

Gamecocks travel to face top-ranked FSU

By AARON SHEININ
Sports Editor

David travels to Goliath Saturday to face the number one team in the nation.

David, otherwise known as the South Carolina Gamecocks, are 24 1/2-point underdogs as of Thursday to Goliath, also known as the Florida State Seminoles.

To put it in perspective, Florida State racked up 51 points against 4th-ranked Michigan. Led by quarterback Casey Weldon and tailback Amp Lee on offense, and cornerback Terrell Buckley on defense, the Seminoles, 9-0 are a formidable opponent to any team, much less the hapless-Gamecocks.

At 3-3-2, USC has had little to cheer about. Save a 23-14 victory over Georgia Tech, the season has been a disappointment to say the least as the Gamecocks head into SEC competition next season. An upset of the Seminoles would be the biggest thing to happen to USC in years. But the Seminoles are not likely to let that happen.

To win, USC not only has to play at its best, but as head coach Sparky Woods said, FSU must play far below its best. Bobby Fuller must pass for at least his average of 230 yards and Brandon Bennett and company must do much better than the 40 yards rushing they accumulated this past week against N.C. State.

Beyond that, however, Weldon, who has emerged as a legitimate Heisman Trophy candidate, must not reach his average of 266 yards and the Gamecocks must figure out a way to stop Lee, something no other team has done. Weldon sat out most of the Seminoles win over Louisville this past week, and the Seminoles still won 40-15. However, Weldon is still listed as probable, nursing a sore knee.

Look for the Gamecocks to continue to utilize the speed of its receivers in the four wideout set. The new alignment worked exceptionally well in the first half of the Tech game and for a quarter against State, but the USC offense

must put together four full quarters of execution-perfect play to keep up with the Seminoles. But as Woods also said, it would be futile for the Gamecocks to try and outscore the Seminoles, who are averaging 41.7 points a game, leaving a huge burden on the Gamecock defense.

To make matters worse, cornerback Jerry Inman broke his ankle against N.C. State and will not play. Safety Norman Greene will not play either, as he is out with a concussion.

On defense, the Seminoles are equally impressive. Buckley has eight interceptions, playing against quarterbacks named Ty Detmer and Elvis Grbac. Woods compared Buckley to Deion Sanders, now playing with the Atlanta Falcons, as one of the best cornerbacks to come out of college in many years. Sanders, incidentally, also played at FSU.

Kickoff is scheduled for 12:10 p.m. and will be televised by WIS-TV in Columbia.



USC's Rob DeBoer (31) is tackled by a host of Seminole defenders in this past season's 41-10 FSU win.

Giants, 49ers face playoff elimination



DAVID BOWDEN
Gridiron gripes

That knocking noise you hear is the sound of the last nails being driven into the coffins of the Niners and the Giants.

The two best teams in the NFC last year are both 4-5 this year. The Giants have an edge in a tie-breaker with the Niners for a Wild Card spot, but both are long-shots at this point. Believe it or not, the Atlanta Falcons, Dallas Cowboys and Detroit Lions would all go to the playoffs if the season ended today. The Vikings at 5-5 stand in the way of either the Giants or the 49ers making the playoffs.

■ If I were a Giants fan (which

I am *not*), I would be calling for coach Ray Handley's head on a platter right about now. Handley started Jeff Hostetler instead of Phil Simms at quarterback, which I always thought was a mistake. Simms might be back as starter next Sunday. But Hostetler can't be blamed for the predictable Giants offense that is even less innovative than Bill Parcells' squad. At least Parcells could coach.

However, the most ridiculous thing I have heard in years was Handley's accusation that other teams were spying on the Giants during practice to steal their plays. Talk about grasping for straws. I guess Philadelphia must have James Bond working for them, because they certainly had a handle on the Giants Monday night.

■ In other NFL news, the Houston Oilers have finally proven that

they are a legitimate Super Bowl contender. In a losing effort to the Redskins, Houston was nearly an equal to the 9-0 Skins in RFK Stadium, the toughest home field in pro football. Jack Pardee have taken the Oilers to the next level of competition. This will be the year of the Oilers' first division title ever.

■ Ironically, the only other team to never win their division is the New Orleans Saints, who have, alas, pretty much clinched the NFC West. I don't know what's weirder, the Saints being so good or the fact that the Tampa Bay Buccaneers have actually won their division before.

The Saints play host to the San Francisco 49ers next Sunday. Well, as Leonard would say, "George Seifert's Bay Area miners are going down the Mississippi

River panning for gold. Trouble is, the Mardi Gras missionaries are going to give them a blessing of a most unholy kind. Leonard's Loser, in a close one: San Francisco." Maybe.

■ Finally, I don't mean to be an iconoclast or anything, but does anyone out there agree with me that Miami's Don Schula and Pittsburgh's Chuck Noll are past their prime? Earlier in the season I praised Schula for getting his 200th win. Unfortunately for the Dolphins, that was one of Miami's last victories. Noll's squad has had a similarly lackluster year.

Schula and Noll have been in the league forever, granted, but neither coach has gotten their team even close to the Super Bowl in nearly a decade. Both the Dolphins and Steelers won't make the playoffs this year either.

Lady Cocks lose to Georgia, host tourney this weekend

By SEAN RYAN
Staff Writer

The Lady Gamecock volleyball team remained winless in the SEC Wednesday after a 3-0 loss to the Georgia Lady Bulldogs. The team's overall record is 11-18, and 0-10 in the powerful SEC.

In the first game of the match, Georgia, ranked 15th nationally, used seven service aces to pace their way to an easy 15-6 win. USC used little defense to stop the Bulldog attack.

The second game, which was filled with long rallies and numerous great plays, saw USC rise to challenge the team from Athens. However, after tying the game at seven, the Gamecocks lost the last eight points of the game to fall 15-7, despite great effort.

The Bulldogs took the third game early, jumping out to a 6-3 lead. Georgia then widened the gap to 11-6, before winning

15-9. The Bulldogs finished the game with 12 service aces while improving their record to 22-6, 8-2 in the SEC.

The Lady Gamecocks were led by Jennifer Guess' 8 kills and overall great performance. Libby Ralston added 7 kills in the defeat.

"We knew what we had to do, but we didn't get the job done," Coach Bonnie Kenny said. "It's good to get away from the conference, even for just the weekend. It's tough to get the monkey off our back."

Tough competition continues for the Lady Gamecocks as they host the Gamecock Invitational beginning today at the Sol Blatt P.E. Center. A team from South Florida will compete this weekend, along with Southeast Missouri St. and East Tennessee St. The Lady Gamecocks will play at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, and continue play on Saturday at 2 and 7:00 p.m.



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