

Miami shuts out Irish to remain unbeaten

By STEVEN WINE
AP Sports Writer

MIAMI — Eighth-ranked South Carolina is the final hurdle in the University of Miami's bid to play in a national championship bowl game for the second straight year.

The Gamecocks, 8-2, play Saturday night at Miami, which improved its record to 10-0 by shutting out Notre Dame 24-0 last Saturday.

The Hurricanes, who lost the 1986 national title to Penn State in the Fiesta Bowl, need another win to retain their No. 2 ranking for the Jan. 1 Orange Bowl game against top-rated Oklahoma.

Defensive tackle Greg Mark said it will be tough to get ready for another big game so quickly.

"There are only so many games a year you can get up to top peak," Mark said. "But it's just another hurdle we're coming up to that we know we have to get over to get to our goals. That's going to be the determining factor, because we know we want to get to the Orange Bowl 11-0."

Mark and his fellow defensive linemen were instrumental in the Hurricanes' 31st straight regular-season victory Saturday. Miami made nine tackles behind the line of scrimmage and held the 10th-ranked Fighting Irish

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to 82 yards rushing, 187 yards below their average.

Miami safety Bennie Blades wasn't surprised that the Hurricanes shut down Cotton Bowl-bound Notre Dame.

"We said, 'If Greg Cox can kick a field goal, we're going to win the game,'" Blades said. "That's how confident we were."

Miami has won four straight games from the Irish, outscoring them 133-20. Saturday's shutout was Notre Dame's first since a 20-0 loss to the Hurricanes in 1983.

"To do that to Notre Dame, and the powerhouse that they are, is something I'll remember the rest of my life," said linebacker George Mira Jr., who made 17 tackles and broke the school record for career stops.

"I told the defense all week long that for us to win the game, the tackles were going to have to control the line of scrimmage, and they did it."

Miami's run defense had been suspect in unimpressive victories over Virginia Tech and Toledo the previous two weeks.

"There had been a lot of questions about the defensive line and whether we would be able to stop the run," Mark said. "There was a lot of proving going on out there."

"We were 2 yards deep in their backfield, and that destroyed the Irish's rhythm. Their game plan seemed shot after that. I think their game plan was to just take it to us. They tried to smash-ball us in the middle."

Miami's offense rolled up 417 yards; four turnovers kept the Hurricanes from scoring more. Fullback Melvin Bratton had two touchdowns on short runs, halfback Leonard Conley scored one and Cox kicked a 30-yard field goal set up by a fake punt.

The deepest penetration by the Irish, 8-3, was Miami's 26-yard line. While Notre Dame's running attack struggled, Heisman Tro-

phy finalist Tim Brown dropped three passes and was held to 95 all-purpose yards, 80 under his average.

"When I look at the game, I see three phases: offense, defense and kicking," Miami Coach Jimmy Johnson said. "And we won all three phases."

Brown said Miami benefited from a weak schedule leading up to the Notre Dame game.

"They had five or six weeks to prepare for us," he said. "When you have that long, you're going to come out and play great."

Notre Dame Coach Lou Holtz said the Hurricanes may find it difficult to play two good teams back to back.

"They are an outstanding team," Holtz said. "They're the quickest team, maybe, I've ever seen. But I want to see them do it two weeks in a row."

Miami wide receiver Michael Irvin said his team will have no trouble getting ready for the Gamecocks.

"I think South Carolina will be better than Notre Dame," Irvin said. "And since they're not national champions, they want to stop somebody else from being. It's just the American way. I guess. So we know we've got to come in here and we've got to play football."

"With 80,000 people in the stands, we'll fly up there again next week. Believe that."

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