



COLLEGE HOCKEY SOUTH

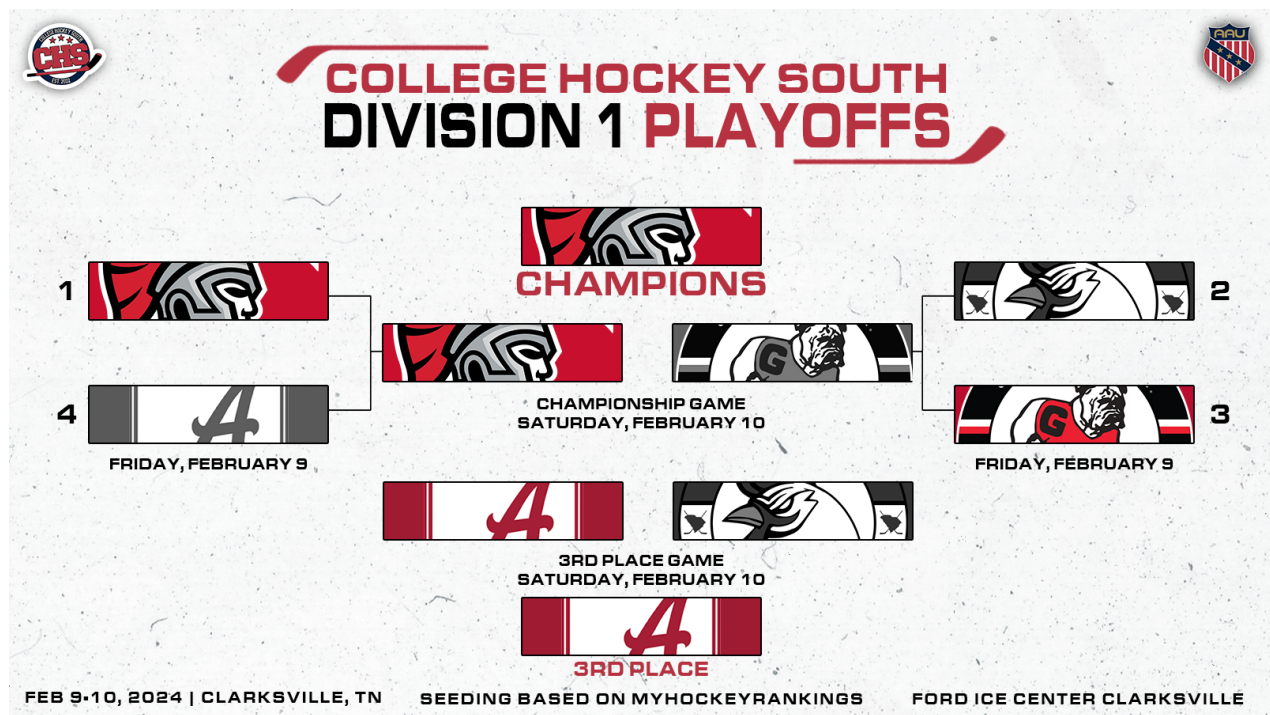
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D1 Playoffs Recap



By: **Audrey Pfitzner**

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The top four teams traveled to Clarksville, Tennessee, to take part in the first-ever College Hockey South (CHS) Division 1 playoffs hosted at Ford Ice Center Feb. 9-10.

While each team arrived at the tournament craving victory, it was the University of Tampa Spartans who reigned supreme.

The Spartans went into the tournament as the top seed in the division, but also the No.1 ranked team in the country. Tampa now has won back-to-back conference titles, after winning the CHS Division 2 championship last season.

"We have success because we do not rely upon three or four guys," Spartan senior Jack Manware said. "I think every single person that dresses for the game impacts it in their own way and that makes our team unique."

Semifinal One: University of Tampa vs. University of Alabama

The top-seeded Spartans showed their offensive firepower depth in their semifinal matchup against the Frozen Tide as they dominated the scoreboard to win 8-2.

Tampa quickly took control of the game with two goals in the first period.

They scored twice more in the second, but sandwiched between the two was an Alabama goal. Right wing Max Savaloja (10) got the Frozen Tide on the board. Savaloja was recently named College Hockey South Division 1 Most Valuable Player.

The second period ended 4-1 Spartans.

The offensive floodgates opened in the third for Tampa as they scored four consecutive goals in less than 10 minutes. The Frozen Tide did manage to score again before the final buzzer sounded.

Tampa showcased their depth in the matchup with 14 different players recording a point. Daniel Griffin (44), William Fortescue (33), Jack Manware (22) and Justin Evans (7) each had a multi-point game. Goalie William Decaro (38) saved 23 of the 25 shots faced in net.

Winning the semifinal gave Tampa the opportunity to defend their title in the championship game.

Semifinal Two: University of South Carolina vs. University of Georgia

These two bitter rivals have met twice already this season. The result? Two one-goal games.

This semifinal matchup followed the same storyline, with both teams hungry for the chance to be in the championship.

The Ice Dawgs opened the scoring with a goal from Josh Mesaros (26), but 12 seconds later the Gamecocks were able to even the score. The teams headed to the locker rooms deadlocked at one.

Georgia may have started the second period on the penalty kill, but the man disadvantage did not stop Mesaros from scoring his second of the game. The Gamecocks responded just minutes later with a goal from John Riggins (25). Both teams scored again during the middle frame.

With the game tied 3-3 going into the third, both teams hit the ice energized and full of hope. Georgia sophomore defenseman Truman Haugen (27) ultimately scored the deciding goal halfway through the final period.

Despite outshooting the Ice Dawgs 18-8 in the third, the Gamecocks were not able to get the puck past Georgia goalie Ryan Testino (31). Testino stopped 34 of the 37 shots he faced.

The Ice Dawgs held on to win 4-3 and advance to the championship game against Tampa.

Third Place Game: University of South Carolina vs. University of Alabama

No team wants to leave the playoffs without a win, and the matchup between the Gamecocks and Frozen Tide proved just that. These two teams engaged in a high-spirited back-and-forth battle.

After Alabama opened the scoring early in the first, South Carolina responded with two straight power-play goals to take the lead.

Both teams prioritized defense in the second and were held off the scoreboard.

Despite trailing 2-1 heading into the third period, the Frozen Tide were able to battle from behind. Alabama notched three unanswered goals within 10 minutes. Jacob Best (81) scored twice during this stretch, with the other goal coming from Matthew Dumond (23).

As the Gamecocks were in scramble mode, tensions rose as the game came to a close. The Gamecocks combined for a total of 60 penalty minutes.

The Frozen Tide were able to hold onto the lead and win the third-place game 4-2.

Championship Game: University of Tampa vs. University of Georgia

The University of Tampa Spartans dominated the championship game with a 7-1 victory over the University of Georgia Ice Dawgs.

The Spartan offense continued to light up the division as 11 different players registered a point in the affair.

Georgia opened the scoring six minutes into the game on the power play with a goal scored by Sam Adler (21). However, Tampa quickly responded 34 seconds later with a short-handed goal from Nicholas Fontaine (89). This marks Fontaine's first goal as a Spartan.

After an evenly matched first period, Tampa came into the second period blazing, scoring five unanswered goals. Forward Jack Manware (22) led the way with two goals.

Frustrations were high for the Ice Dawgs as they had no offensive momentum and consistently found themselves in the box. Throughout the game, the Ice Dawgs racked up 37 penalty minutes.

The Spartan lead continued to grow in the final period. Jack Karant (11) scored the lone goal of the frame on a breakaway. The game concluded with a 7-1 final score.

Manware was awarded the Verbero Most Valuable Player of the Championship Game.



ABOUT College Hockey South: Founded in 2008, College Hockey South is a 29-school, 46 team intercollegiate hockey conference spanning seven southeastern U.S. states that competes in AAU College Hockey. College Hockey South is a 501(c)3 not for profit organization.



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