

## Gamecock football must wait, see about bowl game

**BRYAN JOHNSTON** Asst. Sports Editor

In a season when many magazines said it would be a miracle if the Gamecock football squad produced a winning record, USC proved everyone wrong by putting together a 6-5 record.

Despite their efforts, it looks as if the Gamecocks will be sitting at home this winter break.

With six teams from the Southeastern Conference qualifying for a bowl and only five bowl games open for SEC teams, one squad will be left out. Right now, it looks like that squad is Carolina.

To qualify for a post-season bowl game, a team must win six games against Florida, Bama, UT, LSU and Auburn. USC has done all that.

Unfortunately, only five bowls (Alliance, Citrus, Outback, Peach and Independence) have spots reserved for SEC teams.

Right now, the only hope for the Gamecocks to play in post-season would be if the Volunteers receive an at-large bid or if Alabama beat Florida Saturday.

The Alliance takes the ACC, Big East,

Big 12 and SEC champions along with two at-large teams selected by a panel.

BYU, Colorado, Penn State and Tennessee are all vying for the two spots.

The Cougars play Wyoming in the WAC Championship game Saturday, and if they win, they will be 13-1. This will almost assure them of one of the bids. If they lose to the Cowboys, BYU would probably end up in the Cotton or the Holiday bowls.

The other three schools have to wait and see who the Alliance picks.

The Volunteers controlled their own destiny until they dropped a game to Memphis. The Vols haven't played up to their potential as of late, and with their record at 9-2, they are the longest shot of the remaining hopefuls.

If BYU loses, that leaves the Buffaloes and the Nittany Lions for the two spots.

Notre Dame was a sure-fire lock until they lost to Southern Cal last Saturday. At 8-3, it looks like Lou Holtz has coached his last game under the Golden Dome.

Florida plays Alabama Saturday in the SEC Championship Game and

Nebraska takes on Texas in the Big-12 Championship game.

If the Crimson Tide can pull off the upset, Bama would get the Alliance bid. Many feel the Gators are strong enough for one of the at-large bids.

But if the Gators and Cornhuskers win, more than likely the finals polls will be, in order: Florida State, Arizona State, Nebraska, Florida and Ohio State.

If the Gators and Tide are selected for the Alliance, Tennessee, LSU and Auburn will be bumped up to the next highest SEC-affiliated bowl. That would make room for the Gamecocks to make their second appearance in a bowl in three years.

If this scenario is the case, Carolina would play in the Poulan Weed Eater Independence bowl in Shreveport LA.

"We're still under consideration from the Independence Bowl. They have expressed a strong interest in USC," USC's Assistant Athletics Director and Sports Information Director Kerry Sharp said. "They said that they will not make a decision until after the SEC

Championship Game.

"We've had a great deal of communication with the Independence Bowl. We've even had fans call down to the bowl officials asking about accommodations. They are fully aware of our interest," Sharp said.

The way the Bowl Alliance is set up, number one takes on number two. Since ASU and OSU are in conferences that don't participate in the Alliance (Big Ten and PAC-10), they are out.

That means FSU and Nebraska would meet for the National Championship in the Sugar Bowl.

The no. 3-team takes on the no. 5-team, meaning Florida and Colorado would meet in the Fiesta Bowl.

The fourth-ranked team takes on the sixth-ranked team in the Orange Bowl. Therefore, Virginia Tech probably would meet Penn State.

Here's a look at the other 15 bowls to be played and who the likely teams are in them:

■ Las Vegas Bowl, 9 p.m. Dec. 19.

Big West #1 vs. Mid-American #1 Nevada vs. Ball State

If only all matchups were this easy. ■ Aloha Bowl, 3:30 p.m. Dec. 25.

Big-12 #6 vs. Pac-10 #4

Texas Tech (prob.) vs. California Since the vaunted Big-12 produced a mere five bowl eligible teams, the organizers will have to scramble for Cal's opponent if Nebraska falls to Texas, but still is an Alliance pick.

■ Liberty Bowl, 3 p.m. Dec. 27.

Conf. USA #1 vs. Big East #4

Houston vs. Syracuse

Hurricanes blew Orangemen all the way from Miami to Memphis with last week's upset.

■ Carquest Bowl, 7:30 p.m. Dec. 27.

Big East #3 vs. ACC #4

Miami vs. Virginia

Hometown boys didn't exactly fill up the Orange Bowl this season, but they're coming off an upset of Syracuse and will duel with a quicksilver UVa team.

■ Copper Bowl, 9 p.m. Dec. 27.

WAC #2 vs. Big 12 #5

Wyoming, BYU or Utah vs. undet.

If the Cowboys trip BYU in the conference title game, this is where the Cougars might land. At 8-3, Utah is a safer bet. Assuming Texas Tech is Aloha-bound, organizers will have to sift through unranked teams.

■ Peach Bowl, 8 p.m. Dec. 28.

ACC #3 vs. SEC #4

Clemson vs. LSU (probable)

Tigers vs. Tigers, both with wild-and-crazy followings and national titles in their past.

■ Alamo Bowl, 8 p.m. Dec. 29.

Big 12 #4 vs. Big Ten #4

Iowa or Michigan vs. Texas or T.T.

Based on their conference record, the Hawkeyes should be headed for the Outback Bowl. But they didn't beat Ohio State in Columbus at the end of the year.

■ Holiday Bowl, 8 p.m. Dec. 30.

WAC #1 or PAC-10 #2 vs. Big 12 #3

Wyo., BYU or Wash. vs. Colo. (prob.)

Here's BYU's consolation prize if it gets snubbed by both the Alliance and Cotton Bowls. Here's the Buffaloes save for their Wolverine wounds.

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BRYAN JOHNSTON The Gamecock

### Will they be enough?

**BRYAN JOHNSTON** Asst. Sports Editor

The University of South Carolina has long been known for the excellence in academics and athletics. But for the latter, one of the key ingredients is the support the teams get.

Carolina fans are regarded as some of the finest, most loyal fans in the nation. When the bowls select the teams they want to play in their game, crowd support is a big factor.

This year, it will be more critical than ever, with USC and Auburn vying for the SEC's spot in the Poulan Weed Eater Independence Bowl.

Even though the Tigers beat the Gamecocks head-to-head (28-24) and have a better record (Auburn is 7-4; USC is 6-5), the Gamecocks are relying heavily on the fact that they can sell their allotment of tickets. With this being a smaller bowl, many Tiger fans might bypass the trip to Shreveport, LA.

In the past, when it came down to two teams for one spot, bowls have picked the Gamecocks even though they might not have been the better team because of the crowd support.

But this year, will they be enough?

### Football players honored for academic successes

**Staff Reports**

Carolina football players are proving that they can get the job done not only on the gridiron, but also in the classroom.

USC placed eight players on the SEC Academic Honor Roll as announced by Commissioner Roy Kramer Monday.

The eight players named were sophomore Chad Barnhardt, juniors Scott Beebe, Shane Burnham, Ed Hrubiec and Ryan Koop and seniors Jason Lawson, Reed Morton and Gerrick Taylor.

To be eligible for the award a student-athlete must 1.) have a 3.0 grade point average for either the past year (two semesters or three quarters) or for his career; 2.) be a sophomore or higher in academic classification;

and 3.) have 24 semester hours or 26 quarter hours countable toward a degree.

■ Barnhardt, a quarterback, holds a 3.371 grade point average in Business Marketing.

■ Beebe, a long snapper, holds a 3.800 gpa in Sports Administration.

■ Burnham, a linebacker, holds a 3.081 gpa in Exercise Science.

■ Hrubiec, an offensive lineman, holds a 3.137 gpa in Sports Administration.

■ Koop, a linebacker, holds a 3.233 gpa in Sports Administration.

■ Lawson, a tight end, holds a 3.148 gpa in Exercise Science.

■ Morton, a place kicker, holds a 3.877 gpa in Interdisciplinary Studies.

■ Taylor, a linebacker, holds a 3.133 gpa in Sports Administration.

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