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Millard qualifies for U.S. Amateur

Sixth Blue Raider ever to do so

MT Media Relations

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Hurting has never felt so good for Middle Tennessee rising sophomore [Jason Millard](#).

The Murfreesboro native, who earned honorable mention All-American honors as a freshman for the Blue Raiders, was low medalist during qualifying for the 2008 U.S. Amateur at Willow Creek Golf Course in Knoxville Tuesday.

Millard shot a 9-under 131 during the 36-hole stroke play tournament on the par-70 course to secure one of three qualifying spots for what is regarded as the pinnacle of amateur golf. The U.S. Amateur will take place at Pinehurst Resort & Country Club in Pinehurst, N.C., Aug. 18-24.

"It was a one-day tournament, 36 holes, in 95-degree weather," Millard said the morning after he became the sixth Middle Tennessee golfer to qualify for the U.S. Amateur and the third in three years ([Craig Smith](#), [Kent Bulle](#)). "I have never hurt this bad afterwards but I'm pretty sore."

The pain Millard's body absorbed was not nearly as bad as the beating he put on the field of more than 70 hopefuls playing for three spots and an opportunity to compete for the U.S. Amateur Championship. He was 4-under through five holes after chipping in twice to assume the top spot on the leader board.

Although the scores were close, Millard remained under par the entire 36 holes and never relinquished the lead he gained early in the event. He finished the first 18 at 6-under 64 and came back just as strong in the second 18 when he shot 3-under 67. He shot 36 on the front and sizzled on the back with a 31. His 131 was one shot better than second and the third qualifier shot a 133.

Rising Blue Raider senior [Chas Narramore](#) was just two shots out of qualifying, finishing 5-under 135.

"It was probably the best I have ever played in one day for 36 holes," Millard said. "During the first round I hit the ball really well but I didn't putt well. In the second round I started putting better but I didn't hit as well. I guess that's golf; I guess I got tired."

But a tired Millard was still stronger than anyone in the field. The driven competitor's got game and he's got tremendous upside. Middle Tennessee head coach Whit Turnbow said Millard is starting to realize just how good he can be on the links.

"He has been on quite a roll the last three or four months," Turnbow said. "It really is due to him coming into his own, maturing, and starting to figure out how good he is. He experienced some things in the last few months that will aid in his development.

"Jason's strength is that he has no real weaknesses. He is a very well-rounded player. He is a tremendous ball striker, is good around the greens and he makes putts. He just has to stay humble and if he does then he is just starting to scratch the surface."

Golfers at the U.S. Amateur will play two rounds of stroke play - one round of 18 on two different days. 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.

The champion receives an exemption into the 2009 U.S. Open and British Open, and a probable invite to play in the 2009 Masters Tournament, if he remains an amateur.

"Going into the qualifier I didn't really have expectations," Millard said. "I wanted to qualify but I knew the scores would be low and I had to play well. As far as the (U.S. Amateur) my one goal is to make it to match play and anything can happen from there."

And Turnbow said he wouldn't count Millard out based on his tremendous growth as a collegian.

"I would not be surprised to see Jason make the cut and get into match play and go deep," Turnbow said. "This course will not be set up any more difficult than what he saw at Purdue (for the NCAA National Championship) and he was a Top 20 performer there. He's that good but sometimes it boils down to whether Jason believes that."

Millard's play on the course should serve as a constant reminder.

Best of the best

Following is the list of Blue Raider golfers who have qualified for the U.S. Amateur:



Rising sophomore Jason Millard will play in the U.S. Amateur after winning a qualifier Tuesday. (Tom Campbell)

Brett Alexander (2000)
Charlie Gibson (2000)
Spencer Provow (2004)
[Craig Smith](#) (2006, 2007)
[Kent Bulle](#) (2007)
[Jason Millard](#) (2008)

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