



New football team ready to create 'havoc'

BY ROBERT ANDERSON
SPORTS EDITOR

The newest member of the local football lineup is the Palmetto Havoc, a Triple A semiprofessional football team based in Horry County.

Owned and operated by Jesse "Roc" Frierson, the

Havoc is currently preparing for its inaugural season that begins June 5 at Beaufort.

Frierson, who is also part owner of the Carolina Predators, started the new team to elevate semipro football in the area and give participants a chance to advance in the sport.

The Havoc held its first tryouts in mid-December when more than 50 players were evaluated in areas ranging from speed and agility to strength and desire.

The roster was finalized following a second round of tryouts in February.

According to Frierson, the

players conducted a toy drive for needy youngsters for Christmas in order to introduce itself to the community.

He said the Havoc will be actively involved in the community, especially with organizations like Street Reach in Myrtle Beach and the Shepherd's Table in

Conway. The team is also planning a back-to-school drive as well as a reading program for area youth.

"I want this team to be more active in the community," Frierson said. "I think it's important to be very community oriented."

HAVOC, A8

Anglers holding tourney

BY ROBERT ANDERSON
STAFF WRITER

The Grand Strand Saltwater Anglers Association (GSSAA) is making plans for one of its biggest and most popular annual events, the Spring Flounder Tournament in Murrells Inlet.

"We started the Flounder Tournament nine years ago as a fun tournament and a family event," said Ed Skowysz, who heads up the tournament committee for the 45-member GSSAA. "Everyone has a good time. Last year we had 189, and this year we're hoping to break 200."

In addition to having fun, the local fishing club sponsors the tournament to raise funds for a marine science scholarship at Coastal Carolina University, and to support the South Carolina Artificial Reef Program.

Over the past 25 years, the GSSAA has raised more than \$70,000 to support the building of artificial reefs along the Grand Strand.

"We're about conservation also," Skowysz said. "Conservation of the marine environment and its fisheries has been a key issue for the club since it was founded. That is always stressed during events like the spring tournament."

This past year, 169 adults and 18 youth anglers participated in the tournament.

The GSSAA contributed \$2,500 to the artificial reef program in 2008, resulting in the sinking of a barge at the Paradise Reef.

The Association is seeking sponsors for the tournament, and all firms and organizations that contribute a minimum of \$100 cash or merchandise/services will have their names and logos printed on all tournament materials including the Leaderboard.

Co-sponsorships will also be announced at the Captain's Meeting and Awards

GSSAA, A8



FILE PHOTO

T.J. Johnson, 55, will be the 'center' of attention for the USC Gamecocks in 2010.

Johnson becomes 'center' of attention for Gamecocks

BY ROBERT ANDERSON
SPORTS EDITOR

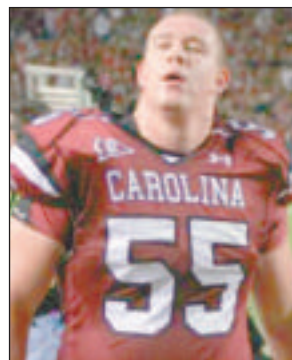
Aynor High graduate T.J. Johnson played a key role in South Carolina's seven-win 2009 campaign, starting every game on the offensive line while making the All-SEC Freshman first team and earning honorable mention Freshman All-American laurels.

Johnson will literally take centerstage for the Gamecocks in 2010, vacating his familiar right guard position to fill a void created by the graduation of Lemuel Jeanpierre at center.

Although he had never taken a snap at center until last year when coaches began exploring the idea of moving him to center as a possible replacement for Jeanpierre, the redshirt sophomore is excited about his new role.

"I'm very excited about the opportunity to play center," Johnson said. "I think it's a very prestigious position. It all starts at center. I think the center and the quarterback are the ones who direct the offense."

Johnson has spent most of spring practice



T.J. Johnson

working with quarterback Stephen Garcia and familiarizing himself with his new role.

"I've never played center in my life and Stephen gives me little tips to help me out," Johnson said. "Snaps are all about communication...Is Stephen comfortable with my snaps? Am I comfortable with Stephen?"

The new combination appears to be working out the way new offensive line coach Shawn Elliott hoped it would.

He said Johnson is a leader on the offensive front, and does everything he's asked to do both in the weight room and the classroom.

Garcia says Johnson is going to be a pretty good player. "He's physical. He's

got a little mean streak in him, and that's what you need in a center."

Johnson is equally complimentary of Garcia.

"I think Stephen is ready to step out and become the leader the quarterback should be," he said. "We saw signs of that last year and I believe he will."

Johnson is also high on Elliott, hired from Appalachian State to replace Eric Wolford who left the Gamecocks to take over the program at Youngstown State.

"I like him a lot," Johnson said. "I really do. He's already won me over and he's won the rest of the guys over. He's a very intense coach, but he's also a coach who has your back."

According to Johnson, center is as much a mental game as it is physical.

"You've got to be able to pick up blitzes and see where everything is coming from," he said. "So it's a lot more mental and of course you've got to get the ball back there, too."

Many publications and prognosticators are predicting 2010 will be big year for Carolina.

MB Riptides make history at tournament

The Myrtle Beach Riptides swimming team competed at the 2010 National Club Swimming Association's (NCSA) Junior National Championships March 16-20 in Orlando, Fla. The meet hosted teams from all over the United States, bringing in over 1100 swimmers aged 18-years and younger. It was the final meet of the season for the locally-based Riptides and it was historic.

The Riptides sent swimmers Lauren Campbell (MB High School, Carolina Forest resident), Megan Kingsley (Conway Christian School, Carolina Forest resident) and Keenan Lineback (Conway Christian School, Conway resident).

The girls combined for several personal best times, but even more impressive were the eight team records broken and two SC Swimming state records broken.

Head coach of the Riptides, James Smith, was quite impressed by the performances of the ladies.

"The girls had been working all season for this meet and they not only did the Riptides proud, but they represented the entire Grand Strand and South Carolina extremely well," said Smith.

Lineback started the meet off for the Riptides in the 1000-yard freestyle and moved up 11 places. However, Lineback fell ill before the start of the meet and struggled with chest congestion and fever the entire week.

Yet, when Lineback competed in the in the 400-Individual Medley (IM) she was able to qualify for Finals for the first time ever, finishing 31st overall.

Her butterfly leg of the IM was a best time of 59.4.

As the week progressed, Lineback swam strongly, but was not able to shake her cold.

"Keenan would have had a better meet if it had not been for her getting sick," Smith said. "She was strong through the first 200 yards of her events, but fatigue would just set in and for a distance swimmer, it makes the race even tougher. As her coach, I understand how hard she has trained and to get sick before the meet was just heartbreaking."

"But true to the Riptides' character, Keenan did her best and never gave up," said Smith.

Campbell had an excellent meet in her second trip to NCSA Juniors.

Campbell had the largest place gain of 35 spots in the 200-yard backstroke.

Her time in this event, 2:05.9, was the "A" standard [she previously held the "B" standard] and a new team record.

Later in the meet, Campbell time-trialed the 200-yard butterfly for a new team record of 2:06 and the 200-yard IM and set a new team record of 2:09.1.

By far Campbell's best event was her final event - the 1650-yard freestyle.

Campbell swam a 16:59.4, becoming the first female swimmer from the Grand Strand to break the 17:00 barrier.

According to Smith, Campbell's time is the third fastest time in South Carolina since 2005 for girls 18/Under.

Campbell finished 24th overall, setting a new team record and earning her first USA-Swimming short-course Junior National qualifying time (q-time).

"Lauren just knows how to step up and race when it counts most," Smith said of Campbell.

RIPTIDES, A8

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(11:05) 1:10, 3:10, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00

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