

## INDUCTEE PROFILE

# Passing fancy

## Confidence helped fuel Steve Taneyhill's success

By Jim Lane

*Altoona Mirror*

Steve Taneyhill. The name evokes different thoughts to different people.

The decade of the 1990s at Altoona Area High School and South Carolina University was filled with athletic events featuring Steve Taneyhill.

Outstanding athlete. Flamboyant. Long hair. Cocky.

"That was just me being me," Taneyhill said from his home in Chesterfield, S.C. "I never thought about it. It was just what I wanted to do."

Fans loved him. Opponents didn't.

A two-sport all-state athlete at AAHS, Taneyhill could throw a football and shoot a basketball with the best of them. In fact, he still holds the school record for career scoring in basketball.

Actually, many sports followers in the area felt baseball would have been his best sport, if he had pursued it. That's how good he was.

"I just enjoyed playing," Taneyhill said. "Obviously, I was a cocky guy, but I really enjoyed the competition, and I liked to have fun."

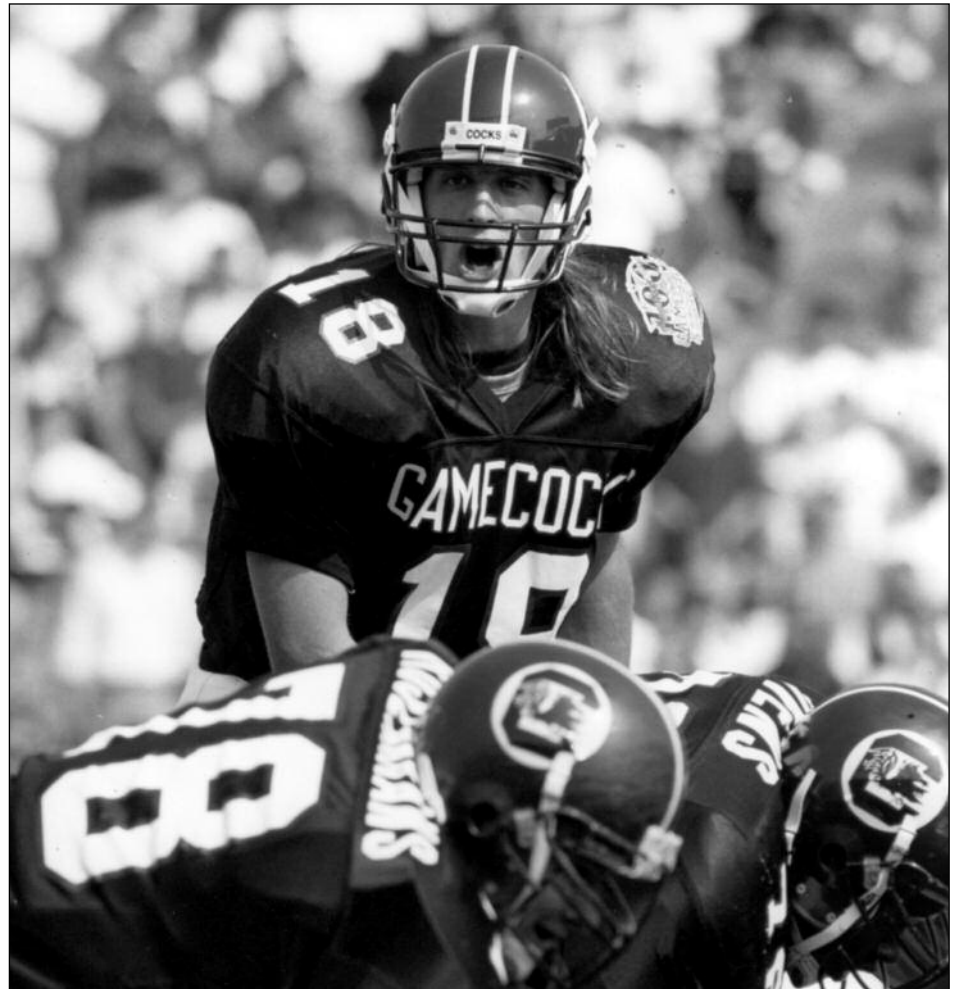
As a junior, Taneyhill, with Brian Rehm and Danny Fortson, led the Mountain Lions to the PIAA Class AAAA state championship game in 1991 where they lost to Glen Mills.

"In high school, we were better as a team in basketball than football," he said. "We played more games, went farther in the playoffs, got more headlines. I was more visible in basketball because I didn't have a helmet, and the people were closer to the action."

Taneyhill admits to "going through ups and downs with the school" during the team's state run in basketball.

"But, we were good, and when I think back to high school, I think about basketball because we were better," he said.

It was football, though, where Taneyhill made his mark in college, and he credits John Franco, his coach at Altoona, with giving him a good foundation.



**Steve Taneyhill was an instant success at South Carolina.**

"My dad (Art) took me to Building II every Sunday from 7th grade on to work with Coach Franco," he said. "I remember the first day I went, he changed a lot of my steps. I thought I was good, and I told my dad I wasn't going back.

"But I did, and it ended up pretty good for me," he said. "As a quarterback, (Franco) was the key guy for me."

Franco, now the coach at Tyrone High School, said he and Taneyhill had a good relationship at Altoona High.

"He's probably the best quarterback I've ever coached," Franco said. "I've always put Steve and (former Guilfoyle and Bucknell QB) John Carey in the same category. Steve was an

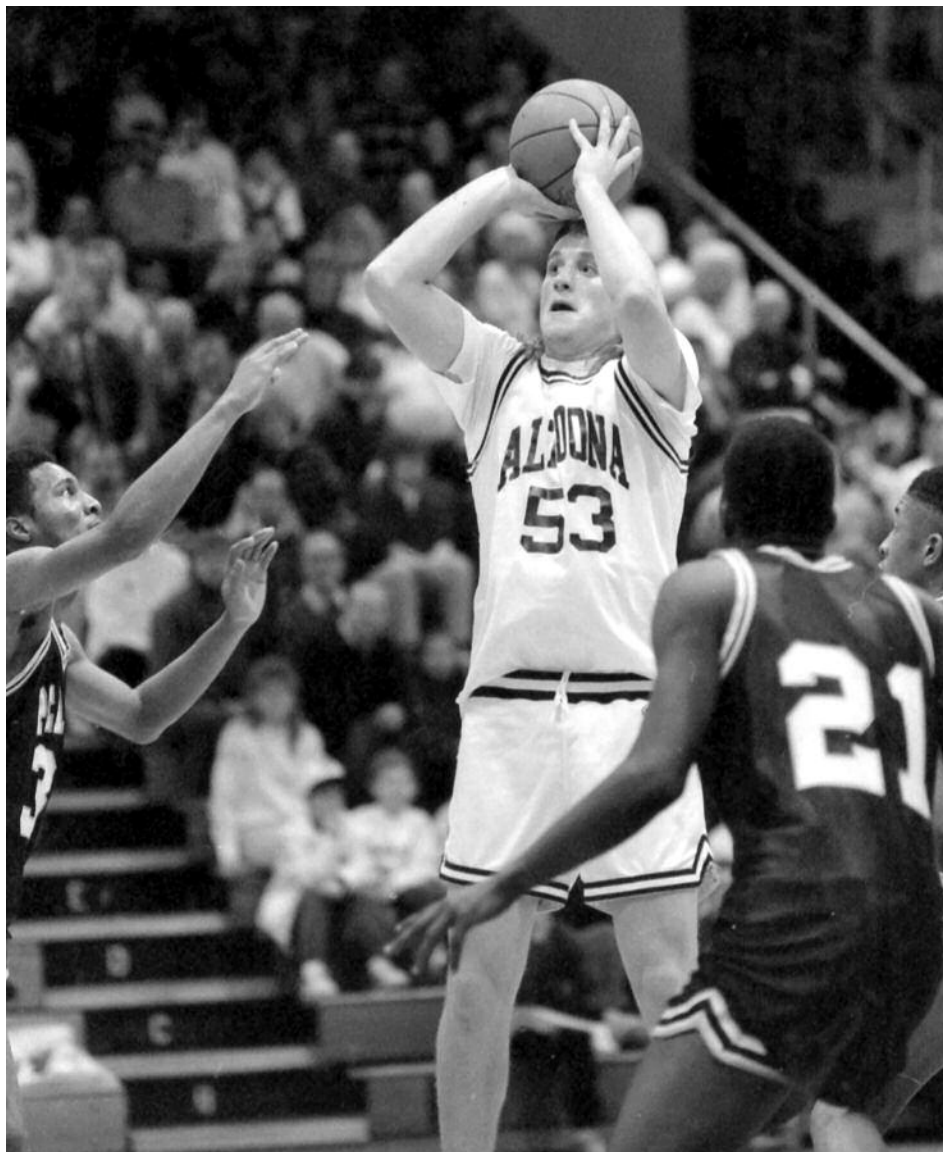
outstanding kid and we got along well because he wanted to win badly."

Taneyhill had a lot going for him, Franco said.

"He was a great, physical quarterback, and as smart as any," Franco said. "He knew the game well and you could see that when he went to the college level. I always loved coaching Steve. He was his own man, but he wanted structure. When you gave him a plan, there wasn't anybody better."

His success at Altoona earned Taneyhill a scholarship to South Carolina, and he was an immediate hit with Gamecock fans.

Besides his playing ability, Taneyhill caught the fans' fancy with his



Steve was also an excellent basketball player, and he played a key role in helping the Mountain Lions to the PIAA Class AAAA championship game in 1991.

appearance.

South Carolina sold hundreds of "Taney-tails," Gamecocks' hats with hair attached.

"They made a big deal out of the long hair," Taneyhill said. "The hat and the ponytail — it was a football thing. When I started playing there, it took on a life of itself.

"It's hard to explain. It was just me, but it was kind of a shock to South Carolina fans."

However, when Brad Scott became the Gamecocks' head coach Taneyhill's junior season, that changed.

"When Coach Scott came, his rule was you couldn't have hair sticking out of your helmet," Taneyhill said. "There were three of us with long hair and, if you wanted to play, you couldn't have it. That's when (long hair) was over."

Scott, now offensive coordinator

at Clemson, recalls the first time he saw Taneyhill.

"When I got there, they had made a hero out the guy in a hurry, and sometimes that happens even before a guy deserves it," Scott said. "When Steve stepped on the field with his long hair and ponytail, he was an instant hero in the eyes of Gamecock fans.

"Maybe that was too much, too fast for a guy who wasn't that mature at that age," Scott said.

"He was very

flamboyant and every little step he did was watched. By the time I got there, he was humbled a bit and just wanted to be a good football player."

And, he became one South Carolina's best under Scott.

"He knew I had some experience developing quarterbacks on that level, and he was very receptive to the coaching, to correction, and to putting some discipline in — on and off the field.

"I had no problem with him," Scott noted. "He was eager for me to show him the parameters. We did trim the hair a little bit — I don't want to say he got a flattop — but we started focusing more on him as a football player, and I think he just blossomed.

"He was a fun youngster to coach, and his work ethic on the field was really good. He could be electric out there."

Taneyhill's accomplishments at USC were many.

One of the most prolific quarterbacks in South Carolina history, he started four years and posted career totals of 62 touchdowns and 8,782 yards passing — first and second in school history, respectively.

His final stats included 753 completions in 1,245 attempts (60 percent), 62 TDs and 37 interceptions. He holds several school records, including most yards (473) in one game. He passed for over 400 yards three times, completed more than 30 passes four times and threw five TDs twice.

Taneyhill started 40 consecutive games and finished with a 20-19-1 record. He was MVP of the 1995 Carquest Bowl when he led a win over West Virginia. It was South Carolina's first bowl victory in 60 years.

He also ranks in the top 10 of some Southeastern Conference passing categories, including No. 1 in single-game completion percentage (86.4 percent on 38-of-44 vs. Mississippi



## Taneyhill bio

**Sport:** Football

**High school:** Altoona

**College:** South Carolina

**Hall of Fame achievement:** Four-year starter at South Carolina (1992-95) and one of the most prolific quarterbacks in SEC history

**Current residence:** Chesterfield, S.C.

State in 1995).

"Steve's a tremendous competitor with a passion for the game and a passion for winning," Scott said. "The thing I'll always remember about him is his leadership qualities. He was a strong leader on the field and had a charisma about him. That Mississippi State game was incredible. He was in a zone.

"I've never enjoyed coaching anybody more than I did Steve Taneyhill. There's something special about him."

Of all his accomplishments, the 40 consecutive starts ranks No. 1 with Taneyhill.

"Records are just numbers," Taneyhill said, "but to start 40 straight games is what I'm most proud. They did an article about four years ago and I was ranked one of the 10 toughest players in South Carolina history.

"I don't know about that," he said, laughing, "but it says a lot about the competitor in me. No matter what, I was there Saturday afternoon."

Taneyhill was signed as a free agent by the NFL Jacksonville Jaguars but was cut in preseason.

"I always wanted to play pro ball, but it just didn't work out," Taneyhill said. "I guess I just wasn't good enough."



### Today, Steve is making his mark as a high school coach in Chesterfield, S.C.

At the urging of Scott, Taneyhill went back to USC and earned his degree in 2004 and now he's making his mark as a high school coach in South Carolina. His 10-year coaching resume includes 101 victories, seven state title appearances and five state championships. He won two state titles while guiding an eight-man team at Cambridge Academy in Greenwood, S.C., and he's won Class A state titles the past three seasons at Chesterfield High in Chesterfield, S.C.

His former coaches are impressed with his accomplishments on the sideline.

"I couldn't be happier for the guy,

he's really made his mark," Franco said. "He has a great (coaching) pedigree with his dad and sister (former George Mason women's basketball coach Debbie). I love watching what he's done."

"He's very loyal to his players, and that's made him a good fit in coaching," Scott said. "He's just as feisty as a coach as he was as a player."

Taneyhill loves it on the sidelines, too. "Coaching is the next best thing to playing," Taneyhill said. "There's just more responsibilities."

How would he react if one of his players showed up with a ponytail?

"I wouldn't do anything," he said. "We're a team, but we're still individuals to an extent. Like when I played, I'm having fun, and I want my kids to have fun."

A 2007 inductee into the South Carolina Hall of Fame, Taneyhill is excited about being a member of the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame's Class of 2010.

"It's a great honor," he said. "I was there when my dad was inducted. I know a lot of people, and, of course, there are some I don't know. But I know it's awfully good company, and I'm really excited about it."



## Unique Solutions to Achieve Success.

Like the bond between a winning team, we're here for you. Helping you to reach your goals with integrity and pride.

For over a century we have provided solutions to individuals like you - **One Customer at a Time.**

Proud supporter of the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame

# ST&Bank

Altoona • 814.941.1080  
Duncansville • 814.695.4201  
stbank.com • Member FDIC