

GAMECOCK SPORTS

Johnston's date with Cinderella



RICK JOHNSTON
The Rick Says

This is a great time to be a sports fan. Not only is collegiate baseball in full swing, but the major leagues are right around the corner. And, of course, it is Christmas all over again for college basketball fans as it is now officially "March Madness."

The tournament time is great for me. I seem to turn into this whole different person. I overdose on games and throw my money into any kind of pool I can find and get fully immersed into the madness. It's kind of like Mr. Hyde meets Dick Vitale.

But, the one thing I love about tournament time more than anything else is hooking up with my old friend Cinderella, or Cindy, as I like to call her.

Cindy is a very strange person, as whatever team she is hanging around come tournament time always seems to do well. Depending on what side of the fence you are on, she is either the love of your life, a gift from heaven above or just a cheap \$2 bar whore with whom you wouldn't associate, even while wearing your favorite pair of beer

goggles.

Now my personal relationship with Cindy has been very love-hate in recent years. As a Gamecock fan, I had some pretty nasty run-ins with her. I remember in 1997 leaving the cozy confines of Wade Hampton High School just dead certain my SEC Champion and No. 2 seeded Gamecocks would just thrash this little team from Maryland, Coppin State.

Well, needless to say, the grief I caught the next day from the Clemson, Georgia and Kentucky fans who were rampant at WHHS made me seriously regret not graduating early.

Well, I think it's pretty obvious that after that debacle and the one that next year against Richmond, Cindy and I were on pretty bad terms. However, I ran into her in Charlotte last year when I was taking in the action in the first and second rounds of the East Regional of the NAAs. After a few drinks and some discussion, she and I made up. She told me to keep an eye on Southwest Missouri State. She had been helping them as only Cindy could.

Well, sure enough, the SMS Bears were the "Cinderella" team of last year.

Thanks to Cindy and the Bears, I was able to realize a lifelong dream when the Tennessee band obliged my request to "quit playing that God-forsaken song" upon their 5,619th play-

ing of "Rocky Top." Of course, the fact the Vols fell by 30 points helped my cause just a bit.

Well, as far as this year goes, I thought Cindy might help out the Gamecocks as they started to pick up steam in the SEC Tournament. As it turns out, she was just still drunk from Spring Break and didn't mean to help us out. I guess you could say she was a 'cock teaser of sorts.

When it was time for the Big Dance, however, Cindy packed up her game and headed out West. And, well, after all that making up we did last year, she has managed to rochambeau me again with my picks for the NCAA tournament.

Let's look at the four teams out of the West who are going to the sweet 16.

First there is Purdue. The Boiler-makers are the only bright point in my West bracket. Then there is LSU, who beat out my pick of Texas. Now, LSU's victory was not any of Cindy's doing. Instead, this is a case of Rick Barnes biting me in the ass once again. I thought that crap would have stopped when he left Clemtech.

Then there is Cindy's main group of boy toys, the Gonzaga Bulldogs. I don't know what Cindy's obsession with John Stockton's alma mater has been in recent years, but after toppling Louisville and St. John's, I know she

is in rare form once again.

And let's not forget Cindy's little affair on the side with the Wisconsin Badgers, who knocked off "Tark the Shark's" Fresno State Bulldogs and No. 1-seeded Arizona. I think it's pretty ironic that she chose to play around with Wisconsin, considering that last year, the Badgers were knocked off in the first round by, you guessed it, Southwest Missouri State. See what I meant by that "it depends on what side of the fence you're on" comment?

Well, as I write this, I'm hoping she didn't leave any loose ends back east as my bracket is on its last legs as it is. I don't need any more of her "help."

Please take this column as a warning. Don't get involved with this vixen. Her black magic works in mysterious ways.

Although last year's "Cinderella" was SMS, I hope all the pundits out there remember how they filled out last year's brackets, you know, giving Duke the title and filling in the other 62 games just because you had to. I'm not trying to take away from Connecticut, but if you know Cindy like I do, you're always left to wonder.

Just be careful and think very hard about your tournament picks in the future, because you never know who "she" is associating with.

SOFTBALL

from page 8

homertn.

Laundry took the loss for Florida.

Friday - Game 2
Florida 7, USC 0

The winds changed for USC's softball team as it faced UF for the second time Friday. Whereas the Lady Gamecocks commanded the Gators in the first game, they suffered a hard 7-0 loss in the late game. McMillin gave up seven runs in six innings to earn the loss, her first since Feb. 12 against No. 3 Fresno State.

Head coach Compton looked past McMillin as the reason behind the defeat.

"[McMillin's] going to be more of the type of pitcher we have to play behind and we didn't do that today," Compton said. "You're going to have some good days and some bad days. She's thrown a lot of good games for us."

Redshirt sophomore and pitcher Heather Culver (1-0) made her second appearance for the Lady Gamecocks, relieving McMillin in the seventh inning.

Florida's play was highlighted by home runs in both the fourth and fifth innings, the former bringing in three and the latter two. Dieter earned the win for UF, throwing a no-hitter and striking out two.

Notes:

The Lady Gamecock softball team faces No. 21 Mississippi State and Ole Miss in dual doubleheaders this weekend.

Men's tennis falls to Gators, Rose wins another

MEN'S TENNIS
ROUNDUP
GAMECOCK SPORTS

The South Carolina men's tennis team traveled to Gainesville, Fla., to meet the No. 4 Florida Gators at the Scott Linder Tennis Stadium Friday, where it lost 5-2.

Once again, freshman Seth Rose had a great performance. He took down Florida's top newcomer Matt Behrmann in straight sets, 6-3, 6-0. Rose has won three in a row for the Gamecocks in three different spots.

Also in the win column for Carolina was senior Olof Akesson. Akesson defeated Troy Hahn, 6-4, 6-3.

The team welcomed back senior Juan Gamboa and freshman Marc Pichler who both were coming off ankle injuries and didn't play in the last match against North Carolina. Both players put in a strong performance in their singles matches.

Gamboa went to a tie-breaker in the first set with the Gators' Nathan Overholser, but eventually lost that set 7-6 (7-4). Pichler won the first set in his match against Florida's Olivier Levant.

Gamecock Sports Roundup

Women's golf

For the third consecutive day, No. 2 Duke had the best team round of the day Sunday and the Blue Devils cruised to their third consecutive Lady Gamecock Classic crown at The University Club. The Blue Devils, who also captured the 1999 NCAA East Regional at The University Club and

have won their last four tournaments here, won the title by 19 strokes on the par 72, 5,996-yard course.

Host and No. 13 South Carolina had its best round of the tournament and the second lowest score of the day (300) as the Lady Gamecocks surged from seventh to third place in their own tournament. No. 11 Louisiana State finished second. This is Duke's fifth Lady Gamecock Classic title and the fourth in the last five years.

The Blue Devils, who had a 299 Sunday, extended their lead from one stroke (Friday) to 14 Saturday and had a final margin of 19 strokes over Louisiana State after 54 holes of play. Scores lowered significantly despite temperatures in the low

50s with seven teams posting scores of 311 or lower compared to just six teams combined in the first two days.

The Lady Gamecocks, after disappointing rounds of 317 and 320 the first two days, had all five of its players score in the 70s and finished with the second-best score of the day at 300. Their three-day 937 total was 37 strokes off the lead and 18 strokes back of LSU. Florida (939) and Tennessee (943) rounded out the top five.

Louisiana State's Lizette Lee played steady golf throughout the entire tournament and captured medalist honors with a four-over 220 score after a three-over 75 Sunday. Lee was followed by Tennessee's

Young-A Yang, who also had a 75 Sunday and finished two strokes back overall at 222. A trio of Duke players rounded out the top five, including Kalen Anderson (223), Beth Bauer (226) and Maria-Garcia Estrada (227).

For the second day in a row, the Lady Gamecocks got a great day from an individual playing for medalist honors only. Freshman Immo native Kacy Thompson had a two-over 74 Sunday and finished tied for sixth place at 12-over 228. Sophomore Dallas Ambrose was USC's top team finisher at 17-over 233 (17th place). Senior Apryl Arrants improved her second round score by eight strokes with a 74 Sunday and finished tied for 23rd place at 236.

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