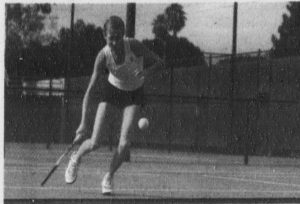


# SPORTS



**« FIRST SERVE »**  
**14** THE NO. 3 WOMEN'S TENNIS TEAM WILL BEGIN ITS SEASON TODAY AT 12:30 VS. LONG BEACH STATE AT MARKS STADIUM.

**GOING FOR THE KILL »**  
**14** THE MEN'S VOLLEYBALL TEAM CHALLENGES NO. 1 UC IRVINE TONIGHT.

## TRANSITION GAME

After a turbulent high school career, Lewis is thriving with the Trojans.

By **ASHLEY ZELDIN**  
 Daily Trojan

Dwight Lewis has made the transition from La. to L.A. He grew up in Metairie, La., just outside New Orleans, and came to Los Angeles, Calif. to play basketball for another Southerner, USC coach Tim Floyd. Yet Lewis has lived in transition for two years, both on the basketball court and the proverbial arena of life.

Coming to USC was Lewis' second move in two years, as he was displaced by Hurricane Katrina in September 2005 and moved with his family to Katy, Texas, 30 miles west of downtown Houston.

As a senior, Lewis had to adjust to a new state, a new house and a new high school, as well as a new basketball program with a new head coach at 5A James E. Taylor High School.

"I think that helped make my adjustment (to USC) really easy, because when I had to move out again, adjusting to a new school, making new friends, getting used to a new coaching style, I was already used to doing that, so coming out here was easy," Lewis said.

Lewis wasn't the only new face at Taylor.

"Dwight and I came in at the same time pretty much. When he first came to Taylor, he laid low in the hallways," second-year Taylor coach Jonathan Hopkins said.

"He had to learn to come into a system that was already in place to fill a role within that system. When we were getting things together for the year, Dwight wasn't even in the picture. There was a month or so of school before Dwight ever showed up. Our style of play was a lot more structured than what he was used to. But Dwight's very intelligent. He picked up on ways he was going to fit in."

Friends influenced Lewis' decision to choose Taylor, which hadn't been to the playoffs in four years.

"He had several choices," Hopkins said. "He could've chosen places with a little bit more basketball tradition, but I think he chose Taylor because while we had good post players, he could fill a need for a guard. He saw it as his opportunity to help us get (to the playoffs)."

That year, Taylor finished 23-12, tied for third place in District 18 — led by Lewis' 20.8 points, 4.5 rebounds, three assists, and two steals per game — but didn't make the playoffs.

Ironically, it was the game Lewis didn't play that cut Taylor's season short. He sprained his ankle on Senior Night, which kept him out of the last game of the season. Hopkins put him in, but 31 seconds later, Lewis had to come out.

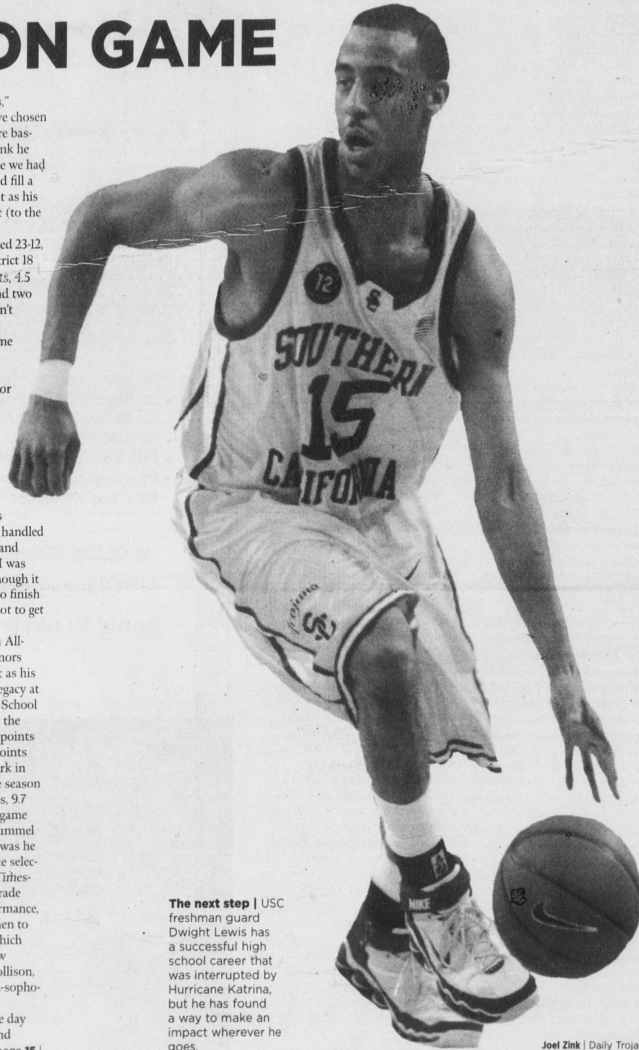
Taylor lost by one point.

"For him to have to miss the last game of season, he handled that with a lot of integrity and character," Hopkins said. "I was very proud of him. Even though it wasn't the way he wanted to finish the season, he overcame a lot to get there."

Lewis received first team All-District and All-Region honors while at Taylor, but as great as his impact on Taylor was, his legacy at Archbishop Rummel High School is even greater. Lewis holds the Rummel records for career points (1,820) and single-season points (960). He set the career mark in only three years and set the season record, averaging 27.5 points, 9.7 rebounds and 4.5 assists a game as a junior while leading Rummel to a 26-12 record. Not only was he named a first-team All-State selection by *The New Orleans Times-Picayune* but also 2005 Parade All-American for his performance, just one of six underclassmen to make the prestigious list which also included Laker Andrew Bynum, UCLA's Darren Collison, and future Trojan and then-sophomore O.J. Mayo.

"He was always, from the day he got here, very athletic, and

| see **LEWIS**, page 15 |



**The next step |** USC freshman guard Dwight Lewis has a successful high school career that was interrupted by Hurricane Katrina, but he has found a way to make an impact wherever he goes.

Joel Zink | Daily Trojan

## Sarkisian will be the glue that keeps the offense together

Somewhere in Oakland, there's a baby-faced man with light brown hair dancing around singing "A Pirate's Life For Me."

That man is Lane Kiffin, formerly the highly criticized offensive coordinator of your USC Trojans and currently the youngest head coach in the NFL.

He's singing because he somehow managed to convince Raiders owner Al Davis that he was good enough to coach an NFL team, even after failing to win a job coaching the University

of Minnesota in his hometown of Minneapolis.

But regardless of what you think of Kiffin or of the Raiders' decision to hire him, the big question for USC fans now relates to the new Trojans offensive coordinator: Steve Sarkisian.

How will the offense change with Kiffin's departure and with Sarkisian emerging to take full control?

Unfortunately, Sarkisian was too busy handling recruiting visits on the road and couldn't take care of real important mat-



**ZAIN SHAIK**

Student Body Left

ters (like returning my calls) but based on what we know of Sarkisian's involvement in the offense last season, significant change is unlikely.

Although Sarkisian was USC's quarterbacks coach in 2006, he had a large role in developing offensive strategy and shared a lot

of the overall responsibility for the offense with Kiffin.

In fact, Sarkisian liked working with Kiffin so much that while he was recently interviewing for a head coaching opportunity with the Raiders, he brought Kiffin along as a potential offensive coordinator on his own coaching staff (Sarkisian later withdrew his name from consideration, deciding to stay at USC and opening the door for Kiffin to interview for a head coaching position on his own).

That all isn't necessarily a bad

thing, but it does mean that big offensive changes are probably not in the works.

Some fans might say the Trojans' offense was just fine anyway and that changes aren't necessary, pointing at USC's 391.9 yards per game (21st in the country in 2006) as proof that the offense was productive enough. But statistics don't always tell the whole story.

With two avoidable losses, an often stagnant running game and an annoyingly high frequency

| see **SHAIK**, page 14 |

## LEWIS: Floyd 'flattered' by the words of Dwight's dad

(continued from page 16)

he could always score," Rummel coach Steve Alfonso said. "As he matured he became a well-rounded player. In his defense, I needed him as a scorer, so that took away from the focus of him as a defender, but he's an excellent defender."

Lewis said he can always improve.

"Coach (Floyd) loves defense. (He) claws me every day about it, wants me to work on it," Lewis said. "I'm not saying I'm bad, but I need to improve on it."

Floyd said he already has. "His weakness coming in we would've said would've been his ability to defend quality players. That has now become a strength," Floyd said.

"He's just gotten better progressively through working hard in practice to the point where we now trust him to go start on the road, like at Oregon and Oregon State. There's an old saying in college coaching that boys can win at home but it takes men on the road. So that just shows how much stronger his weakness has become."

Lewis met Floyd as a junior at Rummel through Alfonso, when Floyd was coaching the New Orleans Hornets.

"USC wasn't in his top five until Floyd got the job," Alfonso said. Lewis had been considering Kansas, LSU, Miami, and Baylor.

"He told me that Dwight Lewis' dad wanted me to check him out," Floyd said. "I was flattered that somebody wanted their kid to play for me so I checked him out and thought, 'This guy's good enough.'"

Floyd visited Lewis three times that spring, but he orally committed to Kansas — twice.

There was speculation as to why he opened up his prospects. *The Lawrence (Kan.) Journal-World* conjectured that when his [www.rivals.com](http://www.rivals.com) rating dropped from No. 84 to No. 132 after a subpar showing for the Houston Westside All-Stars and New Orleans Jazz on the Amateur Athletic Union summer circuit while recuperating from mononucleosis, he was concerned about playing time at a big-time program like Kansas, or that he was considering following DJ Augustin, his teammate on the Jazz, who ended up at Texas.

Regardless, Lewis was still ranked No. 44 at the shooting guard position by [www.rivals.com](http://www.rivals.com).

"I called (Floyd) and let him know, 'You've got to get this guy,' and he got it done," Alfonso said.

"I got a call later that summer that Dwight was having second thoughts and we got involved and got him," Floyd said. "He got second thoughts, for whatever reason, and I'm glad he did."

In fact, Lewis was Floyd's first recruiting visit in the spring of 2005; from New Orleans, Floyd continued onto Baton Rouge, La. to recruit Ryan Francis, who was USC's starting point guard before he was killed while visiting his mother back home last May.

"I can remember the week after that happened," Hopkins recalled. "It touched Dwight, even though they weren't on the same team yet or anything. Dwight's tough, he's been through so much adversity in the last couple years, and because he does so well under adversity — you don't want to wish ill on a program, but — Dwight's the type of guy you want on a program to get through it because

he personally lived through it."

Floyd has provided Southern comfort for Lewis because of his close ties with Alfonso.

Alfonso knew Floyd from his college days at Loyola of New Orleans when Floyd was coaching at the University of New Orleans.

"I knew I was getting into coaching so I'd go watch his practice to make myself better," said Alfonso, who modeled some of his drills and technique after Floyd's flair.

"I like the way Coach Floyd coached and that's why I came down here and it was a great opportunity for me to come here," Lewis said.

That Floyd's style is similar to Alfonso's assured a seamless transition for Lewis into Division I.

"It's not really that big a difference like everybody says," Lewis said. "Everybody says it's going to be a dramatic difference but it's really not. The work's the same and everything to me."

Lewis demonstrates a strong work ethic.

"At Taylor, our motto is 'Nobody works harder than us.' He worked his tail off, and he deserves to be in this position," Hopkins said.

Alfonso said he would stay after varsity practice, do some homework, and practice with the junior varsity and middle school teams.

"I'd open up the gym on Saturdays and Sundays and he'd stay there for hours," Alfonso said.

All his hard work is showing, as he has played in all 20 games, starting in five. He's averaging 5.9 points on 37 percent shooting with 2.4 rebounds in 20 minutes, with 25 assists and 13 steals. His multifaceted game is one of his advantages.

"He has always had an innate ability to score, both as a catch-and-shoot player, as a mid-range catch-one-dribble pull-up shoot-it player," Floyd said. "Now he has added the ability to get all the way to the rim and go get himself to the foul line which has expanded his offensive game. He's always been a safe passer, and now we trust him in tough situations to start. He's big enough and active enough to become an outstanding rebounder from his position. And I think he's got the chance to become one of the better swing players in this league in the next couple years."

And just like at Taylor, Lewis has found his fit on the Trojans, and his wrist, which had limited his shooting ability earlier in the season, is no longer bothering him.

"I see myself as more of a role player," he said. "My role changes from game to game; sometimes I might be called on to shoot some shots and score, and sometimes I'm more of a facilitator to get (my teammates) involved in the game. I just need to pick up on my role each game."

Floyd commends Lewis' learning curve and his adjustment to USC.

"I think he'd never heard his name as much as he heard it the first four weeks of practice, but that was because we expected him to play," Floyd said. "Sometimes he didn't interpret that the way he should have interpreted it, like,

"This is a good thing that they're calling my name versus 'This is a bad thing' in his mind, but he has figured out that we do have his best interests at heart, that we do that because we have big plans for him."

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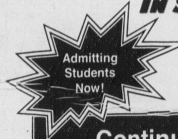
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