

THE 2008-09 SEASON WILL BE SUSIE GARDNER'S SECOND YEAR AS AN ASSISTANT COACH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA AND HER 12TH SEASON OF FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE WITH SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL - THE NATION'S TOUGHEST LEAGUE.

ASSISTANT COACH

SUSIE GARDNER

Gardner came 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 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 wasn't based solely on the veteran coach's prior decade of SEC experience. The two formed a relationship working side-by-side at Austin Peay, where Gardner, then the Lady 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.

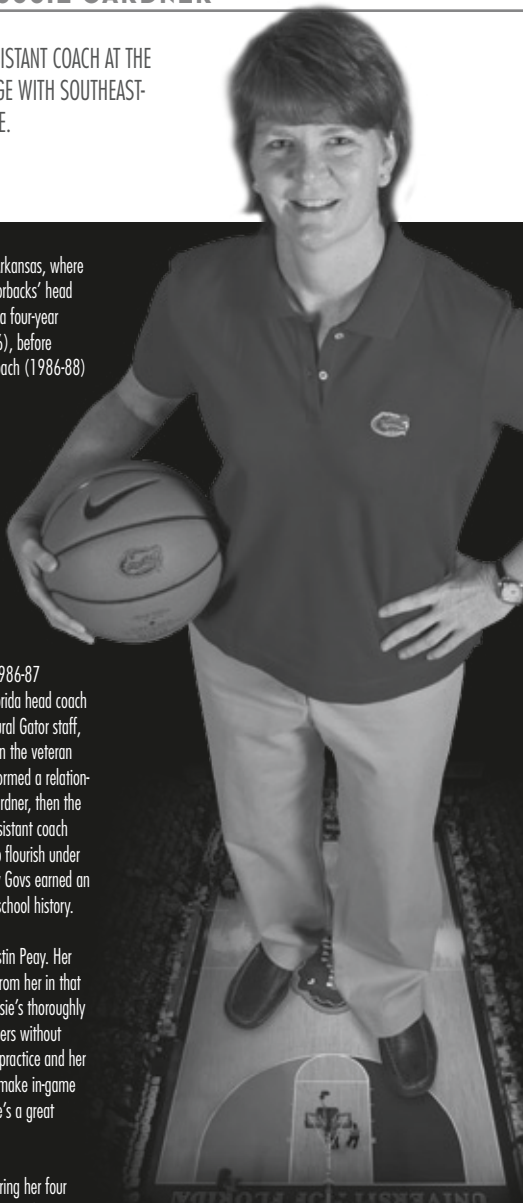
"Susie and I worked very, very well together at Austin Peay. Her on-court skills are second to none. I learned a lot from her in that area," Butler shared. "On game-day especially, Susie's thoroughly prepared and she conveys information well to players without overwhelming them. She's a great teacher during practice and her game-preparation skills, as well as her abilities to make in-game and halftime adjustments, will be invaluable. 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 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.

"The obvious attribute Susie brings to our program is her vast array of experiences. Her insight and approach to dealing with people and tasks are very different from the way I do, but it works perfectly because we compliment each other so well. We challenge each other and make each other better and the entire staff continues to grow as a result."

— HEAD COACH AMANDA BUTLER



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 NJCAA 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; Coached 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
 2008 WNIT Round of 16

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

College: Univ. of Georgia Four-year Letterwinner
 (1982-86)
 • 1983 & 1985 Final Fours (National Runner Up in '85)
 • 1983, 1984 & 1985 SEC Champions
USA: . . . • 1983 Sports Festival South Team (Gold Medal)
 • USA Select Team (competed in Canada, where she
 roomed with future U.S. Olympian Susie McConnell)

Prior to becoming Arkansas' sixth head coach, Gardner was the head coach at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tenn., where she compiled a seven-year record of 112-92. Among those wins was one of the biggest in program history, when on Dec. 16, 1997, Austin Peay marched into Athens, Ga., and stunned then-No. 9-ranked Georgia, 71-66. The Lady Gavs totaled 63 wins in Gardner's final three seasons alone, winning the Ohio Valley Conference Tournament title and earning an NCAA Tournament berth each of those years. APSU posted a program-best 27-4 record that included a 22-game win-streak in 2002-03, culminating in Gardner's selection as the OVC Coach of the Year and helping her credentials when she was inducted into the school's Athletics Hall of Fame in 2006-07.

Gardner earned her first Division I head coaching gig thanks in part to her efforts as an assistant coach at San Diego State University (1992-95). During her three years on the west coast working under Beth Burns, the Aztecs made the NCAA Tournament each season after winning three consecutive Western Athletic Conference Tournament titles. SDSU won the WAC regular-season championships in 1994 and 1995, when the Aztecs compiled a 50-11 overall record and a 27-1 mark in league play.

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 NJCAA 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 who 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.