

New Season, New Team, Differing Expectations

By Alex Ross

Following a disappointing end to the 2021 baseball campaign, Head Coach Mark Kingston and the Gamecocks look for a fresh start. As expectations form, they set out to begin the 2022 season on February 19.



A Difficult End Leads to a New Beginning

As the [2021 season](#) ended, the Gamecocks limped into the postseason following a 6-10 record in their last 16 SEC games. This included a loss in the SEC tournament as the Gamecocks didn't even win a game. Even with home-field advantage, the Gamecocks sputtered and were knocked out of the playoffs in just three games.

Following previous success of Gamecock baseball, Kingston knew change needed to be made. Over the off-season, Kingston brought former Texas A&M coach; Chad Caillet to be the hitting coach and recruiting director. He also brought in the former Indiana pitching coach: Justin Parker for the same position.

After the disappointing end to the 2021 season, both coaches look to bring their own style to help the Gamecocks. But the road ahead for 2022 isn't smooth. According to the [NCAA](#), the Gamecocks have six series' against preseason top 25 opponents.

However, even with the difficulty, the coaches are ready for the tasks ahead. [Parker](#) explains he wants and expects "to be a better version of ourself in June than we are in February."

Along with that mentality, Caillet spoke on the high level of expectations for the team. [Caillet](#) said he wants to "put ourselves in position to host, postseason... and move ourselves to Omaha."

Fans Expectations Have Dropped Amid the Previous Years

Even with the new coaching hires, many fans remain skeptical following the previous years. In 2014 Head Coach Ray Tanner was promoted to Athletic Director after three College World Series appearances and two championships. The baseball program took a hit as this once elite program hasn't had an 'elite' forty-win season since [2016](#).

This 'down' stretch has taken its toll on many fans. One fan in particular, lifelong Gamecock fan Jeff Garbett gave his thoughts on the season. [Garbett](#) said "I don't have a large expectation for this year, unfortunately" which shows how former championship expectations have fallen.

Now the pressure goes back to Kingston and the new coaches he brought in. They must try to prepare the baseball team so they can get this storied program back on track.