

April 21, 2008

Blue Raiders tied for second after opening round

Hale tied for eighth overall

MT Media Relations

MUSCLE SHOALS, Ala. - Freshman [Morgan Hale](#) fired a 3-over 75 and is tied for eighth after the first round of the Sun Belt Conference Championships at the Robert Trent Jones at the Shoals Schoolmaster Course here Monday.

Not only was Hale's performance one she will remember but it helped keep Middle Tennessee in contention for its first Sun Belt women's golf championship. The Blue Raiders are tied for second at 17-over 305 and 17 shots off the pace established by No. 11-ranked Denver.

"I feel good about today's round and we can make a move," said Middle Tennessee first-year coach Chris Adams. "Overall I am pleased with the ways things are going. We are right there and we are within striking distance. I think we are on the verge of breaking through."

Granted, Middle Tennessee and the rest of the Sun Belt field needs Denver to come back to the pack a bit; however, the Blue Raiders are in good position and two of their top players were not at their best in the first round.

The Blue Raiders did not count [Jamey Dillard](#)'s score (8-over 80) and she has been one of the team's top players all spring and senior standout [Taryn Durham](#) finished at 5-over 77 and is tied for 16th overall.

The big story, though, was Hale, who three-putted and settled for a bogey on the first hole but followed with three birdies and no bogeys the remainder of the way on the front. She has an exceptional round going before a bogey on 17 and a double on 18.

"I played well until the last couple of holes," Hale said. "I was really hitting the ball well starting off but I did struggle on those last two holes. Today's round is very encouraging but I know it could have been even better. It was a good score, though."

Sophomore [Clara Leathers](#) is tied for 12th with a 4-over 76 and [Leigh Wilkins](#) came on with a 5-over 77 and is tied for 16th.

"We had some good moments," Adams said. "For Morgan to come in to her first conference tournament and play like she did was super. We could be pleased with where we are but I don't think the girls are because they know we could have played a little better. I am pleased overall, though, because I know we can come back and take another step forward tomorrow." Middle Tennessee posted its second best round of the spring in the opening round of the SBC Championships and will tee off with the final group Tuesday.

Sun Belt Conference Championships

Robert Trent Jones at the Shoals

Schoolmaster Course, Par 72

First Round Team Scores

1 Denver 288 E

T2 Middle Tennessee 305 +17

T2 South Alabama 305 +17

T2 Florida International 305 +17

5 UALR 309 +21

6 Florida Atlantic 314 +26

7 Louisiana-Monroe 316 +28

8 Arkansas State 317 +29

9 North Texas 322 +34

10 Troy 327 +39

11 Western Kentucky 328 +40

T2 MT Scores (305)

T8 [Morgan Hale](#) 36-39 75 +3

T12 [Clara Leathers](#) 38-38 76 +4

T16 [Leigh Wilkins](#) 38-39 77 +5

T16 [Taryn Durham](#) 40-37 77 +5



Morgan Hale is tied for eighth after the first round of the Sun Belt Conference Golf Championships. (B. Lambert)

T31 [Jamey Dillard](#) 41-39 80 +8

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