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Two Blue Raider linksters set for action at U.S. Amateur

Bulle, Smith begin stroke play Monday

MT Media Relations

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. - Middle Tennessee golfers Kent Bulle and [Craig Smith](#) will be among the field of 312 competitors when the 2007 U.S. Amateur begins at The Olympic Club in San Francisco, Monday.

Bulle and Smith earned the right to play in the event regarded as the pinnacle of amateur golf during sectional qualifying, which was conducted over 36 holes at 96 sites throughout the summer.

Bulle claimed the third and final spot with a 136 during qualifying at Indian Hills Country Club in Bowling Green, Ky., July 23, and sophomore teammate [Craig Smith](#) won a playoff to qualify at Marcus Pointe Golf Course in Pensacola, Fla., in early August. Blue Raider junior [Chas Narramore](#) just missed qualifying for the U.S. Amateur. He shot a 137 at Willow Creek Golf Course in Knoxville, July 31, and was one stroke shy of qualifying. He was first alternate.

"This is an honor for both of these guys and for our program," said Middle Tennessee coach Whit Turnbow. "They are standing there with some of the best amateurs in the country, and I know they expect to compete with them. Both of these guys have played in USGA events before and they know what to expect. They have been to match play in USGA events. They know what it is like to be on that first tee."

Smith, the 2007 Sun Belt Conference low medalist, is playing in the U.S. Amateur for the second straight year and he becomes the only Blue Raider ever to play in more than one.

"I believe it helps this year having already played in one," said Smith, who finished fourth at the Tennessee State Amateur Friday. "Last year I got caught up in the whirlwind of everything. This year I am just going to go out and play my game. I've learned that you can't get caught up in everything."

Former Blue Raider teammate Spencer Provow, who played in the U.S. Am in 2004, will caddie for Smith.

"He's a PGA Tour quality caddie," Smith joked. "It will be good having Spencer there with me as well as Kent. It's great for us but it is also great for Middle Tennessee and our golf program."

Bulle reached the U.S. Amateur in his first attempt qualifying but it wasn't as easy as one would think. Bulle shot a 68 in the first round of sectional qualifying and figured he was in pretty good standing only to find out he was seventh after 18 holes. He came back with another 68 in the second round to take the third and final spot.

"It's exciting to know you are going to play with the top amateur golfers out there," Bulle said. "I am going out there with no expectations, just play and have a good time. It's still 36 holes of golf."

The golfers will play two rounds of stroke play Monday and Tuesday. Following two days of stroke play the field of 312 golfers will be reduced to the lowest 64 scorers. The remainder of the tournament is match play with one round scheduled for Wednesday, followed by second and third rounds on Thursday, and single rounds again from Friday-Sunday (Aug. 24-26).

The champion receives an exemption into the 2008 U.S. Open and British Open, and a probable invitation to play in the 2008 Masters Tournament, if he remains an amateur.

Bulle will tee off Monday at 2:35 p.m., (CT) from the Ocean Course at The Olympic Club, and he will begin Tuesday's round at 9:20 a.m. (CT) on the Lake Course. He will play with George Zahringer III (New York, NY), and Rickie Fowler (Murrieta, Calif.)

Smith begins his second U.S. Amateur Monday at 10:30 a.m. from the Lake Course and he will start at 3:45 p.m. Tuesday at the Ocean Course. He will play along with Richard Berkmeier (St. Louis, Mo.), and Chappell Brown (West Palm Beach, Fla.).



Kent Bulle, left, and Craig Smith will begin play in the U.S. Amateur Monday. (Bradley Lambert)

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