

•Eight USC riders will compete in the National Intercollegiate Horse Show after placing in Saturday's Zone Competition at the University of the South in Seawanee, Tenn..

•The men's golf team surged behind a final day score of 272 to finish second place at the Billy Hitchcock Intercollegiate in Auburn, Ala.

Sports

•Baseball vs. Clemson, 7 p.m. today, Sarge Frye Field.
•Bomberball vs. Delmarva, 7 p.m. today, Capital City Stadium.

"I know that I'm never as good or bad as any single performance. I've never believed my critics or my worshippers, and I've always been able to leave the game at the arena."
—Charles Barkley

Wohlers' attitude: 'ingrate'



David Cloninger
Heckler's Row

After a week of exciting baseball action, the game's fans are already starting to form their own opinions on which teams will win the World Series, which

players will collect the postseason awards and how soon they can induct J.D. Drew into the "Crash and Burn" club.

My beloved Braves have a 5-3 record although they don't really deserve it, but that's not what today's topic is about.

This week saw the recognition of two Braves players, one from the past and one of the present, and since this column is the ultimate authority on Braves baseball, I think it's my obligation to comment on the proceedings this week.

Let's start off with the ending of Mark Wohlers' career in Atlanta.

I have followed this case intently for the past year, and only one word comes to mind: "ingrate."

This perfectly describes Wohlers and his attitude and how he has managed to sink from baseball's lovable hard-luck phenom to a level equal to Albert Belle and his relationship with the media.

Wohlers was nurtured and brought up in the Braves organization as one of the fabled 1995 rookie class from Richmond, the class that won an Independent League title with him, Ryan Klesko, Javy Lopez and Chipper Jones, among others.

"Well, thank you, Mark, for bringing down an entire club."

His fireballing pitches and intimidating presence on the mound allowed him to save 97 games in two seasons, and Braves fans finally thought they had a cure for the weakest bullpen in the National League.

Wohlers was there on that magical night of Oct. 29, 1995, when he forced the Indians' Carlos Baerga to loft a high pop fly to center field for the final out, bringing a long-awaited world championship to Atlanta.

It was Wohlers who jumped in the air with arms raised, thrilling millions and sending photographers home with a possible Pulitzer Prize winner.

With a rejuvenated career and a big ring on his finger, how could he go wrong?

I don't know, but he did.

In the middle of the 1998 season, Wohlers inexplicably couldn't find the plate, routinely walking players on four straight and throwing pitches that would make Mitch "Wild Thing" Williams cringe and shake his head in disbelief.

Wohlers was optioned to Richmond, but didn't fare any better, finally bowing out with an ERA of more than 20.

Extensive counseling and therapy, paid for by tightwad John Schuerholz, followed in the off-season, and spring training provided another opportunity for our subject.

He seemed to be in control again, throwing that blazing fastball and garnering the support of skipper Bobby Cox, who said, "This kid is the heart and soul of this club."

All that came crashing down Tuesday, when Wohlers refused to accept an assignment to Richmond because of his latest outing, in which he threw one strike in 10 pitches.

After all of the time and money the Braves have spent (he is paid \$5.2 million per year), he decides he wants to be traded because he can't find the plate. Well, thank you, Mark, for bringing down an entire club.

This is the thanks they get for believing in you?

Battle at Sarge Frye rages tonight

by David Cloninger
Senior Writer

When the South Carolina baseball team reflected on its 1998 season, it had nothing to be ashamed of.

That team boasted a 44-18 record, an NCAA tournament berth, two freshmen All-Americans, seven players drafted by the major leagues and an SEC Coach of the Year.

However, one thing stood: a loss to archrival Clemson in front of a sold-out home crowd.

The Gamecocks hope to gain some measure of revenge, as they once again prepare to do battle with the Tigers at 7 p.m. at Sarge Frye Field.

The game is gaining more attention than usual because the second USC-Clemson game was rained out last year.

Coach Ray Tanner, who made a career of beating Clemson while he was at N.C. State, is optimistic about the matchup.

"There's nothing like the Carolina-Clemson game. I believe it's the best game in the country," Tanner said.

The game will feature the aces of both pitching staffs, USC's Kip Bouknight against Clemson's Ryan Mottl.

Bouknight, a sophomore All-American, hasn't fared well in his past two outings, but Tanner still thinks the right-hander will be the best solution for Clemson's dangerous offense.

"We'll be keeping Kip on a pitch count so he can also pitch this weekend. The tempo of the game will determine when he comes out," Tanner said.

USC comes into the matchup with a 24-11 record.

Although its 8-6 mark in the SEC is good enough for first in the East, it would also tie for last in the West.

Clemson, which has a 19-16 record (3-5 ACC), has had hard luck so far this season, and will have to pull together down the stretch to try and duplicate last year's NCAA appearance and No. 3 national ranking.

Although the Tigers beat Miami and top-ranked Florida State, they also lost to Western Carolina and blew a 15-4 lead over The Citadel.

Carolina hopes to counter Clemson's seven .300-plus hitters with a potent attack of its own.

Juniors Nate Janowicz (.339, 19 stolen bases) and Brian Roberts (.328, 43 stolen bases) are expected to lead the attack.

Roberts, a transfer from the ACC's North Carolina, is used to playing Clemso, but isn't up to speed on the intense rivalry between the two schools.

"That was one of our biggest rivalries, so I do have a head start on some of the new guys. I'm really excited to be a part of this," said Roberts,



Sean Rayford Photo Editor

Sophomore Clint Collins slides into home plate in a game against George Washington. The Gamecocks take on their archrival, the Clemson Tigers, at 7 p.m. today at Sarge Frye Field.

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Matthews making immediate impact

by Todd Money
Sports Copy Editor

Making an impact.

It's what most freshman athletes aspire to do. Of course, what most of them actually do is play sparingly, learn a lot from their teammates and chip in here and there while continuing to develop the facets of their game. Call South Carolina softball's Megan Matthews an exception to the rule.

What Matthews has already done this year would be enough for many players to call a career.

The blonde-haired, 5-foot-11 right-hander has racked up 20 wins, leads the nation with seven saves, and leads her team in several pitching categories, including innings (180) and shutouts (5). But then, she's used to being a winner.

"I was in fourth grade when I started [softball]," she said. "In fifth grade, there were some girls that played for the high school [who] pitched fast-pitch, and I thought that was really cool, so I wanted to do it."

By the time she got to Riverside High School in Greenville, she was already doing most of the pitching for the varsity team.

Matthews would letter in softball there for six years, a span in which the school won three state championships. That's a whole lot of individual wins.

The personal highlight of her playing career in high school came in an Upper State semifinal game against Wren, Riverside's big rival.

"We played them, and I pitched a perfect game and hit one out of the park," she remembered. "We hated them so much ... it was better than winning the state championship."

After showing that much promise in high school, Matthews had several

options as far as the next level of play. But, surprise — USC definitely wasn't her first choice of college. Once, when she came to Columbia to watch a game, she did so to watch two of Carolina's opponents, Tennessee and North Carolina.

When she took the chance to check out the Lady Gamecocks, though, Matthews' opinion changed. "They just looked so sharp, and so good," she said.

"I just liked the whole presence of everybody on the field ... I know this is corny, but people say you just know? And I did — I just knew. It really was [a gut feeling]."

One of Matthews' stats that jumps out at you is that number of innings pitched on the year. She has essentially become the workhorse of an experienced USC staff. Last weekend, she even started three of four games against Tennessee in two days. Matthews is used to it, though.

"I like it," she said. "I work better under pressure. ... It can hurt me if I let it go too far, but ... I don't get tired! It takes me a long time to get so physically tired where I just can't do it any more."

Of course, it helps when you're forced to stay as in shape during the off-season as in the months of play. "Off-season is the hard part," she said, laughing.

"From August until spring starts, we're running our tails off, every day — it's not just a two- or three-day thing ... and then we're lifting four times a week. So that's tough."

Freshman players are known for sometimes taking a while to get accustomed to a new program: New rules, a new home and new coaches can have

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Sean Rayford Photo Editor

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Akesson, Legat pace men's tennis in win over WFU

by Jared Kelowitz
Assistant Sports Editor

Tuesday, the No. 11 men's tennis team devastated the Demon Deacons of Wake Forest 7-0 at Sam Daniel Tennis Stadium.

The Gamecocks tout a record of 13-10 overall, 4-6 in the SEC and 8-2 in Region 2 action.

The Deacons drop to 11-13 overall, 3-4 in the ACC. USC leads the all-time series, 16-4.

The match started off with the Carolina men taking two of three doubles matches, giving the team a 1-0 lead.

The Gamecocks' team of Olof Akesson and Guillaume Legat defeated Wake Forest's Michael Berger and Justin Kaufmann, 8-6.

The second win in doubles came courtesy of USC's Juan Gamboa-Jerome Jour-

don duo, which defeated Johan Hansen and Andres Guzman, 8-5.

USC also dominated the singles matches, not allowing a win to Wake Forest.

All four players who won in doubles for Carolina also won in singles, as did Tomasz Wawrzyniak and Vladimir Pavicevic.

The first to win his singles match was Gamboa, who defeated Hayes Calvert in two sets, 6-3 and 6-0.

Following his lead was Legat, beating Berger 6-0, 6-2.

Legat is the No. 23-ranked player in the country and boasts a 28-10 record.

Akesson was part of this winning trend. He used a combination of well-placed serves and powerful forehand returns to defeat Brett Mauro.

Akesson is ranked 71st in the nation, with a record of 30-10.

"I played pretty well today because I made good use of my opportunities when I had them," he said.

"Probably the biggest part of my game today were my approaches, and I approached very well."

Another player who had success in doubles and also dominated his singles match was Jourdon, who's ranked 38th in the country and is 27-10.

"The key to winning my matches today was my returning," Jourdon said.

"This was a big part, because my opponents were serve-and-volley players, meaning they weren't very good from the baseline."

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Sean Rayford Photo Editor

Tennis players Jerome Jourdon (left) and Olof Akesson won their doubles match against Wake Forest Tuesday.