

CAROLINA



RUGBY

University of South Carolina
Men's Rugby Football Club
Est. 1967

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Press Release: USC Men's Rugby ranked #25 nationally

Columbia, SC – American Rugby News (ARN), the nation's leading collegiate rugby news agency, has ranked the University of South Carolina 25th overall in its most recent Down Under Endeavours Top 25 (November 17th, 2008). The ranking is the club's first in the 3 years since ARN begin issuing rankings, and signifies the return of the club to national prominence.

Founded in 1967, the Men's Rugby Club is the oldest sports club on the campus of the University of South Carolina. The club is an elite member of USA Rugby South's premier Division I competition – an honor bestowed upon only 6 other USA Rugby South clubs (#4 Arkansas State, #21 Florida, Tennessee, North Carolina, Clemson, and Georgia) – and fields 2 fully competitive sides in league play. With an open membership of over 50 members, the club will occasionally field 3 sides in fall pre-season play, and aims to make 3 full teams a regular fixture in its near future.

South Carolina Men's Rugby was a national powerhouse from its inception until the mid-1990s, and the club is ecstatic over its recent acclaim. In 1984, the club was selected #1 in a national pre-season poll (by a now dormant ranking publication), a reflection of the club's regular past dominance over both senior men's and men's collegiate rugby sides. The team's greatness is reflected well in its alumni, as former USC ruggers have gone on to serve on the USA Rugby Board of Directors (Jeff Smolka), played on the USA Rugby Men's Senior National Team (Phillip Rockefeller, '89), established National Division III powerhouse Furman Men's Rugby (John Roberts, '90) and men's senior powerhouse Atlanta Old White (Rick LeBel), founded the South Carolina High School Rugby League (Jeff Smolka), as well as many other accomplishments, including serving as the popular broadcasting voice of USC sporting events (Brad Muller, '92).

The club's current coach, Geoff Mason, is the only former professional coaching in collegiate South competition, and has been a large part of the club's renaissance since 2003. A success on the field, Mason played in the New South Wales Rugby League competition for Sydney University, Newtown and Penrith in the 1970's as a prop and second row and represented Newcastle against New Zealand in 1978. From there, he emigrated to the US in 1980 and was Player/Coach at USC from 1981-1985. He also played for Olde Grey 1986-1990 where he represented Combined South and East in the National All-Star Championships. Afterwards, he coached USC from 1992-1994 where the club reached the South Final Four. Since Coach Mason's return to USC in the spring of 2004, USC has risen to new heights and returned to national prominence. Taking over a previously under-achieving Division II team, Coach Mason quickly helped the team reach the USA Rugby South Division II playoffs in 2005, 2006, and 2007. Building on this success, coupled with increased performance on the organization level, the club moved to the South's prestigious Division I competition - an honor bestowed upon only 7 collegiate clubs in USA Rugby South, where the club's A and B-side teams both placed 4th of 7 in their first year of Division I play (spring 2008).

This week's ranking is the end result of a long flirtation with the rankings by the Gamecocks this semester. Concluding their fall season with a solid 24-12 victory over 2007 Palmetto Cup Champions Coastal Carolina University, the club finished with a 7-3 overall record, including a 5-2 record in official

match play (pool-play and bracket-play matches with 25-minute halves do not count towards an official record), recording victories over then-#18 Clemson University, 2007 D3 National Runner-Up (and 2008 Palmetto Cup Champion) Furman University, 2008 Palmetto Cup Runner-Up College of Charleston, and in-town senior men's side Columbia Olde Grey. The club once again did not participate in the Palmetto Cup Championship Tournament, citing a schedule conflict with the SEC Championship Rugby Tournament in Birmingham, Alabama. At said tournament, the Gamecocks defeated the University of Georgia and Auburn University before falling to the 21st-ranked Florida Gators in the Plate Final (garnering a 4th place finish – USA Rugby West powerhouse LSU [#13 nationally] was Champion). The club's second side finished its fall season with a 5-3-1 mark overall, including a 4-2 record against collegiate competition, and was tied for 3rd in the SEC's 2nd Division competition.

With the fall campaign concluded, the club looks forward to USA Rugby South competition in the spring, where it will open league play against 4th-ranked Arkansas State University (Jan. 31) on the rugby pitch located behind USC's Strom Thurmond Wellness & Fitness Center facility (the rugby posts behind the building are quite distinctive). Following that, the Gamecocks will play away against 21st-ranked Florida (Feb. 7), home against Georgia (Feb. 14), away against Tennessee (Feb. 21), home against North Carolina (Feb. 28), and away again versus hated rival Clemson (Mar. 28). The remaining portion of the calendar will be announced in the coming weeks as the club prepares to fill in exhibition matches during its by weeks.

This week many USC students will likely see the 25th-ranked Gamecocks in their new teamwear, as they assist once again in the annual Carolina-Clemson Blood Drive. The Men's Rugby Club has been an integral member of this philanthropic event for years, in addition to their volunteer work in setting up, aiding, and instructing youth players (U19) in the South Carolina High School Rugby League.

The Men's Rugby Club at the University of South Carolina is an open membership club that takes all interested athletes, regardless of experience level. Many USC ruggers have little to no experience prior to competing at the collegiate level but adapt quickly, as evidenced by club newcomer Calvin Storey's selection to the 2008 SEC Tournament All-Star Team (Nov. 8th, 2008) – Storey only began play with the club in the spring of 2008. The club regularly fields 2 full sides, with plans to field more, and is a proud member of [USA Rugby](#), [USA Rugby South](#), and the [Palmetto Rugby Union](#). Additionally, the club is honored to compete in the [SEC Championship Rugby Tournament](#). Several club members are also annually selected to the Palmetto Rugby Union Collegiate All-Star team and compete in the USA Rugby South Local Area Union All-Star Tournament each November, where they are selected to tryout for the USA Rugby South Collegiate All-Star Team.

The club is always welcoming of new players, and interested athletes should visit the team's website at www.uscrugby.org for further contact information.



Posted in: [College](#)

By Brian Lowe

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Not so much movement in this week's [Down Under Endeavours](#) Top 25, although two teams make their 2008/09 season debut.

Everyone in the Top 15 stays the same, but there is some jockeying below that.

Cal Poly leapfrogs San Diego State on the back of their win against Chico State. While both southern Cal sides have 1-0 records, the Mustangs beat a team from a conference with a higher Power Rating, as opposed to the Aztecs who notched a victory over a team with the same Power Rating as theirs.

Minnesota checks in for the first time this season, and South Carolina makes its first ever appearance in the *ARN* rankings following a solid fall preseason.

Those two new entries have forced Rutgers and Buffalo to drop out altogether. Even though the Black Death and UB got to the NRU playoffs, they were eliminated from the national postseason, and as such, lose their spots in the [Down Under Endeavours](#) Top 25.

And while Texas A&M won the Big XII tournament at the weekend, all games were only 25-minute halves and therefore don't count towards any team's overall record.

- 1 (1) Penn State* (9-1) [4]
- 2 (2) Kutztown (7-2) [4]
- 3 (3) California (out of season) [5]
- 4 (4) Arkansas State* (5-0) [3]
- 5 (5) Army (7-0) [2]
- 6 (6) St Mary's (2-0-1) [5]
- 7 (7) BYU (out of season) [5]
- 8 (8) Utah (7-2-1) [5]
- 9 (9) Navy (5-2-1) [4]
- 10 (10) Dartmouth (9-1) [2]
- 11 (11) Bowling Green* (13-0) [2]
- 12 (12) Central Washington (7-0) [3]
- 13 (13) LSU* (5-1) [4]
- 14 (14) Wyoming (5-1) [4]
- 15 (15) Virginia Tech (6-2) [4]
- 16 (16) Texas A&M (5-0) [4]

- 17 (18) Cal Poly (1-0) [4]
- 18 (17) San Diego State (1-0) [4]
- 19 (19) Syracuse (8-2) [2]
- 20 (20) Oklahoma* (8-1) [4]
- 21 (21) Florida* (8-1) [3]
- 22 (unranked) Minnesota (6-1) [2]
- 23 (22) Colorado State* (3-2-1) [4]
- 24 (23) Air Force (3-1-2) [4]
- 25 (unranked) South Carolina* (5-2) [3]

*denotes exhibition games