Georgia Southern Slows USC Playoff Hopes

BY STEVE PARKER  
Sports Editor

Despite string pitching from starters Earl Bass and Greg Ward, USC's baseball team dropped a Saturday doubleheader to Georgia Southern.

While the series was not considered critical to USC's post-season playoff hopes, it was generally accepted that a USC sweep would most certainly land the Gamecocks an NCAA playoff berth in the Southeast.

A victory against Southern would have given the Gamecocks, 25-5, wins against three nationally-ranked schools. Carolina had previously defeated Florida State and South Alabama.

But Southern, 25-1, dominated the twinbill, winning the first 2-0 behind the strong pitching of John Gibson and taking the second, 6-4, behind another complete game performance by Barry Beck.

Gibson's five hit, ten-strikeout shutout overshadowed an impressive performance by USC's Greg Ward, who also worked the complete game. Ward surrendered just five hits in picking up his second loss against six wins.

Earl Bass was the victim of poor USC fielding in the nightcap, as nine Carolina errors led to five unearned runs, four against Bass and one against reliever Allen Johnson.

Outfielder John Gambrell led the Gamecocks, 4-0, in the first inning, they were forced to fight off several USC threats in the error-marred second game.

Bass doubled in Small in the first inning to push Carolina ahead, 1-0, but Bass surrendered his only earned run of the game in the bottom of the inning to deadlock the score. Southern moved ahead in the second frame when Gambrell's error led to the tie-breaker.

Choate homered and later singled in another run to again tie the score, 4-4, but two errors in the bottom of the inning spoiled the USC play.

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Carolinas Gambrell

Looks To Pro Career

BY BILLY BAKER
Sports Writer

Many people believe that Carolina's centerfielder John Gambrell has the potential to become one of the best baseball players the state has ever produced.

That is saying a lot when you consider that Bobby Richardson, his coach, and Don Buddin, a personal friend, both made it big in pro ball as native South Carolinians. Gambrell is from Manning, where he hit over .300 in his four-year high school career and also ran a 9.7 100 in track.

"John has something Don (Buddin) and I didn't have," commented Richardson. "He has speed and four tremendous years of college baseball behind him."

At Carolina Gambrell has hit .301, .321, and .326 the past three seasons. This year he is the team's leading hitter with a .322 average going into last weekend's games.

In 1972 he set a school record with twelve doubles.

"I have wanted to play professional baseball ever since I was six years old," said Gambrell. "God gave me the ability to run and Coach Richardson likes a running team."

Gambrell is a deeply religious person. Last summer he and USC teammate Drew Choute toured Latin America with the Sports Ambassadors team represented by college baseball players around the country. "That was an experience I will never trade for anything," said Gambrell. "It changed my life, especially when I talked to the younger kids about God and Christ."

Gambrell became close to God about two years ago. "I was selfish trying to do what I wanted with baseball," he said. "I guess I am now playing for God, too, and for some reason the hits have been dropping."

Gambrell has earned the reputation of being a singles and doubles hitter, very much like his coach. "Last year I led the team in strike-outs, which is embarrassing for a singles hitter," he said. "This year I stopped swinging for the fence because my main strength is my speed so I just want to get on base and let guys like Choute, Hank Small or Earl Bass bring me in."

"Gambrell has more power than I did," said Richardson. "When the scouts ask me about pitching I tell them about Earl Bass and when they talk about power hitting I tell them about Hank Small. When we talk about Gambrell it is always about his speed and consistency."

Gambrell is having his best year ever. "We have had scouts at every game so this has helped him a lot," said Richardson. "This year I am finally reaching my potential," said Gambrell. "I am learning to concentrate at the plate."

Gambrell enjoyed watching the Yankees-Mets exhibition last Tuesday. "It helped us a lot mentally. They are big time, really, but they are not a great deal