

SUSIE GARDNER



2007-08 FLORIDA GATOR BASKETBALL • COACHING & SUPPORT STAFF

Susie Gardner

ASSISTANT COACH

The 2007-08 season will be **Susie Gardner's** first year as an assistant coach at the University of Florida, however, it is anything but her initial experience with Southeastern Conference women's basketball, compiling 10 years of firsthand knowledge within the nation's toughest league.

Gardner comes to Gainesville via the University of Arkansas, where she spent the previous four years as the Lady Razorbacks' head coach (2003-07). Gardner's SEC career began as a four-year letterwinner at the University of Georgia (1982-86), before becoming the Lady Bulldogs' graduate assistant coach (1986-88) under Andy Landers.

Between her tenures in Athens and Fayetteville, Gardner was the head coach at Anderson (S.C.) College (1988-92), an assistant coach at San Diego State University (1992-95) and the head coach at Austin Peay State (Tenn.) University (1995-2003). Gardner has been a part of a combined 12 NCAA Tournaments, four as a player and eight as a coach or assistant.

While Gardner's experience, not only in the SEC, but as a coach since the 1986-87 season, was one of the most important reasons Florida head coach Amanda Butler recruited Gardner to join her inaugural Gator staff, Butler's selection of Gardner to her staff wasn't based solely on the veteran coach's decade of SEC experience. The two formed a relationship working side-by-side at Austin Peay, where Gardner, then the Ladies Governors' head coach, hired Butler as an assistant coach during the summer of 1997. Austin Peay began to flourish under Gardner and Butler's teamwork, as the 2001 Lady Gavs earned an NCAA Tournament bid for only the second time in school history.

"Susie and I worked very, very well together at Austin Peay. Her on-court skills are second to none. I learned a lot from her in that area," Butler shared. "Susie's a great all-around bench coach."

Gardner displayed her on-court coaching talents during her four years at Arkansas despite enduring numerous season-ending injuries to starters every season. In Arkansas' 2006-07 regular-season finale, the Lady Backs pushed eventual NCAA champion Tennessee to overtime before falling short. During the 2005-06 season, UA posted what its media guide proclaimed as "two of the most dramatic home wins in Lady Razorback history - the overtime thriller

"On game-day especially, Susie's thoroughly prepared and she conveys information well to players without overwhelming them. She's a great teacher during practice and her game-preparation skills, as well as her abilities to make in-game and halftime adjustments, will be invaluable."

- Amanda Butler, Florida Head Coach

against No. 20 Vanderbilt and the upset of No. 24 Florida." That 2006 squad also raced out to the best SEC start in program history, one year removed from a WNIT season.

Individually, Gardner developed center Lauren Ervin, who emerged as UA's leader in 2007 - her first season at UA - and became the first Lady Back since the late 1980s to average a double-double. Shameka Christon flourished under Gardner's direction, as she was recognized as the 2004 SEC Player of the Year and became the fifth overall selection in the 2004 WNBA Draft.

Gardner at a Glance

PERSONAL

Full Name: Susanne Lange Gardner
Hometown: Mt. Juliet, Tenn.
Birthdate: June 29, 1964

EDUCATION

High School: Mt. Juliet H.S.
College: ... Univ. of Georgia (BS 1986; M.Ed., 1988)

COACHING EXPERIENCE

1986-88 Univ. of Georgia Graduate Assistant
..... 1987 & 1988 NCAA Appearances
1988-92 Anderson College Head Coach 1989
NCAA Region X Co-Champion;
1991 & 1992 Region Runner-up
1992-95 San Diego State Univ. Assistant Coach
1993, 1994 & 1995 WAC Champions;
1993, 1994 & 1995 NCAA Appearances
1995-03 Austin Peay St. Univ. Head Coach
2003 Ohio Valley Coach of the Year;
2001, 2002 & 2003 OVC Tournament Champions;
2003 OVC Regular-Season Champions; 2001, 2002 &
2003 NCAA Appearances; 2003 & 2004 OVC Player of
the Year; 2000 & 2001 OVC Freshman of the Year
2003-07 Univ. of Arkansas Head Coach;
2005 WNIT; Coached 2004 SEC Player of the Year
2007-present Univ. of Florida Assistant Coach

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

College: Univ. of Georgia Four-year Letterwinner
(1982-86)
1983 & 1985 Final Fours (National Runner Up in '85)
1983, 1984 & 1986 SEC Champions

Off Court with... Susie Gardner

THE PAST

My all-time favorite Gator is: Tommy Jackson
My first pair of basketball shoes were: Chuck Taylors
The best movie I've ever seen: Remember the Titans
My favorite line from a movie: "I love you guys" Gene Hackman, Hoosiers
The last book I read for enjoyment: From the Heart, Robin Roberts
When I was little, my favorite cartoon character was: Scooby-Doo
The best TV show that no longer airs: The West Wing
I used to be: Very, very shy

THE PRESENT

People would be surprised to know that I: Love to cut grass
When I'm nervous I: Can't sit still
When I'm angry I: Exercise or clean house
My favorite sport to play besides basketball: Golf
My favorite sport to watch besides basketball: College Football (on TV)
The best TV show currently on right now: Damages, starring Glenn Close
The most-played artist on my MP3 player: Mary Chapin Carpenter
Since getting to know Coach Butler, the word that best describes her: Balanced

THE FUTURE

The performer I would most like to see in concert: Mary Chapin Carpenter
On my perfect day I: Play golf all day
My ideal vacation: Sanibel Island with my family
I would watch any movie starring: Denzel Washington
The one thing I would wait in line for overnight: Tee time at St. Andrews
The one bad habit I have that I would like to change: I save everything
My goal in life: Win a national championship

Her initial experience as a head coach was at Anderson College (now Anderson University) in South Carolina. Gardner's first of four clubs posted a 24-4 record and earned a share of the 1989 NCAA Region X championship, before finishing as region runner-up in 1991 and 1992.

Gardner's first taste of the coaching profession came as a graduate assistant coach at the University of Georgia, where she completed her master's degree while helping the Lady Bulldogs reach the NCAA Tournament both years. As a player at Georgia (1982-86), Gardner was instrumental in the team's run to the 1983 and 1985 Final Fours, in addition to winning three SEC Championships (1983, 1984 and 1986), while playing alongside the likes of Teresa Edwards, Janet Harris and Katrina McClain.

In spite of the rivalry between the Gators and Lady Bulldogs, Gardner has quickly warmed to the Florida family.

"As soon as I walked on campus for the press conference (announcing Butler as the head coach) it has been an incredibly friendly environment," said the Georgia grad. "You feel a sense of Gator pride that is not just in the athletic or basketball building, but in everyone you encounter on campus. That's what they call The Gator Nation."

A native of Mt. Juliet, Tenn., Gardner graduated from Mt. Juliet High School where she was coached by Tommy Martin, who, interestingly, coached Butler during her prep days at Mt. Juliet H.S. Gardner and Butler never met until they worked together at Austin Peay.