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FINAL FOUR

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Wire-to-fire champ

Gamecocks complete season-long quest by claiming second NCAA crown

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Less than a minute remained when South Carolina coach Dawn Staley emptied her bench.

The fans behind them roared as players came off the Target Center court. Some players hugged each other. After playing the game of her life, Destanni Henderson jumped into the arms of assistant coach Fred Chmiel.

Afterward? They jumped, screamed, danced at mid-court as the confetti fell and the nets were cut down. Sunday night, the Gamecocks started the women's basketball national championship game with a punch to the gut and ended it with a combination, leading

National championship

South Carolina 64, Connecticut 49

Gamecocks players celebrated winning the NCAA title Sunday night at Target Center.

Photo by CARLOS GONZALEZ • Star Tribune

EXPANDED COVERAGE

Scoggins: Staley cements superstar status. **C5**
Souhan: Bueckers' big effort isn't enough. **C5**
Reusse: Eastview knows winning feeling. **C8**

wire-to-wire in a 64-49 victory over Connecticut in front of an announced 18,304 fans.

"UConn is not only a great team, it has a great tradition," Staley said as her players rejoiced around her, after she became the first Black coach to win two Division I titles. "But it was divine order for us to be champions today. We weren't going to be denied."

No. They were a force to be reckoned with. From the start, until the end of their second national title, joining the one won in 2017. If last year's image of the team was star forward Aliyah Boston devastated after a missed last-second shot failed to fall, this time it was of Boston, See **FINAL** on C6 ▶