid-range threat, instead of attacking all the way each time.

Tessa Johnson has to be a bit more consistent as a senior, as she's had streaks of cold offense the past two seasons. She's the first to admit she has to impact the game in other ways when her 3-point shot isn't falling. So if she's continuously driving or kicking it out, she either scores or opens up more chances for her teammates but she can't go invisible.

Staley also needs that same offensive attack she had with Latson in Texas transfer Jordan Lee. The 6-foot guard knows how to create her own shot in the SEC systems so her transition might be smoother than Latson's was at first.

If Lee starts, that means Agot Makeer is likely coming off the bench. She doesn't force shots, she attacks downhill while still posing a threat from the 3-point line, and she might have a similar jump from her freshman to sophomore year like Edwards did.

Opposing coaches often talked about having to pick their battles with defending South Carolina given how balanced its attack was. The obvious difference

from 2024-25 to 2025-26 was the Gamecocks didn't struggle to score except for rare occasions, and roster wise, it has the pieces for that to happen again.

Rebounding: Lose Madina Okot, gain Chloe Kitts, Ashlyn Watkins

Okot averaged an SEC-best 10.6 rebounds in her lone season with South Carolina. Behind her was Edwards at 6.8.

In the title game, UCLA destroyed South Carolina on the boards (49-37) and a lot of that was because Okot lost the battle against 6-foot-7 Lauren Betts. Opponents averaged 12.4 offensive rebounds per game against the Gamecocks and in all four losses, they lost the rebounding battle by an average of 10.7.

Now South Carolina gains back two great rebounders in Ashlyn Watkins and Chloe Kitts who both missed the season, but it can't be just those two. In the Final Four win over UConn, Latson led the team in rebounds with 11 because Okot and Edwards had hard one-on-one matchups to deal.

South Carolina can't struggle again with bench scoring, especially posts

South Carolina was 145th in the nation in bench scoring at 18.5 points, one season after it was first.

Staley had to rely on her starters

WNBA

Continued from Page 1C

camp focused on running through different defensive sets.

"I think we'll be able to do some more things on the defensive end of the floor, hopefully be a better rebounding team as well, and that'll allow us to play a little more in transition. ... More than any-

thing, we want to be a bear on the defensive end of the floor," White said April 19. "We want to be in the top three in the league in defense."

The front office brought in players that can help her with that goal, including Johnson, forward Monique Billings and guard Tyasha Harris.

Billings, who signed a two-year deal with the Fever, is projected to be Indiana's starting power forward, sharing the frontcourt with three-time All-Star

Aliyah Boston.

"First and foremost, Mo is an elite communicator," White said. "She's an elite communicator on the defensive end of the floor, there shouldn't be mistakes in coverages, because she's talking about it. She's a really good defender, active, aggressive."

Harris, a combo guard who will likely back up both Clark and Kelsey Mitchell, is already familiar with White's expectations on the defensive end of the floor.

She played two seasons under White in Connecticut, one as a full-season starter in 2024.

"I remember Connecticut, she used to be on my butt about it," Harris said with a laugh. "A lot of our offense can be dictated from our defense. And you know the cliché saying is, 'Defense wins championships.' Once the playoffs hit, that's really what matters, how you can execute your defense, how you can lock down and get stops when it matters."