

Sports MONDAY

Gauchos Ride Mustangs

By ELIAV APPELBAUM
Staff Writer

The UCSB men's basketball team may not be perfect, but it could always look for guidance from A Perfect Circle on how to perfect its shooting.

A Perfect Circle played in the Thunderdome on Friday night, hours before the Gauchos took over their own stage against Cal Poly.

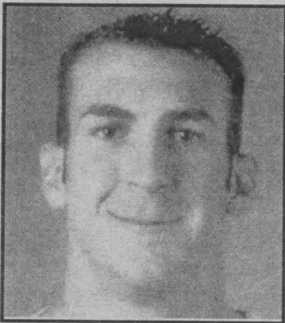
Santa Barbara took a step closer to perfection, drubbing the Mustangs 95-88 for their fifth straight victory. UCSB made an astounding 74 percent of their shots in the first half and finished the evening engulfing the nets with flames for a 67.4 shooting percentage in the game.

"We're shooting the ball really well," UCSB Head Coach Bob Williams said. "I'm really pleased with the rhythm of our shooting."

Cal Poly (8-13, 2-8 in the Big West) found its shot was more frigid than an iceberg, clanking the ball at a timid 29 percent. The Mustangs, who fell behind by as many as 22 points yet came within two points during the second half, could never get over

the hump of their horrendous shooting.

"[Our shooting] really killed us," said Cal Poly freshman guard Jamaal Scott, who led his team with 21 points. "We shot 29 percent. That's the game right there. If we make some shots, it's a



Mark Hull

different game."

Sophomore forward Mark Hull drilled a career-high 31 points on 9-14 shooting from the field and a perfect 11-11 from the charity stripe for the Gauchos (10-11, 7-4). Hull found his stroke late in the first half after freshman forward Branduinn Fullove and junior power forward Mike Vukovich provided the bulk of the offense early.

"I found myself a little bit more open [later in the half]," Hull said. "I had a few more open looks and a lot of our game plans are

just trying to make plays and draw defenders out to me."

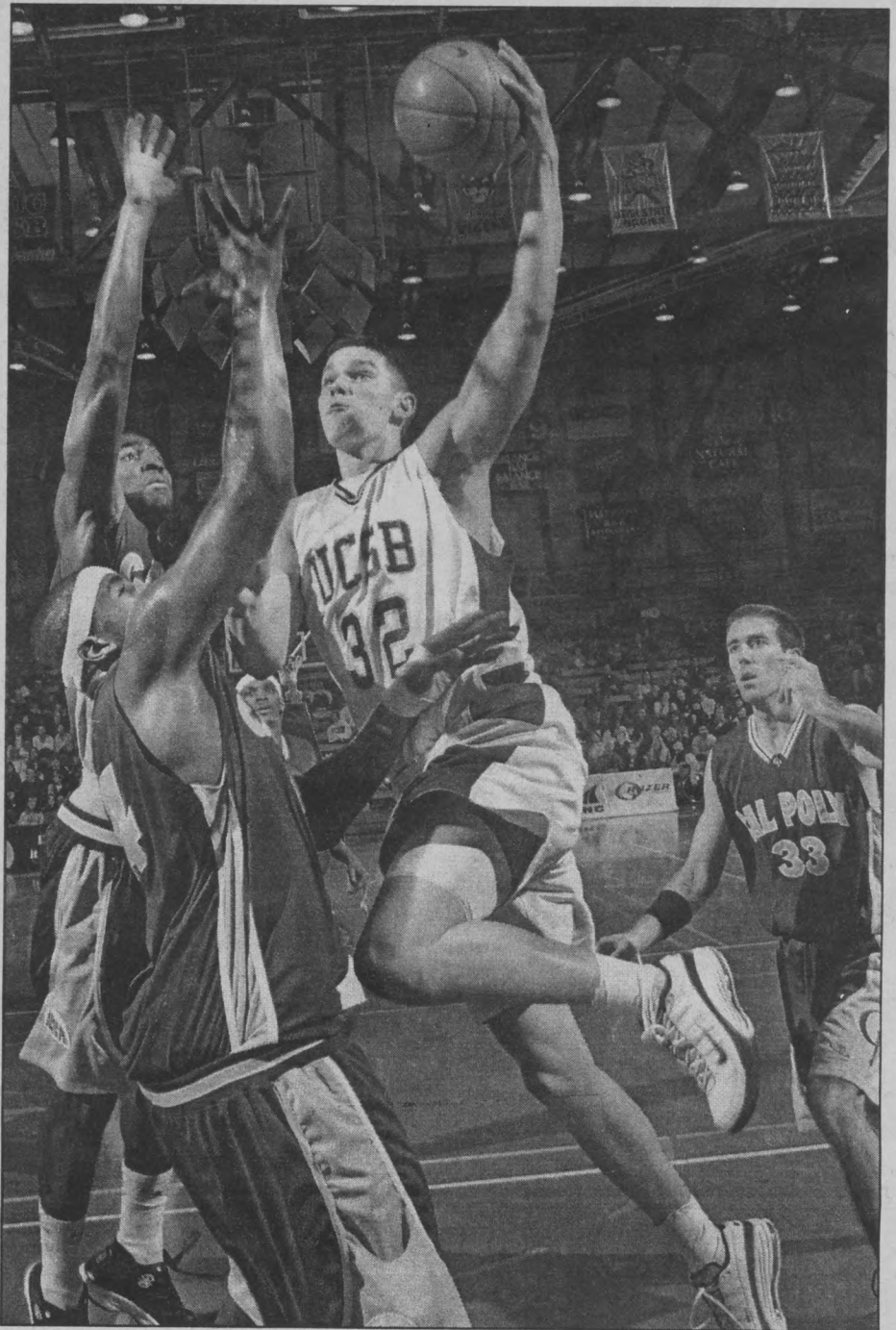
Fullove and Vukovich combined for 7-7 shooting in the first 8:41, and they both shot 4-5 from the field. Fullove finished with 14 points and five assists. Vukovich ended his night on the bench, but not before going out with nine points and three pivotal blocks.

Yet it was Hull spraying jumpers everywhere, dismantling Cal Poly at critical points in the game. Hull scored 10 of Santa Barbara's 12 points at the end of the first half, finishing the half with butter rolling from his fingers after connecting on 5-6 shots in the first 20 minutes of action. Hull continued his rampage in the second half, scoring 16 points.

"This was as aggressive as I've seen Mark in both halves of the game," Williams said. "He was more aggressive and more determined to create things offensively."

The Gauchos opened up a 17-8 lead on a rim-rattling dunk from Vukovich with 14:47 in the first half. UCSB first opened a double-digit

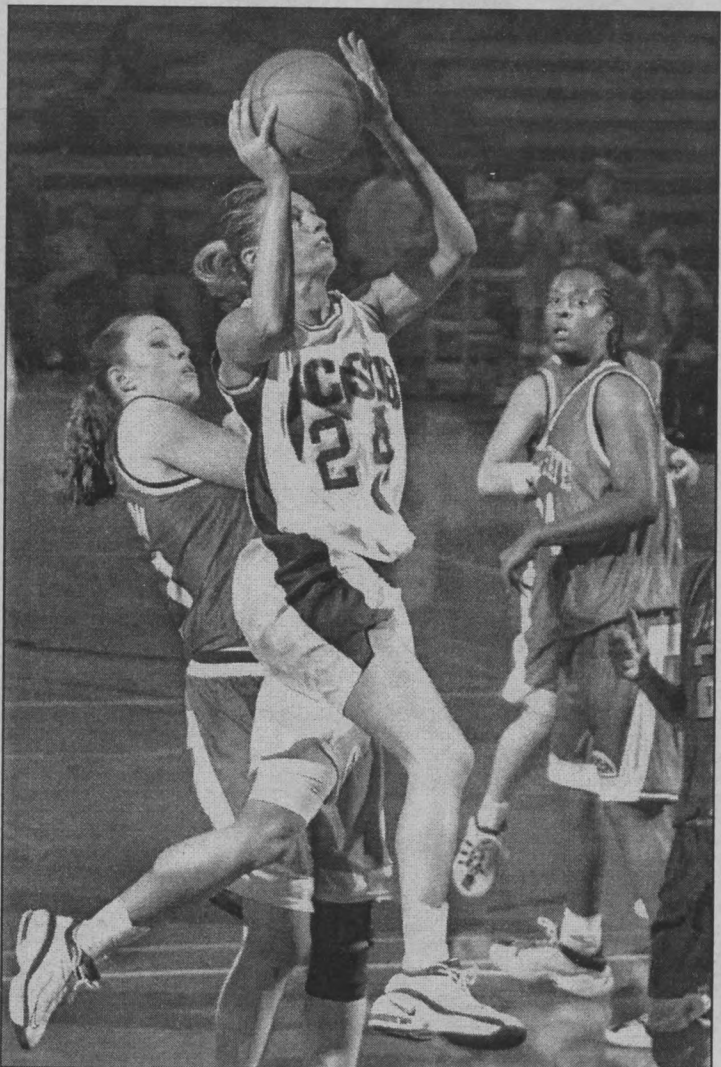
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TRUC BUI / DAILY NEXUS

Freshman forward Casey Cook leaps head-and-shoulders above every Mustang defender during the Gauchos' 95-88 victory Saturday night in the T-dome for their fifth-straight win.

'The Streak' Finally Ends at 49 Victories; Cal Poly Stuns Santa Barbara



JASON SCHOCK / DAILY NEXUS FILE

Senior guard Rachele Rogers and the Gauchos could not find a way to extend their Big West regular season winning streak to 50 games.

By MATT HEITNER
Reporter

Everyone knew that the UCSB women's basketball team could not keep its conference winning streak going forever.

Nobody thought that it would end this weekend.

But that's exactly what happened, as the Gauchos fell 76-70 to Cal Poly on Friday night at Mott Gym. The loss was Santa Barbara's first in 50 conference games, and the outcome was even more surprising since UCSB had been playing its best basketball of the year heading into the game.

"I think we just weren't mentally prepared," senior guard Rachele Rogers said. "They just made their shots when they needed to and did all the little things that we didn't do."

In a back-and-forth first half, the Gauchos (13-7, 7-1 in the Big West) fell behind early, 8-2, while the Mustangs (9-12, 3-5) came out confident in front of a boisterous home crowd of 1,114 fans. UCSB managed to temporarily silence the Mustangs' fans by taking a 14-9 lead with 13 minutes remaining in the first half. Neither team was able to find its rhythm and break the game wide open.

The lead exchanged hands five more times before freshman

forward Lisa Willett hit two free throws to tie the game once again, this time at 28-all.

At that point Cal Poly seemed to take control by running off nine straight points. Mustang guard Odessa Jenkins nailed a jumper at the buzzer to give the Mustangs a 39-31 halftime lead.

Despite being down eight at the half, UCSB was confident that it could erase the deficit and continue its winning streak.

"We were frustrated," freshman forward Jessica Combs said. "But we did think that we would take control and win in the second half."

The Gauchos, who had not trailed at the half in a conference game all season, appeared to be in a daze at the start of the second half, turning the ball over on countless possessions. The Gauchos coughed up the ball 28 times in the game, compared to only 19 by Cal Poly.

The Mustangs managed to capitalize on the Gauchos' poor ball handling by taking a 45-35 lead early in the second half. Nevertheless, UCSB was on the verge of a comeback when senior forward Nicole Greathouse hit a short hook to pull Santa Barbara within three, 48-45. But Cal Poly responded with a 6-0 run to reclaim a nine-point lead, 56-47, midway through the period.

With its winning streak on

the line, UCSB cut the deficit to eight on sophomore point guard Debby Caine's three-pointer. Momentum seemed to swing to Santa Barbara, but Greathouse, who finished with a game-high 17 points, threw the ball away on consecutive possessions, foiling another golden opportunity for the Gauchos.

Following the turnovers, the Mustangs took their largest lead of the night at 66-53 on senior guard Jennifer Sorosky's free throws with three and a half minutes remaining in the contest.

Santa Barbara made one final gasp, cutting the Mustang lead to six with 25 seconds left to play. UCSB was forced to foul, and Cal Poly made its free throws.

The Gauchos are now left scratching their heads about the loss and must regroup before facing Irvine on Wednesday at the Thunderdome. But junior forward Kayte Christensen says that the team will not have trouble bouncing back from the loss, and that the defeat could serve as a valuable learning experience.

"[The loss] was a huge eye opener," Christensen said. "It showed us that we can't mess around, but I expect everyone to come out and prove it to ourselves and our coaches that we can play better. I'm just glad that we lost now instead of in the Big West Tournament."

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UCSB

Continued from p.1A

lead, 31-21, with a trey from freshman guard Nick Jones at the 10:19 mark. Santa Barbara kept the onslaught going with excellent passing and phenomenal shooting — a big reason why it has won five games in a row.

Freshman point guard Jacoby Atako was a key player in the outcome of the contest, frustrating and abusing his elder rival, Cal Poly senior point man Watende Favors. Favors, victimized by taunting fans and dreadful shooting and passing, was limited to two assists versus three turnovers and had only six points on 2-11 shooting.

"Jacoby had his best game offensively in a couple games," Williams said. "He was relieved to hit some shots. Jacoby had one of his better games in a while."

Atako finished the night with 11 points and four assists with only one turnover. More importantly, Atako made 3-4 shots from the floor, many falling during critical points in the game. A pull-up jumper by the freshman, who slipped by over-eager senior point guard Michael Burris with the shot clock winding down, with 4:25 left in the game was described by Williams as the pivotal bucket for

the players regaining their composure and intensity.

"The shot clock was running down, and we needed a shot, and I found myself open," Atako said. "I figured I should take it, that I can make that shot even though I've been struggling a little bit lately."

The Gauchos led 49-34 at the half, a position Cal Poly despises being in. The Mustangs are 0-12 when they trail at halftime in their games this season.

"I think we have to go back and execute better," Cal Poly Head Coach Kevin Bromley said. "I did like how we battled back and how [freshman forward Varney] Dennis and [senior forward] Jeremiah Mayes played on the block. I thought we had some decent looks in the first half, and there was a silver lining between our level of play and the score."

One stat in the Mustang's favor was that they grabbed 22 offensive rebounds out of their 32 boards.

"Did you see them on the offensive block?" Williams said. "I don't know if I've ever seen a team get 22 offensive rebounds. They were all over us. I think they're a very good basketball team."

After Atako's bucket, the Gauchos weathered the storm and made

enough free throws down the stretch to seal the victory and secure third place in the Big West.

"The last few games, we've found a way to pull out a win," Williams said. "And it's a great thing we're learning."

USC Spikes Gauchos in Match

The #6 UCSB men's volleyball team fell to #8 Southern California in a tight five-game match loss at North Gym in Los Angeles on Saturday.

The Trojans were paced

by junior All-American opposite hitter Brook Billings' 20 kills, helping his squad snap a three-match losing streak to come out victorious, 30-22, 27-30, 30-28, 29-31, 15-12. Billings, relegated to no action for the first two games due to disciplinary reasons, hit .448 for the game.

Santa Barbara (4-3, 2-3 in the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation) got off to a slow start that set the tone the rest of the match, and USC (4-3 overall and in the MPSF) took advantage of the Gauchos' slow start.

Junior opposite hitter Ben Koski recorded 17 kills and had five blocks for Santa Barbara. Junior outside hitter Dave Kohl had 15 kills and eight digs. Sophomore outside hitter Brian Nordberg had 10 kills and sophomore middle blocker Anders Bengtsson had 10 blocks.

USC was bolstered by the performance of senior outside hitter Eli Fairfield's 14 kills and match-best 12 digs.

Santa Barbara's next match is against Irvine tomorrow evening at 7 in Rob Gym.

—Nexus Staff Report



ERIC LISTER/ DAILY NEXUS

Rain, Rain Go Away, We Have Games to Play Today

The UCSB men's tennis and baseball games were cancelled due to lousy weather. All road games involving the softball team and women's tennis team were also cancelled. The men's tennis game against Irvine has been rescheduled for Saturday April 8 at 1 p.m. No other games rained out this weekend have been rescheduled as of press time.

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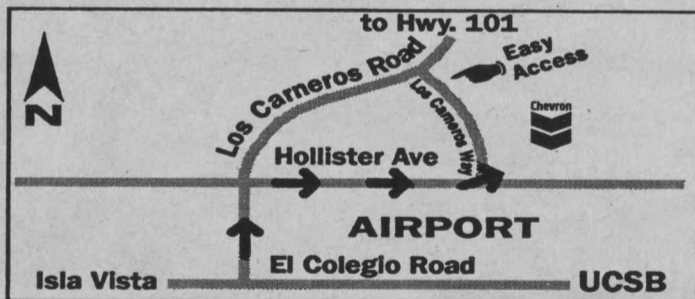
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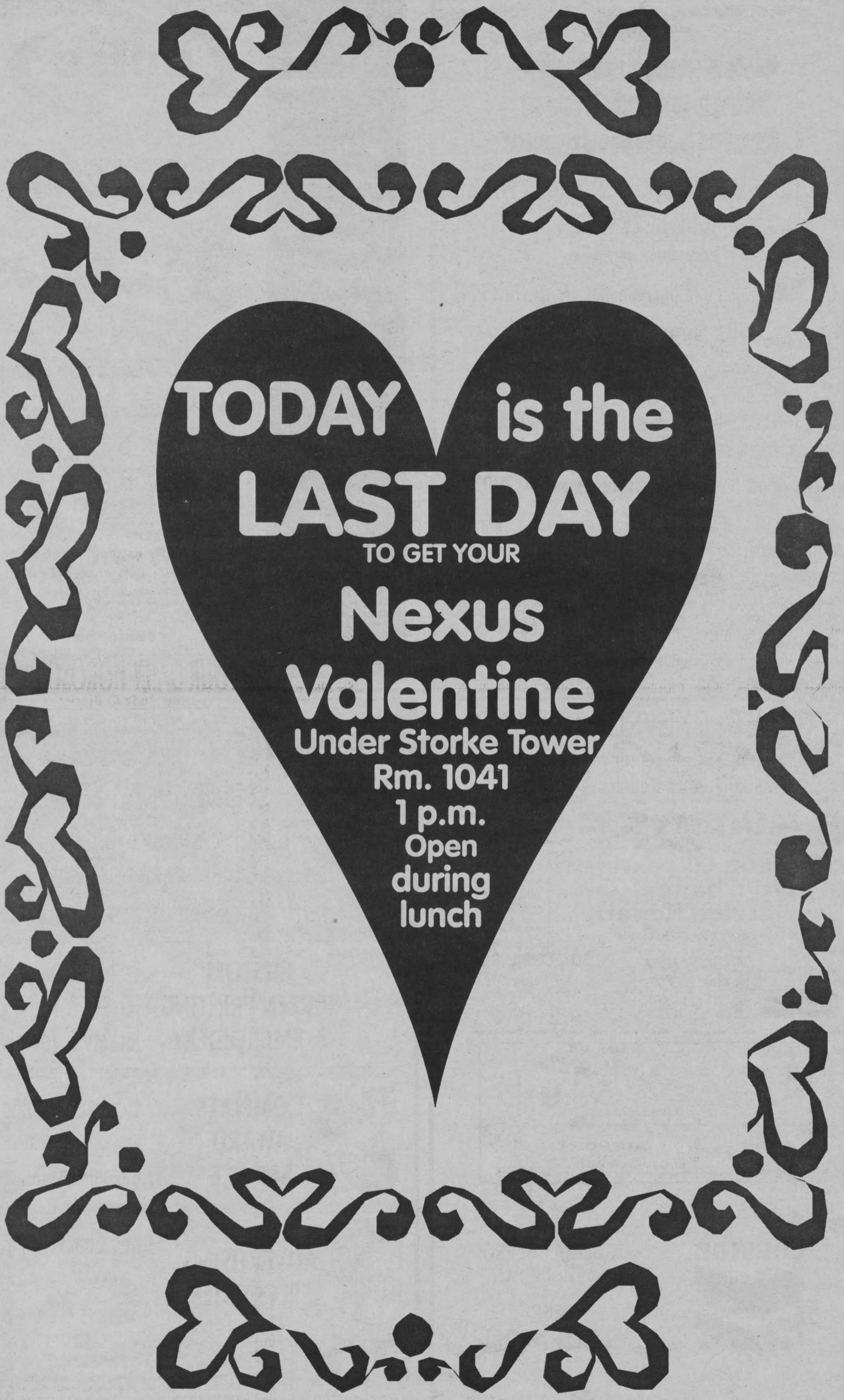
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