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South Carolina, Led By Virgin Islander Boston, Will Begin National Title Defense as Nation's No. 1 Team

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Kyle Murphy **October 21, 2022**

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South Carolina will begin their national title defense as the top-ranked team in the country after the Associated Press released its preseason poll earlier this week. The team will be led by reigning National Player of the Year and Virgin Islander Aliyah Boston.

The Gamecocks are ranked as the No. 1 team in the country by all members of the 30-member national media panel in the preseason poll. Their first game this season will be against East Tennessee State on November 7.

South Carolina will play a competitive non-conference schedule this season, which will include matchups against four top-25 teams in non-conference play. Those top 25 non-conference

matchups are No.17 Maryland on Nov. 11, No. 2 Stanford on Nov. 20, No. 23 South Dakota State on Dec 15, and No. 6 UConn on Feb 5.

No. 5 Tennessee is the only other SEC team ranked in the initial AP poll and will play South Carolina on Feb. 23.

South Carolina won its second NCAA tournament national title in program history by beating UConn 64-49 in the Women's Basketball National Title Game last season.

In her junior year, Boston had 16.8 points, 12.5 rebounds, and 2.4 blocks per game and won multiple awards including being named the unanimous National Player of the Year and the Naismith Defensive Player of the Year in Women's College Basketball. She had the fourth-highest rebounds per game total in Division 1 Women's College Basketball last year.

Last year, Boston had a historic season and now holds the Southeastern Conference record for consecutive double-doubles after putting up at least 10 points and 10 rebounds in 27 consecutive games last season. Her double-double streak is the fifth longest in the history of Division 1, according to ESPN.

In June, Boston was honored in her hometown of St. Thomas with a parade and sign unveiling at the Cyril E. King airport for tremendous achievements.