

Gamecocks one win shy of bowl bid

BRYAN JOHNSTON Asst. Sports Editor

Georgia, Auburn, Tennessee and Florida are all big games on the Gamecock football schedule.

But this Saturday is *The Game*. It's time, once again, for USC fans from all over to make their semi-annual trip to the rolling hills and pastures of the Palmetto State for the Carolina-Clemson battle.

The 94th episode of this epic rivalry has the makings of a classic.

The game will feature two excellent defenses that have stopped some of the better offenses around, and two offenses that have the capabilities of exploding at any moment.

Clemson comes into the game 7-3. The Tigers started off 2-3, but have since reeled off five victories in a row, two of which were against Top-25 teams. The Tigers broke into both the Coaches' and AP polls this past week and are most likely headed to the Peach Bowl.

"Clemson is one of the hottest teams in the country. They've looked very impressive coming off five straight wins and have looked somewhat unstoppable on both sides of the ball," Carolina head coach Brad Scott said.

South Carolina, on the other hand,

started off strong, winning their first two games. They then proceeded to drop three in a row. After winning three consecutive games, they dropped back-to-back games to then-No. 6 Tennessee and No. 1 Florida.

As of right now, the Gamecocks are 5-5 and are one win shy of qualifying for a bowl bid.

Their last shot to qualify comes Saturday against archrival Clemson in Death Valley.

Clemson's defense is led by sophomore linebacker Anthony Simmons and junior defensive end Trevor Pryce.

Simmons is a name that Gamecock fans remember from last year's game. Simmons made 19 tackles, three of which were for loss against USC last season.

Pryce has been on a roll as of late. He had eight tackles for loss in a two-game span. Against Maryland, Pryce had 10 tackles, including four tackles for loss and two sacks. He now has 51 tackles in seven games and has 14 tackles for loss.

"He's been a tremendous impact player for them," Scott said. "I've not seen a player in a long time dominate the line of scrimmage like Trevor Pryce."

As much pressure as the Gamecock offense is going to face Saturday, it is

good news to hear that senior Duce Staley will be back.

The senior All-SEC candidate returns for the first time after suffering a severely sprained ankle in USC's 27-0 victory over Vanderbilt on Oct. 26.

"I'll stand by my statement that he's going to be able to participate in the game. How much he'll be used, we might wait until Saturday to find out," Scott said.

Staley needs only 17 more yards to become the first back since Harold Green in 1987 to rush for 1,000 yards in a season.

"Even if they have to roll him out there in a stroller, I want to see him get 1,000 yards," USC quarterback Anthony Wright said. "I don't care if I have to carry him on my back."

What capacity Staley will be at is undetermined, but what is known is that USC has found a quality back to fill-in for Staley if he can't go.

In last Saturday's 52-25 loss to the Gators, freshman Troy Hambrick emerged as a budding star. The Lacochee, Fla., native rushed for 120 yards and had one TD on 20 carries against a very good Florida defense.

The Clemson defense has been able to shut down the run most of the year,

but has been susceptible to the pass, especially the deep one.

"That is a concern," Clemson head coach Tommy West said in his Tuesday press conference. "I would anticipate that they'll watch the film, and I'm sure they'll take their shots on the deep ball on us."

Wright, who has thrown for 1,730 yards and only five interceptions in 10 games, will have to get the ball to wide receivers Marcus Robinson, Corey Bridges and Zola Davis if USC is to move the ball.

If they can establish the pass, Clemson will have to honor it, and, thus, the running game will open up.

Defensively, the Gamecocks must stop the run if they want to win the ball game.

The trio of tailback Raymond Priester and fullbacks Kelton Dunnican and Emory Smith have combined for 1,646 of the 1,951 (84.4 percent) Tiger rushing yards this year.

Priester has rushed for 1,067 of those yards. The junior has six touchdowns and averages 4.9 yards per carry. Last season, Priester carried for 85 yards and had one TD on 17 carries against

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SEC Volleyball Tournney kicks off at Carolina

DWAYNE McLEMORE Asst. Sports Editor

The 1996 SEC Volleyball Tournament begins today and runs through Sunday, and the Lady Gamecocks will be looking to win their first conference title ever.

Carolina enters the tournament 21-7 and 10-4 in the SEC, its best conference record ever. The team finished second in the SEC Eastern Division, earning a first-round bye, and will take on Mississippi at 7 p.m. today at the Volleyball Competition Facility.

Although Carolina defeated Mississippi on the road this season, Lady Gamecock coach Kim Hudson said the match with the Lady Rebels will be no easy contest.

"Mississippi is a good team," Hudson said. "We will have to play well. They have consistently gotten better throughout the year and have beaten some good teams."

The Lady Rebels were 18-9 and 6-7 in the SEC, and finished third in the SEC Western Division. The team is coming off a big 3-2 win over Western Division Champion Arkansas this past Sunday.

The team everyone will be gunning for is Florida, ranked No. 1 nationally in the USA Today/AVCA Coaches' Poll. The Lady Gators were 29-1 and 14-0 in the SEC, finishing first in the SEC Eastern Division, and will be looking to win its fifth straight tournament title.

Hudson said Florida is certainly the favorite to win the tournament, but doesn't rule out any surprises.

"Tournament time is always a time when teams can be upset," Hudson said. "That's why it's exciting. Arkansas, Auburn and South Carolina are playing very well right now."

Arkansas and Auburn tied for the SEC Western Division title at 11-4 in the conference. The Lady Razorbacks were 21-9 this season and have been on top in the West for three straight years.

Arkansas coach Chris Poole said the tournament feels like a whole new season. The Lady Razorbacks face the winner of the Mississippi State/Tennessee match at 5:30.

The Lady Tigers finished the season 21-8 and have won eight consecutive conference matches. The total wins are the most ever for Auburn.

Lady Tiger coach Liz Bitzer said she and the team are excited about the

tournament and taking on the winner of the Alabama/Kentucky match.

"We're looking forward to giving ourselves a shot at the SEC title," Bitzer said.

The Lady Gamecocks will be looking to advance past the semi-finals, where the team has lost to Florida the past two seasons. A Carolina/Florida match won't be possible until the finals.

Hudson, however, said the team will be operating under the same philosophy it has all season: one match at a time.

Larkin, Edlund named All-SEC

Carolina junior Heather Larkin and sophomore Ashley Edlund were named to the All-SEC First Team Thursday. Sophomore Cindy Robarge was selected to the All-SEC Second Team.

Larkin leads the Lady Gamecocks in kills, with 336, and in hitting, at .297. It is the second straight year for Larkin on the first team.

"It's nice to know the coaches have recognized my hard work," Larkin said.

Edlund leads the team in assists, with 1,146, and added 100 kills and 285 digs. Her 12.93 assists per game was fourth in the SEC.

"It's a great honor because the SEC is real competitive and there are some good setters," Edlund said.

Robarge was third on the team in kills and had 10 SEC matches in double-figure kills.

"It's certainly an honor for me because I am from South Carolina, and I'm sure it means a lot to the state for volleyball," Robarge said.

Florida coach Mary Wise was selected SEC Coach of the Year while Lady Gator Jenny Wood earned Player of the Year. Georgia's Rebecca Dady was selected as the Spalding Freshman of the Year.

Also named to the first team were: Denise Baez and Tina Rico of Arkansas; Allyson Beecroft and Rani Whitson of Auburn; Nina Foster, Aurymar Rodriguez, Nikki Shade and Jenny Wood of Florida; Gina Heustis of Kentucky; and Carmis Franks of LSU.

Read more about the SEC Volleyball Tournament on page 12!

Gamecock Sports CHALLENGE

	Carolina/Clemson	Auburn/Bama	Michigan/ OSU	WVa/VT
Achim Hunt Boss Hog 39-27	Carolina 34-29	War Eagle	Buckeyes	Hokies
Bryan Johnston Flash 42-24	Clemson 22-16	Roll Tide Roll	Buckeyes	Hokies
Dwayne McLemore Sheriff Little 41-25	Clemson 29-17	Roll Tide Roll	Buckeyes	Hokies
Josh Penrod Uncle Jessie 23-17	Carolina 21-14	War Eagle	Buckeyes	Hokies
J.T. Wagenheim The General Lee 3-2	Clemson 35-13	War Eagle	Buckeyes	WVa
Jennifer Stanley Daisy Duke 27-13	Carolina 27-24	Roll Tide Roll	Buckeyes	WVa
Eric Caldwell Bo Duke 99-1-1	Carolina 24-13	Roll Tide Roll	Buckeyes	Hokies
Adam Snyder Roscoe 13-7	Carolina 21-20	Roll Tide Roll	Buckeyes	Hokies

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