

Cloninger offers the best picks for the upcoming NCAA Tournament, equestrian team places one in Western Tournament

# Sports

## SCHEDULE

- Softball vs. Furman (DH), 5 p.m.
- Swimming at NCAA Championships, Indianapolis, Thu. – Sat.
- Women's golf at Lady Gamecock Classic, Fri. – Sun.

# Baseball squad wins 20th straight

BY DAVID CLONINGER  
SPORTS EDITOR

"I'm still not sure exactly what happened," coach Ray Tanner said. "You've got to suck it up, and do the little things that win ballgames," relief pitcher Jamie Poston said.

"It's hard to get through [games like this], but once you get through them, it's good," catcher Brandon Pack remarked.

With statements like these, people would have reason to suppose the worst for the No. 5 Gamecock baseball team, who entered Wednesday's matchup with UNC-Asheville needing a victory to set the SEC's longest consecutive winning streak.

As they have most of the season, the Gamecocks were led by clutch hitting and strong pitching.

Unlike the rest of the season, the game boiled down to one play in the seventh inning.

With the Bulldogs' Stephen Hull on third with one out and UNCA trailing 3-1, USC's Jamie Poston (2-0) threw an 0-1 pitch to Bulldog center-fielder Jason Ronai on his way to his second victory of the season.

Ronai bunted down the first base

line, sending Hull in motion toward the plate and the beginning of a possible rally.

Gamecock first baseman Tripp Kelly scooped up the ball by the pitcher's mound and fired it to Pack, who caught it and slapped the tag on the sliding Hull.

Or so it seemed.

The ball fell out of Pack's glove onto the plate, which was still 18 inches away from Hull's foot. Pack quickly nabbed the ball and tagged Hull out, snuffing the rally and sending UNCA coach Mike Roberts into a frenzy.

However, once the dust settled, Hull was out, the Gamecocks had a 3-1 lead, and the Bulldogs were looking for answers as USC earned its 20th consecutive win.

"I did drop the ball, but I picked it back up, and tagged him out," Pack said. "We have games like this, and it's real nice to get a win."

With the win, the high-flying Gamecocks notched yet another record in the already heralded 2000 season and cruised into their three-game weekend series with SEC East foe Florida.

"This game will humble you like no other sport," Tanner said. "We're

just fortunate to be where we are."

USC got on the board in the first inning, jumping on Bulldog pitcher Matt Corrado (0-3) from the first pitch. Corrado, rated the top Major League Baseball prospect in the Big South Conference, was shelled early with Pack lining an RBI triple to left center field.

Junior third baseman Chris Plummer knocked in Pack with an RBI single four pitches later, making the score 2-0.

The Bulldogs got one run in the third when Corey Mercer scored from a Hull single to left field. But, Roberts, father of former USC base-stealer Brian Roberts, saw his team lose an excellent chance to score in the fifth when Gamecock pitcher Brett Price wiggled out of a bases-loaded, two-out jam.

USC added an insurance run in the same inning when outfielder Brennan Dees plated SEC Player of the Week John McHenry on a dribbler past third base. UNCA never recovered as it dropped to 4-9 for the year.

USC will play the Gators Friday at 7 p.m. at Sarge Frye Field. The Gamecocks will be looking to improve on their 3-0 SEC record and avenge a 1-2 series with Florida last season.



First baseman Tripp Kelly, 43, is congratulated by teammates Chris Spigner, 25, Steve Thomas, 15, and Tim Whittaker, 26, after one of his team-leading nine home runs earlier in the season.

2000 USC Baseball Statistics (through 19 games)										
	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	Avg.
9 Marcos Rios	8	7	2	4	2	0	0	3	0	.571
21 Brandon Pack	19	63	17	24	7	0	6	24	1	.381
41 Bo Mobley	7	16	6	6	0	0	2	6	0	.375
43 Tripp Kelly	19	68	20	25	5	0	9	27	0	.368
2 Nate Janowicz	19	68	18	23	2	2	4	15	10	.338
15 Steve Thomas	7	3	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	.333
12 Brennan Dees	19	79	24	26	3	2	4	14	7	.329
1 Chris Plummer	15	52	13	17	3	0	3	13	2	.327
7 Drew Meyer	19	75	22	24	3	2	4	19	1	.320
27 John McHenry	19	53	13	16	6	1	3	12	1	.302
17 Trey Dyson	9	17	5	5	1	0	1	6	0	.294
10 Clint Collins	4	7	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	.286
3 Matt Riddle	6	7	3	2	0	0	1	3	0	.286
8 Marcus McBeth	19	68	20	19	3	3	3	15	3	.279
29 Shane Nelson	11	45	8	10	2	0	2	6	3	.222
18 Bryon Jeffcoat	19	31	7	5	1	0	1	2	1	.161
26 Tim Whittaker	12	7	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	.143
19 Rico Bravo	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	.000

  

	ERA	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	W	L	Sv
4 Brett Price	0.00	10.2	5	1	0	3	12	2	0	0
34 Steven Whetstone	0.00	3.2	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
13 Steven Boudurant	0.00	1.1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
10 Clint Collins	1.17	7.2	6	1	1	1	10	1	0	0
38 Peter Bauer	1.26	28.2	18	10	4	4	27	3	0	0
36 Scott Harber	1.48	24.1	19	6	4	4	22	3	0	3
14 Kip Booknight	2.01	44.2	29	11	10	5	45	6	0	0
23 Lee Cronkiewicz	2.25	12.0	5	4	3	3	13	1	0	1
25 Chris Spigner	2.84	6.1	6	2	2	5	5	0	0	0
46 Matt Wilson	3.00	6.0	6	2	2	2	4	0	0	0
32 Ernie Bascuas	3.46	13.0	7	6	5	7	15	2	0	2
6 Jamie Poston	3.48	10.1	13	6	4	2	12	1	0	0
22 Jeremy Plexico	9.00	1.0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
20 John Wesley	20.25	1.1	3	3	3	0	2	0	0	0

## McHenry receives SEC award, schedule for 2001 changes

### BASEBALL ROUNDUP GAMECOCK SPORTS

Gamecock second baseman John McHenry was named the SEC Player of the Week for his performance against both Furman and Auburn last week.

The junior from Sparks, Nev., hit .500 last week with five runs scored, five RBIs, a double, a triple and a game-winning three-run blast in the eighth inning of Sunday's game at Auburn.

McHenry has been instrumental in the Gamecocks' success this season, playing in all 20 games and starting in 19. The Gamecocks have received solid defensive play from McHenry and have benefited from his hitting in several games.



MCHEHRY

With McHenry's support, USC has moved up to No. 5 in both the Collegiate Baseball and *Baseball America* polls, up from Nos. 11 and 12 last week. Also, the *USA Today* poll lists USC as No. 4. The squad is one of two undefeated teams in the Top 25.

The USC baseball team will also return to a previous form of scheduling next season when it plays arch-rival Clemson four times a year instead of two.

Head-coach Ray Tanner has cited schedule conflicts as the reason for the Gamecocks and Tigers playing each other only twice in the past three seasons, but the two teams did play each other four times in 1997.

Tanner also said he and Clemson head coach Jack Leggett plan to play each other four times a year as long as the schedule permits.

In 2001, the teams will play at Columbia's Sarge Frye Field on March 4 and April 18, while Clemson's Doug Kingsmore Stadium will play host to the annual grudge match on March 3 and April 25.

"I love the environment, and we want to play each other," Tanner said. "But both teams have a tremendous responsibility to our conferences."

This season, USC goes to Clemson on April 12, but returns to Columbia on April 19. The Tigers, recipients of the nation's best recruiting class, are currently ranked No. 4 in the Collegiate Baseball poll with a 15-2 record.

Tuesday's win over UNC-Asheville not only set a record for most consecutive Southeastern Conference wins, but also a personal mark for Tanner. His previous best winning streak was 19, set in 1990 while at N.C. State. That team finished 48-20 and went to the NCAA Tournament.

Also, UNCA is coached by Mike Roberts, the father of former Gamecock shortstop Brian Roberts. Brian Roberts set a USC single-season stolen base mark last year for USC, and was picked by the Baltimore Orioles in the major-league baseball draft.

The USC baseball team is now hitting an average .314, while holding an average 2.05 earned run average. Opponents hold an average 8.88 ERA.

# Softball captures Speedline crown

### SOFTBALL ROUNDUP GAMECOCK SPORTS

The No. 18 South Carolina softball team reached the finals of the USF/Speedline Classic for the second time in as many years Sunday with wins over No. 24 Mississippi State, 2-1, and Florida, 9-2.

In 1999, Carolina advanced to the finals only to fall to Michigan. The win was Carolina's second straight tournament crown. USC captured the Gladstone's Tournament at the same place in February.

After going 2-2 in the first two days of the tournament, the Lady Gamecocks rebounded to win five straight in the final two days of the tournament. USC moves to 18-9.

In game one, Carolina faced Southeastern Conference foe No. 24 Mississippi State in the semifinals. The Lady Gamecocks stopped the Bulldogs in eight innings. With the win, USC moved on to the finals to face Florida. Carolina faced three consecutive SEC teams to end the tournament.

Despite six hits, the Lady Gamecocks had to go eight innings to score a run. In the top of the eighth, Jodi Fittro was placed at second and Joyce McMillin walked. Senior Sondra Hall came up with a game-winning two-run single to give USC a 2-0 lead going into the bottom of the eighth.

In the bottom of the inning, the Bulldogs cut the lead in half with an RBI single by Karrie Rider, but Megan Matthews made the final out for her 10th win of the season.

Carolina took on the Gators in the final after UF took care of Virginia Tech in the other semifinal, 7-0. The Lady Gamecocks jumped out to an early lead against UF with tournament MVP McMillin taking the mound. McMillin ended the four-day tournament with a 4-0 record.

Carolina scored two runs in the first inning and put the game away with three in the fourth and sixth innings and one in the seventh. In USC's past four games, the Lady Gamecocks have scored 30 runs.

McMillin was the Lady Gamecocks' offensive leader as well as a leader on the mound. McMillin hit her team-leading fifth home run of the season with a two-run shot

to deep left field. Fittro also added two RBIs to advance her nine-game tournament total to seven.

The Lady Gamecock names were prevalent on the All-Tournament team, as McMillin was named Most Valuable Player and Matthews earned Most Valuable Pitcher honors for the second time this season.

Freshman Fittro joined seniors Kim Schultze and Hall on the All-Tournament squad.

Carolina broke through on Saturday, winning three games to advance to the semifinals. With an 8-3 win over Hofstra, USC advanced out of Pool C with a No. 2 seed. Carolina then stopped Georgia and host school South Florida in single-elimination play.

In game one, USC finished pool play with a strong win over Hofstra. Matthews settled down after allowing a three-run homer in the first inning to pitch six scoreless innings for her first win of the weekend.

The USC bats caught fire on Saturday as Carolina scored 19 runs and allowed only four. Against the Flying Dutchwomen, USC scored three in the first, one in the second and two in both the fifth and seventh innings. Fittro led USC with two hits and two RBIs. USC also got single RBIs from Schultze, McMillin and Debralee Troesh.

In game two, McMillin pitched her second shutout of the tournament with a 2-0 complete game



Third baseman Sondra Hall was an important player this weekend as USC won the Speedline Invitational tournament.

shutout win over SEC foe Georgia. McMillin allowed only two hits in seven innings and struck out seven. The junior matched her total wins in 1999 with a 7-1 record. McMillin also lowered her ERA to 0.65, allowing only one run in her three wins of the tournament.

The USC offense came out in the top of the third inning. Schultze led off the inning with a walk and Fit-

# UCF's Lounsberry fills coaching spot

### FOOTBALL ROUNDUP GAMECOCK SPORTS

Entering into what Gamecock fans will hope to be a second-chance season in fall 2000, there will be a new face on the Carolina sideline.

USC hired Central Florida's Paul Lounsberry on Monday to be one of its two offensive line coaches.

He will join Dave DeGuglielmo, who coached the Gamecocks' offensive line last season. This also means tight ends coach Dave Roberts will switch to coaching defense.

Lounsberry, 48, spent the past 13 seasons coaching the offensive line for the Knights and became the offensive coordinator last season.

Lounsberry said the move to USC was a difficult decision, especially because he had been with Central Florida for so long. But discussions with Gamecock head coach Lou Holtz persuaded him to do it.

Holtz was out of town and unavailable for comment on the hiring.

The new addition to the Gamecock staff was described by Central Florida head coach Mike Kruczek as part of the foundation of a program that made the leap from Division I-AA to I-A. He also is credited with the recruitment of former Central Florida All-American quarterback Daunte Culpepper.

Lounsberry will fill a position created by the departure of defensive ends coach and special teams coordinator

Jon Fabris, who took a job with the Cleveland Browns.

**Notes:** The Gamecocks will wear black pants on the road next season ... Spring practice begins Saturday and is open to the public. Practice fields are on Bluff Road, across from Williams-Brice Stadium ... Guard Kevin Rivers, academically ineligible for the 2000 season, will practice with the scout squad next season ... Richland Northeast product Jonathan Martin will get a look at defensive back this spring.

### 2000 USC football schedule (Home games in CAPS)

September	
2	NEW MEXICO STATE
9	GEORGIA*
16	EASTERN MICHIGAN
23	MISSISSIPPI STATE*
30	Alabama*
October	
7	Kentucky*
14	ARKANSAS*
21	Vanderbilt*
28	TENNESSEE*
November	
11	Florida*
18	Clemson

\*denotes Southeastern Conference game