

Carolina set to muzzle Bulldogs in weekend series

ROBBIE MEEK Staff Writer

The Carolina Baseball team will entertain the Mississippi State Bulldogs this weekend for a three-game series.

South Carolina enters the series needing a conference win. The Gamecocks are 2-4 in the conference and 20-12 overall. Mississippi State is 2-4 in the conference and 20-8 overall.

The Gamecocks lead the series between the two teams, holding a 4-2 margin. USC leads 2-1 since entering the SEC. The Gamecocks took two of three from the Bulldogs in Starkville last season.

Randy Stegall and Mark Mapes are leading the offense, batting .395 and .358 respectively. Mapes leads the team with 32 RBIs, and Stegall has 24 RBIs.

"This weekend is big, if we can get two out of three," said Stegall, USC second baseman. "It's a matter of going out and playing hard every game and not playing up like against Clemson and then on Friday (against Mississippi) night it was like nobody was out on the field."

The Bulldogs are led by Brian Clark

who is batting .356 with 24 RBIs and 10 doubles. David Hayman leads the team in homeruns with five.

The first game of the series will be played today. J.J. Pearsall will be on the mound for the Gamecocks. Pearsall has a 5-2 record and 3.17 ERA.

Pearsall will face Kyle Kennedy who has a 5-1 record and a 1.93 ERA in ten starts for the Bulldogs. That game will start at 7 p.m.

Saturday's game will match USC's Wally Maynard against MSU's Eric DuBose. Maynard has a 4-1 record and a 1.95 ERA.

DuBose is 4-3 in nine starts and has a 3.68 ERA. Saturday's game will begin at 2 p.m.

Sunday's game will be played between Carolina's Jason Haynie and MSU's Scott Polk. Haynie enters 1-1 with both of those decisions coming against nationally-ranked Clemson. He has a 5.23 ERA.

Polk comes into the series, 3-2 with a 3.47 ERA. That game will also begin at 2 p.m.

Mickelson, Frost lead Masters at 6-under-par

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — The rain came. The greens softened. And Augusta National was there to be had.

Phil Mickelson and David Frost were tied for the lead Thursday in the opening round of the Masters tournament, while Jack Nicklaus, seeking a record seventh title, was only one stroke back.

Mickelson, the sensational 24-year-old left-hander, shot a 6-under-par 66 over the rain-softened greens of the Augusta National Golf Club course.

Frost matched Mickelson's 66 with a bogey-free round in the rain that ranged from drizzle to showers.

The 55-year-old Nicklaus had an eagle-2 en route to a 67 and was tied for third with David Guilford of England.

Nicklaus holed a 5-iron for an eagle 2 on No. 5 and drew huge galleries and thunderous applause in the far reaches of Amen Corner where on this rainy day the brilliant beauty of the dogwoods and azaleas in bloom where almost obscured by a garden of colorful umbrellas as the thousands of fans huddled trying to stay dry.

"That's two and one-half shots up on the field on that hole," he said.

They were more than warmed by the four-birdie, no-bogey 32 Nicklaus shot on the back nine.

But he didn't gain ground at the par-5s, frequently the key to a good round on this course. Nicklaus played them even. His driving was at fault, he said.

"I have to start driving the ball better," he said. "If I start playing the par-5s better, I could be in contention."

Nicklaus had warmed up for the Masters with a playoff victory in a senior tournament in Arizona last weekend.

"You can't be in contention on this course if you don't play the par-5s well, and you can't play the par-5s well if you don't drive well," Nicklaus said.

While the eagle got him started, he made his big move on the back nine. Nicklaus hit a 3-iron to five feet at the 10th, holed out from 18 feet on a downhill putt at the 12th, dropped a 10-footer at the 14th and pitched to four feet at the 15th.

Only a few players remained on the course when Nicklaus finished.

Chip Beck and Mark O'Meara were another stroke back at 68, 4-under-par on the course that was eased by the day-long rains that took the fire out of the

greens.

Seven players were at 69, five more at 70 and six at 71 on a soggy day in which par became a meaningless standard.

"If the rain continues, I think the scoring will continue to go down," said Hale Irwin, one of those to shoot a 69. "The greens were pretty soft, very receptive."

"Shots that the last few days were pitching forward quite a ways now are coming to a quick stop, and in some cases even coming back," said Irwin, who felt the course was playing about two strokes easier because of the rain.

"It's a much different golf course than we saw the last three days," he said. It was a day in which golf's past and future crossed paths on the Augusta National Golf Club.

U.S. Open winner Ernie Els of South Africa, just 25 years old, shot a 32 on the back nine to save an even-par 72. And Tiger Woods, the 19-year-old U.S. Amateur champion, gave a hint of what is to come for him with a solid 72.

Playing in showers that ranged from a light drizzle to a steady rain, the golfers found the inconvenience more than made

up for by the softness of the greens.

Irwin, Scott Hoch, David Edwards, Ian Woosnam of Wales and Wayne Grady of Australia, Lee Janzen and Davis Love were at 69. Craig Stadler, Jumbo Ozaki of Japan, Mark Calcavecchia, Ben Crenshaw and Paul Azinger were at 70 while Jay Haas and Miguel Angel Jimenez of Spain, Dan Forsman, Bill Glasson, Payne Stewart and Raymond Floyd were at 71.

It was a very different Augusta National from the hard and fast layout the players tested during the practice rounds. Beck got a good example of that on No. 17 when his 9-iron approach shot hit 15 feet past the hole, took one short hop and drew back a few feet. A day earlier that shot would have rolled 45 feet past the hole.

Beck banged his drive on No. 13 into the left trees, took a penalty drop, laying up and hitting a 60-yard wedge shot to 20 feet and making the putt for par.

"That putt there," Beck said, "and that chip-in on No. 4 (with a bump-and-run 5-iron from 60 feet), I can't remember when I did that in the same round. Those are the kinds of things that win tournaments for you."

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