

Heart drives USC men's soccer to NCAA Tournament berth

By MATTHEW NAGY
THE GAMECOCK

As the USC men's soccer team gathered at Williams-Brice Stadium to watch the NCAA selection show on ESPN News, it was evident that heart is what keeps the players together. Players gathered around two televisions in the Letterman's Lounge to watch the selections live, as a team.

Carolina has battled through adversity and youth this year to get to where it is, and the Gamecocks have played together every step of the way.

"We have more heart, more willingness to win (than past teams)," junior captain Eric Szeszycki said.

Carolina will face the Cougars for the second time this season after dropping the first game Oct. 20 in Mount Pleasant. The loss came at the tail end of a three-game USC losing streak in the middle of the season, and the players are itching for a second chance.

"I'm actually glad that we are playing College of Charleston in the first round," Szeszycki said. "It's a chance for payback time to average that 3-0 loss that we had."

It will be a tough task for the youthful Carolina team to defeat a senior-laden Cougar squad. "Any time you face a senior-oriented team, it's a big difference in experience and in their mentality and their strength," USC head coach Mark Berson said, but the Gamecocks will have the added advantage of playing their first game under the lights at home in Stone Stadium.

"Home-field advantage is enormous. It's going to be a great weekend," Berson said. "I hope we can have a great turnout from our student population and the university community, because that is going to be a big factor in the game."

Carolina is 10-9 all-time in home



KATIE KIRKLAND/THE GAMECOCK

USC goalkeeper Brad Guzan leaps for a save in a recent home game against the Duke Blue Devils.

matches in the NCAA Tournament but has lost its last four contests in tournament play, including three at Stone Stadium. The Gamecocks have compiled an overall .792 winning percentage in home contests and average over three goals a game at home, but this team rises to the occasion and has gotten big wins this season.

The Gamecocks have gone 4-3 against schools in the current tournament field. One of those wins came against the No. 1 overall seed Wake Forest on Sept. 24 in Winston-Salem, N.C.

"When you defeated the number one team in the tournament at their place, and with the other wins we've had this

year, it should give our young team some confidence" Berson said.

USC has relied on plenty of youth this season and only has four players on the roster with NCAA Tournament experience.

"We've had to rely on a lot of sophomores and freshmen coming in and they've done a really good job," junior Ryan Deter said. "The freshmen came in, and some of them come off the bench and they've done a tremendous job for us. I'm really pleased with their performance this year."

USC freshman Sebastian Lindholm leads the team in goals with six and points with 16, with three other newcomers

scoring points for the team during the season. Second-year players Mike Sambursky, who leads the team with six assists, and Ayo Akinsete have anchored the front line for the Gamecocks.

The team will indeed face a tough contest against the Cougars, but Berson is confident in his young squad.

"We won't back down from anybody this year, and College of Charleston will get our best shot Friday night," he said.

Admission is \$5 for students and \$8 for the general public. Kickoff is 7 p.m. on Friday at Stone Stadium.

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecocksports@gwm.sc.edu



SUE OGROCKI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Oklahoma wide receiver Mark Bradley, left, fights off a tackle from Nebraska defender Daniel Bullocks in OU's 30-3 win.

Sooners hold on to BCS standing

By RALPH D. RUSSO
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Oklahoma remained second in the Bowl Championship Series standings Monday, holding off Auburn because of a stronger computer ranking.

Southern California is still No. 1 with a grade of .9808. Oklahoma's grade is .9621, and Auburn's is .9350.

Last week, the Sooners led the Tigers by .0567. Oklahoma's lead is down to .0271.

The Tigers made up lots of ground on the Sooners in the polls Sunday, tying Oklahoma for second in The Associated Press Top 25 and getting within two points of No. 2 in the coaches poll.

The polls each count for a third of a BCS grade. A compilation of six computer rankings make up the other third, and according to the computers Oklahoma is the best team in the country.

USC's is second in the computer rankings, and Auburn is third.

The top two teams in the final BCS standings, which will be released Dec. 5, play for the national title in the Orange Bowl on Jan. 4.

The Trojans, Sooners and Tigers are all 10-0.

Auburn surged on the heels of its 24-6 victory over SEC rival Georgia on Saturday. Oklahoma beat Nebraska 30-3, but appeared to be hurt in the polls by recent close calls against Oklahoma State and Texas A&M. The computers, however, have been partial to the Sooners' quality wins away from home in the Big 12 and strength of schedule.

California (.8522) is fourth, Texas (.8140) is fifth and Utah (.8062) is back in the sixth spot, after slipping to seventh last week.

The unbeaten Utes are trying to become the first team from a mid-major conference to earn a BCS bid. They can lock up a spot by finishing in the top six. Utah is .0568 ahead of seventh-place Michigan with a game to play against Mountain West Conference rival BYU on Saturday.

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If you can beat the editors, you'll win a free Gamecock T-shirt. Send your picks to gamecocksports@gwm.sc.edu by 2 p.m. Thursday. We'll select ONE person's picks, at random, to be our Reader of the Week.

This week's games:

2 Auburn at Alabama
7 Michigan at Ohio State
9 Wisconsin at 17 Iowa
Florida at 10 Florida State
Arkansas at Mississippi State

North Carolina at Duke
18 Virginia at Georgia Tech
Michigan State at Penn State
Oregon at Oregon State
USC at Clemson

◆ FOR TIE-BREAKING PURPOSES, PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR SCORE FOR THE USC-CLEMSON GAME. AND DON'T FORGET YOUR NAME!

Orange makes me lose my lunch

Everything related to Clemson makes me want to throw up

Orange has got to be the ugliest color there is. I cannot think of a single orange object in existence that I don't at least have a mild distaste for. To this day, I will not eat an orange M&M. Those pylons you see around construction work always bother me. And don't even get me started on Cheetos. Sure, they taste good, but when you're finished, their orange taint sticks to your fingers and your teeth — not very attractive.

What about oranges? Sure, they're a great source of vitamin C, which prevents nasty things like scurvy, but other than that, they don't really have any redeeming qualities. I mean, if they're so great, couldn't the guy who named them think of anything better to name them after than their color?

Of course, my hatred for Clemson runs much deeper than that. I grew up in Columbia, a Carolina fan through thick and thin. I hated Clemson before I knew how to tie my shoes.



JOEL WALLACE

FIFTH-YEAR PRINT JOURNALISM STUDENT

I hated Clemson so much, in fact, that I went to school there my freshman year. I don't really know what I was thinking — maybe it was some kind of outreach thing. I thought if I could go there and explain to people the benefits of

to necessitate an entire rack.

Having spent a year there, I now feel more justified in my hatred for Clemson. I don't feel so bad when I see a Clemsux shirt or when I call them hillbillies. I mean, when I was there, if I wanted Taco Bell, I'd have to spend 15 minutes walking to my car and another 20 minutes to drive there.

Think about that. When was the last time you can honestly say you were more than 30 minutes away from a Taco Bell? It would have been easier for me to grab some cheese and soft shells and kill the cow myself. They have plenty of cows up there, so they wouldn't miss just one.

I went to the Carolina game up there my freshman year, and I haven't been back since. I've never seen 80,000 people so proud of the fact that they can spell the word Clemson. I know they're used to expressing themselves monosyllabically, but come on.

I'm going to enjoy the melee from the comfort of my own home. I may not have a gunrack, but I think I'll get by just fine.

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