

The Vanderbilt Hustler

MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 2010 • 122ND YEAR, NO. 3 • THE VOICE OF VANDERBILT SINCE 1888

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SPORTS:
Marriage between the Dores and the Bears tumultuous. See page 4

CALENDAR

TODAY
• Martin Luther King Jr. Day



FRANCIS MILLER / LIFE Magazine

To honor the civil rights activist, The Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Series will run throughout the week with lectures and panels highlighting King's legacy and the history of the civil rights movement. Tonight, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee member Bob Moses and Congress of Racial Equality member Rita Bender will deliver the keynote address on "The Deliberate Denial of Education," starting at 6 p.m. in Benton Chapel. A candlelight vigil will be held following the speech in honor of King and civil rights activists.

• Spring dance class registration starts



MARTIN O'CONNOR / VU Media Relations

Register for classes with the Vanderbilt Dance Program in the Sarratt Student Center Lobby from noon to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and 11 a.m.-4 p.m. on Saturday. For a list of classes, go to <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/dance/>

THURSDAY, JAN. 21

• **"Leveling the Playing Field, Helping Poor Children Succeed"**
Geoffrey Canada, president and CEO of Harlem Children's Zone, will speak about what he believes is necessary to change the lives of inner-city children. As part of the Chancellor's Lecture Series, the speech will begin at 4 p.m. at Benton Chapel and will be followed by a complimentary reception.

• **"Urinetown: The Musical"**
Vanderbilt Off-Broadway's student-run production of Greg Kotis' award-winning musical premieres Thursday night, with additional shows Friday and Saturday night. Beginning at 8 p.m. each night at Blair School of Music's Ingram Hall, admission is \$5 for the public and free for undergraduates.

IN THIS ISSUE

OPINION:
MLK should be honored with a day of service. See page 4

WEATHER

WEATHER.COM

TODAY



HIGH **57**, LOW **36**
Partly Cloudy

Going, going, Greek



JUSTIN MENESTRINA / The Vanderbilt Hustler

New members of Alpha Chi Omega circle up and begin to get to know their new sisters and sorority's cheers at Sunday's Panhellenic Bid Day.

At the end of a weeklong recruitment, Vanderbilt's fraternities and sororities have welcomed their newest members. Of the 520 women who began the process, 418 received bids on Sunday, while 252 men joined Interfraternity Council fraternities. "It was really fun," said new Delta Delta Delta member McCallen Moser. "It's a little stressful, seeing where you're accepted back to, but overall I had a really good experience with it."



JUSTIN MENESTRINA / The Vanderbilt Hustler

New Kappa Delta members Cozy Ruan and Ellen Reat celebrate after receiving their bids.



JUSTIN MENESTRINA / The Vanderbilt Hustler

New fraternity members gathered in Sarratt Cinema Saturday evening to receive their bids at the end of the first formal Interfraternity Council recruitment process.

MORE ON
InsideVandy.com

To view photo slideshows of both Panhellenic and Interfraternity Council Bid Days, go to InsideVandy.com.

Potential candidates take first step toward VSG presidency



Susan Gleiser and Andrew Morse



Lee Redinoff and Lori Murphy



Aysha Malik and Theo Samets

by **SARA GAST**
Senior Reporter

Three pairs of students attended Vanderbilt Student Government's information session for presidential candidates Sunday night, unofficially presenting themselves as contenders to be the next leaders of the student body.

Current Speaker of the Senate Aysha Malik and Executive Adviser Theo Samets, Engineering Senator Andrew Morse and Programming Director Susan Gleiser, and Vice President Lori Murphy and Treasurer Lee Pedinoff were present at the meeting to hear the official rules and deadlines as they prepared for their campaigns as presidents

Please see **VSG**, page 3

MORE ON
InsideVandy.com

Check InsideVandy.com throughout the week for more in-depth VSG election coverage.

Web site ranks Vanderbilt second hottest school of the decade

by **CONRAD GOERINGER**
Contributing Reporter

Only one school was hotter than Vanderbilt in the 2000s. Ranking behind the University of Southern California, Vanderbilt placed second in The Daily Beast's list of the hottest colleges of the decade.

The Daily Beast, Tina Brown's news outlet, ranked schools based on admissions statistics, financial aid packages and campus amenities.

The Daily Beast attributed Vanderbilt's

recent increase in selectivity, merit-aid packages and the construction of The Commons as being major factors in its ranking. The implementation of a need-blind admissions process and a guarantee of meeting 100 percent of a family's demonstrated financial need made Vanderbilt accessible to more talented students, and the construction of The Commons in 2007 fostered a 30 percent increase in applications the following year.

"This Almost Ivy is the quintessential

Please see **VANDY RANKING**, page 3

THEN AND NOW

Number of applications	8,890 (2000)	21,500 (projected 2010)
Percent admitted	55.1% (2000)	20% (2009)
Yield (percent enrolled)	33.5% (2000)	41% (2009)
Diversity (number who self-identified as minorities)	17.4% (2000)	28.5% (2009)

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Page Two

CORRECTION

In the Friday, Jan. 15 issue of The Hustler, Sam Betten was mentioned as a member of Phi Kappa Psi. Betten is a Phi Kappa Sigma. The Hustler regrets this error.

CRIME LOG

compiled by AMANDA NIEMAN

Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2:48 p.m.

A GPS was stolen from a vehicle in South Garage.

Wednesday, Jan. 13, 4:05 p.m.

Money was stolen from Vanderbilt University Hospital.

Wednesday, Jan. 13, 8:00 p.m.

A car was pulled over at the intersection of Pierce Avenue and 24th Avenue South. The vehicle did not have any headlights on, and the driver's license was suspended.

Around the Loop

compiled by LAURA DOLBOW

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO COME TO VANDERBILT?



"It was the best school in the South, and it was the best school I got into."
—Cayla Mackey, Class of 2012



"Vandy has strong academics with a good mix of sports as well. It's also a good distance from home."
—Chelsea Hollenkamp, Class of 2012



"First because it was close to home, and it is the best academic school in the Southeast."
—Matthew Taylor, Class of 2012



"It's a good distance from Atlanta, and also a good mix of academics and social life."
—Kalie Deutsch, Class of 2012

SERVICE GUIDE

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The Hustler strives for accuracy and fairness and will correct errors of substance. See our correction policy on the Opinion page for information about notifying us.

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BACK ISSUES

Back issues are available in Sarratt 130 during business hours.

Who is: STEVE PATE

TEACHES: Managerial Studies

ATTENDED: B.S., M.S., Ph.D. in mathematics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
M.B.A., University of Chicago



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IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU DO TO PREPARE FOR SPEED READING?

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DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS ON HOW TO SPEED READ?

It's easy to say, but hard to do. Do not sub-vocalize. Pick some syllable, as a kid mine was "no" and repeat it to yourself as you read. This will prevent you from saying the words in the book, and you will move along much faster.

compiled by FRANCESCA AMIKER

SNAPSHOT

Blue and White Formal



ZAC HARDY / The Vanderbilt Hustler

Britany Jenkins and Kembrap Nelson dance it up at the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., Blue and White Formal in Alumni Hall on Saturday.

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD,
HELPING POOR CHILDREN SUCCEED

Geoffrey Canada

President & CEO,

Harlem Children's Zone

Thursday, January 21, 2010

Lecture 4 p.m. • Reception 5 p.m. • Benton Chapel

Geoffrey Canada is the founder of the Harlem Children's Zone. His revolutionary idea that helping impoverished youth beat the odds against them means changing the entire character of their schools, families, and neighborhoods has been replicated with success by communities across the country. He is the author of *Fist Stick Knife Gun: A Personal History of Violence in America* and *Reaching Up for Manhood*, a manifesto of hope for boys born in the inner city.



This lecture begins at 4 p.m. and is followed by a complimentary reception at 5 p.m. in Benton Chapel, Divinity School. Parking is available in Terrace Place Garage (21st Avenue, South at Terrace Place).

This event is free and open to the public. Seating is limited and available on a first-come, first-seated basis.

For more information, please refer to www.vanderbilt.edu/chancellor/cls, email cls@vanderbilt.edu, or call 343-2574.

CHANCELLOR'S LECTURE SERIES
2009/2010



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Chipotle to join Taste of Nashville

by MALVI SAVANI
Contributing Reporter

With strong student support in the form of Facebook groups and e-mails, the Chipotle Mexican Grill on West End Avenue will join Vanderbilt Dining's Taste of Nashville program this semester. The restaurant, which opened on Nov. 13, has already completed the Taste of Nashville application.

"We are now at the mercy of Vanderbilt Dining," said Ryan Dickerson, who works with Chipotle's Southeast marketing team.

"Chipotle is on the top of everyone's list right now" said Camp Howard, director of Vanderbilt Dining.

Chipotle, a Mexican quick-service restaurant, will most likely compete with the Qdoba Mexican Grill on West End Avenue, a similar restaurant that joined Taste of Nashville roughly three years ago.

"(Chipotle) would more than likely affect (Qdoba's) business," Howard said.

In order to qualify for the Taste of Nashville program, dining establishments must be 10 minutes walking distance from central campus or within

a 10-minute delivery radius of the campus. Restaurants are required to give 10 percent of Taste of Nashville profits to Vanderbilt. Numerous restaurants that are a part of the program rave about the benefits.

"I'm satisfied with it," said Kesha Demonbreun, the manager of Schlotzsky's Deli on West End Avenue. "I don't really see any cons of (Taste of Nashville) since it helps business. A lot of students are very excited when they find out that the card works here."

Glen Smith, manager of Noshville Delicatessen on Broadway, agreed.

"It's a great program for independent restaurants of Davidson County to get together, and it helps promote business," Smith said.

Although Jack Baum, the manager of Chili's on West End Avenue said he loved the Taste of Nashville program and the benefits of Vanderbilt student business he expressed frustration over the "obnoxious Vanderbilt students that don't understand the rules" associated with the plan, including the fact that they're not allowed to get gift cards with the plan.



ZAC HARDY / The Vanderbilt Hustler

Even though it only opened two months ago, the Chipotle on West End Avenue is ready to be part of the Taste of Nashville program, which would allow Vanderbilt students to use their Meal Money at the restaurant.

Taste of Nashville, which itself is unique for a college campus, began four years ago with only four participant restaurants. Now the program has matured to 25 restaurants

ranging from high-class dining to fast food. Howard said he would still like the program to grow by adding one or two new restaurants each year. ■

VSG: Teams offer different perspectives on leadership

From VSG, page 1

and vice presidents, respectively. Attorney General Tyler Boyd moderated the session, which was also attended by other members of the VSG executive board, including President Wyatt Smith.

"It's an exciting time ... to start looking for new leadership," said Smith, who advised potential candidates to "keep in mind the best interests of the student body" and keep a "high level of integrity" throughout their campaigns in order to live up to the expectations of students.

Campaigns will officially begin on Thursday, Jan. 21, at 8 p.m. A primary to narrow down the race to two tickets will run from Jan. 27 at 8 a.m. to Jan. 28 at noon, with the final election beginning on Feb. 3 at 8 a.m. and ending on Feb. 4 at noon.

Many of the potential candidates described their ticket as providing a unique position. Morse and Gleiser said their distance from the executive board gave them a "bird's-eye view" of how VSG works and what the student body needs.

"(VSG) has great strengths and weaknesses," Gleiser said. "Our ability to see it from a step back is a great strength." She also expressed her and Morse's passion for VSG and their hope to "utilize every student's voice."

"We want VSG to be an advocacy group," she said.



JUSTIN MENESTRINA / The Vanderbilt Hustler

Presidential candidate Andrew Morse looks over the rules for the campaign as the three pairs of candidates meet to officially declare their presidency.

Murphy and Pedinoff, on the other hand, said their combined six years of experience is the element that gives them a "unique perspective" on student government.

"We're running for president and vice president because we believe we are best suited to provide services and support for students and lobby for them," Murphy said. "We see what makes students tick and know how to successfully represent the student body."

Murphy also noted her plans to continue the work she and Smith started

over the past year.

"We want to expand on that success and improve the organization each day we're in office," she said.

Malik said the roles she and Samets have held over their time at Vanderbilt have given them insight into students' needs, both now and in the future.

"I love this university, and I only want to be able to give back," Malik said, a thought Samets echoed.

"We want to commit to provide services that students want and need," Samets said. "That will be our focus." ■

VANDY RANKING: Commons, financial aid entice applicants

From VANDY RANKING, page 1

example of the supply/demand crunch of the 2000s," wrote Kathleen Kingsbury, author of the post. Over the past 10 years, the percent of applicants admitted has shot down, going from 55.1 percent in 2000 to 20 percent for the current freshman class.

Vice Provost for Enrollment and Dean of Admissions Douglas Christiansen agreed, saying Vanderbilt's No. 2 ranking is a measure of demand. This year, the admissions office is expected to receive approximately 12,600 more applications than in 2000. As a natural result of selectivity, the caliber of students admitted has also increased.

Christiansen said that even more important than statistics is the student experience.

"All these things are wonderful," he said. "But I believe the biggest driver is the solid academic experience students are having."

With faculty members who are top experts in their fields but who also focus on undergraduate learning, students receive a world-class education.

"Vanderbilt could not have success without substance," Christiansen said.

Sophomore Ethan Messenger, an economics major from Milford, Mass., said he was attracted to Vanderbilt because of its academics and size, despite considering liberal arts colleges including Bowdoin, Colgate and Washington and Lee.

"(Vanderbilt) is large enough that it becomes a different experience from high school, but also not so large that one becomes lost in the numbers," he said.

Yet others are drawn to the university for research opportunities.

"It is my second semester here, and I am already getting experience in a lab performing cutting edge research," said sophomore transfer Ravi Nath, a biology major from Centerville, Va. "There are so many opportunities here."

"As far as if I am happy with my choice, I couldn't be happier," Messenger said.

Hannah Twillman contributed reporting to this article. ■

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- ***Anu Pardeshi*** (MBA'04): Director of Special Projects, DaVita Inc.

Wednesday, January 20, 5:30-6:30pm
(networking immediately following)

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Sports

COLUMN

Commodores and Bears: A rocky relationship, but one that can work

by DAVID RUTZ
Sports Reporter

The Chicago Bears don't need sniggering reminders they have five players from the Vanderbilt Commodores on their roster. They're the ones who traded for and drafted Jay Cutler, Earl Bennett, Chris Williams, Hunter Hillenmeyer and D.J. Moore, who all, with the exception of Moore, played prominent roles on this season's team. It's a strange marriage between a college never known as a football powerhouse and an NFL franchise with a rich history.

"Has any other NFL team ever started three former Vanderbilt players on offense?" my brother-in-law asked me. I didn't look it up, but I don't imagine there was.

Circumstances have changed for both teams lately. Vanderbilt's seen an upsurge in its football program in the last few seasons, while the Bears are a shadow of the dominant force they were decades ago.

But there are plenty of reasons our Commodore alumni can and will be instrumental in making Da Bears a playoff team again, and much of the proof lies in the pudding of a profoundly disappointing 7-9 season.

The tale starts and ends with the mercurial, brash Jay Cutler, the quarterback with tons of talent and plenty of growing up to do.

With the third-most touchdown passes (27) in Bears history but also the most interceptions in the NFL (26), Cutler's 2009 season was a study in the highs and lows of gunslinging: that brand of quarterbacking that's alternately thrilling and maddening.

Plenty of upside to that mindset: Cutler is one of the most physically gifted quarterbacks in the league, justifying the confidence in his arm to make throws where others might take the sack.

But also plenty of downside: Four games where No. 6 tossed at least three picks knifed a struggling Bears offense. The result was a lot of points left on the field and a lot of facepalms from Chicago fans.

What, then, to make of his volatile first season



JOHN RUSSELL / VU Meadi Relations

Vanderbilt alumni Earl Bennett and Jay Cutler look to emulate their collegiate success with the storied Chicago Bears.

in the Windy City? Any season that comes up short of the playoffs for a legitimate franchise certainly doesn't qualify as a success, and Cutler's inconsistency was a big part of the problem.

The good thing is Cutler didn't try to deny this, and there was development as the season wore on for a quarterback who people tend to forget is just 26 years old.

Cutler threw eight touchdown passes in the last two games: victories over the NFC North champion Vikings and the pitiful Lions. A modest winning streak to end the season, sure,

and a tease to Bears fans: Where was this all season? Well, it was there at the end, and that was something to build on.

Along with Cutler's roller coaster ride, the NFL got a more proper introduction in 2009 to Earl Bennett, who became a dynamic part of the Chicago offense with the arrival of his old college friend. After registering zero catches in his rookie season, Bennett caught 54 passes for 717 yards.

Like Cutler, he played his best at the end of the season, catching his first two career touchdown passes in victories over St. Louis and Minnesota

in November and December and returning a punt for a touchdown for Chicago's lone points in a late-season loss at Baltimore. Bennett doesn't have the kind of breaking speed to stretch a defense, but he's become a more disciplined route-runner, has great hands and has such a close relationship with his quarterback that his role as a possession receiver is and will continue to be invaluable.

Big Chris Williams, a first-round offensive lineman pick in 2008, got better and better as the season wore on, capped by his terrific performance at left tackle against the fearsome Vikings pass rush on Monday Night Football on Dec. 28. Cutler was barely touched all night.

And Hunter Hillenmeyer, who early in the season feared being released, was a steadying force at middle linebacker after Brian Urlacher was lost for the year to injury. He's no speed demon, but Hillenmeyer's a very smart player and sure-handed tackler.

That's how it is with Vanderbilt players. They're not going to be machines. They're generally not going to be the caliber of players from Alabama, USC or Texas. The key is to focus on what they bring to the table rather than what they're lacking.

So the fates of nearly half of Vanderbilt's NFL products and the hopes of one of the NFL's proudest teams are very much intertwined. 2009 gave glimmers of hope it can be a successful relationship, if not always a smooth one.

Not a marriage made in heaven, but a union that can work, for better or worse, for playoffs or an early offseason, through injury and in health.

Norman storms his way to All-American status

by DAVID NAMM
Sports Editor

Even though he hasn't played a game in almost two months, Vanderbilt freshman running back Warren Norman is still running past his competition. The standout season he put together for an otherwise disappointing 2-10 Vanderbilt squad is still garnering accolades, as Norman was named a First-Team Freshman All-American by the American Football Coaches Association, an honor capping postseason recognition of the Commodores' most dynamic offensive threat. Norman received similar honors from The Sporting News, Rivals.com and Scout.com.

"Warren put together a fantastic season for the Commodores, one that will be remembered for years to come," said Vanderbilt head coach Bobby Johnson on the news of Norman's recognition. "Warren came into the program wanting to do everything he could to help our team, and his mindset and determination never wavered.

"All the accomplishments are a tremendous credit to an outstanding and very deserving young man."

In a campaign that included very little firepower and explosive plays, Norman almost single-handedly kept the Commodores in contention, scoring seven total touchdowns including a Southeastern Conference record-tying three kickoffs returned for scores. His 1,941 total yards on the season also set a conference mark, surpassing former Georgia great Herschel Walker.

Improvement necessary: As the season-ending polls and future projections were turned in during the aftermath of the 2009 college football season, it is safe to say many did not favor the Commodores. Not surprisingly, ESPN ranked Vanderbilt as the SEC's worst team and — outside of the aforementioned Norman — did not see many bright spots for the program moving forward. As Chris Low, ESPN's SEC beat reporter and blogger, said, "The defense played respectably for most of the season, but ... the Commodores have to find a way to improve their passing game."

Bobby Johnson and company look to spur competition in that area with the signing of junior college transfer Jordan Rodgers. Rodgers, the younger brother of famed Green Bay Packers signal caller Aaron Rodgers, comes from Butte College in California with a solid reputation; however, when he will actually take the field for



CHRIS PHARE / The Vanderbilt Hustler

A standout freshman season by tailback sensation Warren Norman continues to pay dividends.

Vanderbilt remains to be seen. Since secondary NCAA recruitment violations were committed in signing Rodgers, his ability to compete with incumbent starter and redshirt sophomore Larry Smith may be hindered by disciplinary action. The Commodores did self-report these violations, though, which may lessen the penalty.

Lewis, Welch to Combine: Senior cornerback Myron Lewis and offensive tackle Thomas Welch have been invited to participate in the 2010 NFL Combine, where noteworthy professional prospects gather in the league's glorified talent evaluation mecca. Lewis, a second-team All-SEC selection, recorded four interceptions in his follow-up to an outstanding junior year where he registered five picks and recorded five sacks. He also has prototype size (listed at 6-foot-2-inches, 205 lbs.), which will certainly help his April draft status.

Welch, the team's most consistent offensive lineman, can now turn his conversion from tight end to lineman into a chance at the NFL. The NFL Combine will be held Feb. 24 until March 2 in Indianapolis, Ind., with the 2010 NFL Draft starting on April 22. ■

Men's tennis opens 2010 with back-to-back sweeps

by ERIC SINGLE
Asst Sports Editor

The Commodores could not have asked for a better performance to start their spring season.

Vanderbilt did not lose a set in 18 matches on Saturday, compiling a 6-0 doubles record and a 12-0 singles record on their way to consecutive sweeps of Belmont University and University of Tennessee-Chattanooga. Senior Scott Lieberman defeated Stephen Crofford, 7-5, 7-5, in the final singles match of the doubleheader to preserve a spotless opening day at Curry Tennis Center.

The 57th-ranked doubles team of senior Vijay Paul and junior Bryant Salcedo lost only five games on the day, defeating Felipe Cirne Lima and Bruno Silva of Belmont, 8-2, and following up in the afternoon with an 8-3 victory over Chattanooga's Sam Parfitt and Stephen Crofford. Paul and Salcedo also won two singles matches each for the Commodores.

The team that saw none of its members finish in the top 100 in the final rankings of the 2009 season received strong performances from all three of its nationally ranked singles players on Saturday. In addition to No. 71 Paul's work, 29th-ranked freshman Ryan Lipman defeated Joao Paoliello of Belmont, 6-4, 6-2, and sophomore Charlie Jones backed up his No. 53 ranking with a victory over Chattanooga's Chris Smith, 6-4, 6-4.

Lipman, the only freshman on the team, extended his singles record in his first year at Vanderbilt to 11-3, bringing himself level with junior Alex Zotov and Charlie Jones for the team lead in wins. In the fall, he posted a 3-2 record against nationally ranked opponents.

The 55th-ranked Commodores faced only one tiebreaker all day, against Chattanooga. Junior Andy Pulido and senior James Moyer defeated Roberto Vieira and Jackson Tresnan, 9-8 (7-1) after rallying to force the tiebreaker in the final doubles match of the day.

Vanderbilt travels to Raleigh next weekend and will play North Carolina State on Friday and Michigan on Saturday. Their next home match is on Feb. 5 against Northwestern. ■



OLIVER WOLFE / The Vanderbilt Hustler

No. 2 singles player Vijay Paul won a doubles and singles match in each of Vanderbilt's overall victories this weekend.

Commodores best South Carolina

by DAVID NAMM
Sports Editor

As the first half drew to a close, South Carolina scoring sensation Devan Downey sliced through a stunned and silenced Vanderbilt defense. The senior guard's nifty lay-in around a crowd of Commodores drew the Gamecocks to within six points of their conference rivals. It was apparent then that Downey would not let his team go down without a fight.

In the end, though, it was Vanderbilt (14-3, 3-0 Southeastern Conference) — and junior center A.J. Ogilvy — who delivered the knockout punch.

Ogilvy scored 18 of his team-high 22 points in the second half, as the Commodores gradually willed their way to a highly contested 89-79 win in Columbia, S.C., over the Gamecocks (11-6, 2-1). This victory came in spite of Downey's best efforts, as his season-high 35 points kept South Carolina close for the majority of the contest.

"Downey was sensational," said Vanderbilt coach Kevin Stallings. "We were fortunate he had a good game ... and we won."

Two huge reasons for the Commodores leaving South Carolina with an eight-game winning streak and an unblemished record in conference play were their shooting efficiency and rebounding advantages. Vanderbilt shot over 61 percent from the floor on the night and out-rebounded the Gamecocks 39-24, with Ogilvy and redshirt sophomore forward Andre Walker both registering nine boards to lead the team. Four Commodores — led by Ogilvy — scored in double figures, with sophomore forward Jeffrey Taylor (16 points) and guards John Jenkins and Jermaine Beal (10 points apiece) consistently testing the South Carolina defense.

"It was an interesting game much like we thought it would be," Stallings said. "They tried to

get after our pressure. At times we were successful, and when we were, that's how we got control of the game.

"Rebounding was key. We were assertive on the boards. That was big because when we did miss, we got a few back."

Indeed, 13 of Vanderbilt's rebounds came on the offensive end of the floor, giving the Commodores plenty of opportunities to establish an insurmountable lead over Downey and Co. The Gamecock disadvantage on the boards stems not only from the loss of dominant big man Dominique

Archie, but also — according to South Carolina head coach Darrin Horn — from a lack of concentration and effort on defense.

"It starts on the defensive end," Horn said. "You won't beat anyone when they shoot 61 percent against you. There were things we did well and spots we played with the energy and aggressiveness we need to have, but it wasn't enough. That's the bottom line.

"Collectively we weren't good defensively tonight to give ourselves a chance to win."

Vanderbilt, on the other hand, was able to force the Gamecocks into ill-advised shots and ball-handling mistakes, with the South Carolina starting backcourt committing 10 turnovers, and the team overall shooting under 44 percent from the field. The Commodores are now in

the middle of their week off from conference play and resume their SEC slate on Saturday at Memorial Gymnasium in their bout against Auburn, where Vanderbilt looks to take their win streak to nine.

"We talked about at the beginning of the week how good we'd feel on Sunday if we could get two road wins," Stallings said. "Now we'll hopefully get to experience that tomorrow. It was big. Any road win in this league is a great win. It's always going to be a hard-fought win because the teams are too good, and the coaches are too good. We're very happy to have won and have (had) such a good week." ■



CHRIS HONIBALL / The Vanderbilt Hustler

Jeffery Taylor (44) continues to be an offensive threat for the Commodores, as he poured in 16 points in Vanderbilt's 89-79 victory over USC.

COLUMN

The fine line between greatness and frustration

by ERIC SINGLE
Asst Sports Editor

So January's halfway done, and Vanderbilt is 14-3 overall with a shiny clean 3-0 record in Southeastern Conference play. After winning a track meet with Florida in their SEC opener, the Commodores absolutely stole a win over Alabama in Tuscaloosa and followed it up three days later with a solid road win they had to have in South Carolina.

In all three games, the Commodores took staggering haymakers from three exceptional guards in Kenny Boynton, Mikhail Torrance and Devan Downey, and in all three games the Commodores absorbed the blows, held their patience and struck back when their opponents ran out of gas. The Commodores have proved they are capable and more than happy to beat teams at their own style of game, and they have three tough wins they should be very proud of.

So why am I so nervous?

The 2009-2010 Commodores are toeing a thin line between scary good and frustratingly okay, and with road trips to Tennessee and Kentucky right before February, we're going to find out real quick on which side of that line they belong.

That answer may very well boil down to who steps up and shows ownership of the paint. A.J. Ogilvy is just starting to return to the 20-point, 10-rebound center he

is expected to be, but he needs to step up the strength with which he takes the ball inside if he wants to take games over with the dominating resolve he really hasn't shown all season. Ogilvy has struggled to finish after contact all year, whether or not a foul is actually called on the play, and that detail shouldn't matter for an All-SEC player.

It certainly hasn't mattered for Festus Ezeli, who has shifted the momentum of several games so far while spelling Ogilvy at center. Ezeli has rebounded and defended inside with authority all season, and he can be relied upon to stop a rally with an emphatic block or punctuate a Vanderbilt run with a put-back slam. But this aggressiveness has led to chronic foul trouble, which puts the pressure on Ogilvy and Steve Tchiengang to take more of his minutes than coach Kevin Stallings would probably prefer.

Depth — at all five positions, not just down low with Ogilvy, Ezeli and Tchiengang — is quite a luxury, and it is what makes Vanderbilt such a dangerous matchup for so many teams. As a result, for example, Andre Walker has virtually hidden among the trees at power forward all year and has quietly become a key player at both ends of the floor. Don't be surprised if he steps into the spotlight to drop a double-double or two in late February or early March when the team sorely needs one.

But the Commodores' depth has worked against them, too. Many times it's tough to determine which player out of three or four options is hot and which lineups are clicking on a given night, and so far in SEC play the Commodores' opponents have taken those first uncertain minutes and capitalized, building early leads with their solid shooting and forcing Vanderbilt to work from behind in the first half. With the right combination out of the group of Jermaine Beal, John Jenkins, Brad Tinsley and Jeffrey Taylor playing on the perimeter, Vanderbilt is tough to stop. The burning question is how much time John Wall and Eric Bledsoe will give Coach Stallings to determine that combination in two weeks in Lexington.

I'm still nervous about a lot of things. Who's going to take the last shot in the next close conference game? How many threes do we need to hit to be able to run with the best teams on the schedule? Which free throw shooting performance was an aberration, the 84 percent effort against Missouri or the 54 percent showing against Alabama? There is a terrifying amount of information about this team that is still up in the air. However, I am confident we haven't seen anything close to the Commodores' best game of the year. Which should make the rest of the SEC very, very nervous.



ZAC HARDY / The Vanderbilt Hustler

Coach Kevin Stallings led his Commodores to a perfect start in SEC play, but he and Vanderbilt will be tested as conference play continues.

Was that you with your friends supporting Dance Marathon?

... Take a peek at p. 219

Were you wearing black and gold at ESPN's GameDay?

... See p. 230

Did you hang out in front of the Rites of Spring stage?

... Flip to p. 249

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