

May 30, 2008

Blue Raiders on an emotional roller coaster ride

Bailes details wild day of golf, scary weather in postcard

By Nick Bailes

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. - Senior Nick Bailes is writing a daily postcard from the NCAA National Golf Championships. Following is his fifth installment.

It's hard to explain all the feelings this team has experienced in the last 24 hours. We felt great after a solid round (Thursday) and we were in the driver's seat in control of our own fate. What a difference a day makes.

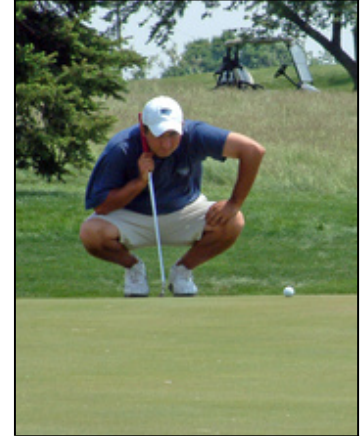
(Friday) was probably the windiest and hardest day we have experienced so far. The wind blew anywhere from 20-to-30 miles per hour this morning and that was the best weather of the day. Four of us played what we would all consider sloppy rounds, except for [Jason Millard](#). He played one heck of a round this morning and has played very solidly this entire tournament. I can't express how great and how maturely he has played these last 54 holes. The interesting thing is I don't think he's played up to his potential yet. Watch out for him, he's only going to get better the next three years.

This afternoon was an emotional rollercoaster ride. Most of us relaxed at the hotel room and watched the other teams move slowly backwards. It was getting really close to the finish and we were extremely close to the cut line before Mother Nature stepped in. Play was suspended around 6 p.m. for the day as some extremely dangerous weather moved into the area. At around 6:45 the tornado sirens were going off in the city of West Lafayette and we found ourselves staring up at funnel clouds just outside our hotel's lobby. We went from nervous about making the cut to being nervous about our own safety. Luckily the tornado touched down elsewhere or just passed over without ever hitting the ground. We are not out of the woods yet as there is still a tornado watch until 11 p.m. (Friday night).

If you are reading this then you already know that Auburn, Texas, UC Irvine, and San Diego State stand in our way of making the cut. We have to have them make several bogeys (Saturday) morning in what is sure to be tough conditions. Wake Forest and UAB are also looming a couple shots behind us - well within striking distance.

It has rained very hard tonight and is supposed to continue raining until just before sunrise. The golf course will play even longer, extremely wet, and the rough will be almost a full shot penalty. Long, thick rough is hard enough to play out of when it's dry. If it's wet it gets even thicker and stickier. The teams won't be able to play lift, clean, and place since the rest of the field finished playing the ball down so there is the chance of mud balls in the fairway. A mud ball makes the golf ball knuckle and fly sideways and there's nothing the players can do about it.

So now we play the waiting game until the teams resume at 7 a.m. Saturday morning. If things don't work out for us in the morning this has still been one heck of an experience. This is definitely something I will remember for the rest of my life. As for the rest of the guys, I have a feeling they will be even better next year and will have a great opportunity to get back to the National Championship and make history once again.



Senior Nick Bailes lines up a putt during the third round of the NCAA National Golf Championships. (Tony Stinnett)

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