Five Ranked Teams Fight For NCAA Bids

BY BILLY HAKER
Sports Writer

It is possible that Carolina’s baseball team could win every remaining game, which would give them a 45-5 record, and still not receive an NCAA play-off bid. Why?

The Southeast District 3 has five major Independent schools ranked in the top twenty and only three can get bids. Miami of Florida is the nation’s second-ranked team with a 34-1 record through Monday games. Georgia Southern is ranked fourth with a 30-1 record and Carolina is 11th with a 32-5 record. South Alabama is 16th with a 26-6 record and Stetson is 18th with a 22-7 mark.

USC Coach Bobby Richardson said he thinks Miami and Georgia Southern will get bids. The third position seems to belong to Carolina when you follow the national rankings. But the people who rank the teams have no influence on the playoff picks. A special coaches’ committee has this task and sports becomes very political in some cases.

Carolina will meet Georgia Southern in a three game series April 26-27. They will need to win two games to cement their hopes of a bid, which makes one wonder what might happen to Southern if Carolina sweeps the series. Also, Southern visits Stetson, one of their few road trips, for a two-game series later in the season.

“If we beat Southern at least twice, I think the selection committee will over-look our two losses to South Alabama earlier in the season,” said Richardson.

Five coaches comprise the selection committee. Carolina has played and defeated three of the teams whose coaches are members of the committee. They are Dave Fuller of Virginia and Jim Ward or Stetson. Tonight the Citadel’s Chal Font will become the third coach to see the Gamecocks in action. The other two committee members are Joe Shipley of East Tennessee and Dave Fuller of Florida.

“I really do feel that if we win the rest of our games there is no way we can be overlooked,” said Richardson. “I would say of the five teams Miami plays the toughest and our schedule is very similar to Southern, even though I said that theirs was a weak one when we played them earlier.”

District 3 includes the Southern, A.C.C., and Southern Conference teams.

USC Tops Stetson

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Carolina’s chances of receiving an NCAA playoff bid received a shot in the arm with a 7-4 and 2-1, at the Roost. Tonight at 7:30 the Gamecocks entertain the Citadel with Allen Johnson slated to pitch for USC.

Tuesday, Earl Bass and the Hatter’s Bill Rhoden locked themselves in a pitchers duel for most of the game. Bass went to the sidelines when he was hit by a line drive in the seventh inning and Tom Luckstone came on in relief.

The game was tied-1 after nine innings.

Short-stop Eddie Ford laced a double to right center in the bottom of the tenth to score Robbie Rogers for USC.

Coach Bobby Richardson’s strategy worked well in the 11th inning. Pinch hitter John Hinkle was replaced by Robbie Rogers with two strikes against him and Rogers delivered a surprise bunt down the first base line for a single. Don Repsher’s long fly ball to the center field fence advanced Rogers to second base, two out before Ford became the game hero with his hit.

The win boosted the 11th-ranked Gamecocks to a 32-5 record.

Behind $1-0 in the bottom of the third inning on Monday, Carolina used four home runs to push across five runs in the inning. The homer were hit by Jeff Grantz, Eddie Ford, John Gambrell and Drew Chaste.

Full Swing

...Reserve catcher Robbie Parrish follows through on swing in recent game. Photo by Russell Jeffcoat.

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