

September 6, 2008

Blue Raider golfers have confident approach

Experienced squad has even greater goals for 2008-09

MT Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Golfers at Middle Tennessee have a confident approach to the 2008-09 season and that's a good quality because they are now the hunted, now the hunters, after bursting onto the national scene during last year's splendid campaign.

The Blue Raiders open the fall season at the Aldila Intercollegiate at Council Fire in Chattanooga Monday and they do so with a No. 29 preseason ranking on the heels of a 15th-place finish at the 2008 NCAA Division I Men's National Championships. Council Fire also is the scene of the Blue Raiders' 10th-place finish in the East Regional that qualified them for the National Championships. The Aldila Intercollegiate is being co-hosted by Chattanooga and Middle Tennessee.

"Our guys are a confident bunch as well they should be, but it's also important that they understand no one is going to lay down for them," second-year head coach Whit Turnbow said. "Now we are the team everybody wants a shot at so we can't afford to take a week off or take a practice off. If we do then we are going to get beat. Confidence is a great thing to have in our game but humility has to go hand-in-hand. This bunch has a grasp on that."

This group boasts a roster deep with experience, tournament wins, numerous Top 10 finishes, a Sun Belt Conference Player of the Year, four All-Sun Belt Conference honors, a Sun Belt Freshman of the Year, three U.S. Amateur qualifiers, and an honorable mention all-American.

The core of the roster includes seniors [Rick Cochran](#) and [Chas Narramore](#), juniors [Kent Bulle](#) and [Craig Smith](#), and sophomores [Jason Millard](#) and [Andrew Green](#).

"There are four guys in the lineup who have experienced everything you can in collegiate golf," Turnbow said. "They have won, they have played well down the stretch, they have played well in the postseason, and they have shined on a national stage. They have done all of this but they want to take it to another level and that is to consistently be at the top, not near the top."

Oh yeah, in addition to experience throughout the lineup the Blue Raiders also welcome three heralded freshmen with impeccable credentials in [Hunter Green](#), [Brad Simons](#) and [Dane Voss](#). Each of these players is capable of pushing the returnees and denting the lineup in their first season (i.e. Millard in 2007-08).

"We are definitely deeper this year than we were last year so there is going to be a little more competition as far as qualifying week to week," Turnbow said. "Friendly competition never hurt anyone and it will make them all better because you have to earn your spot week-in, week-out. There is no time to coast and not do the little things it takes to be successful because you have to be strong each week."

Cochran and Narramore have provided consistent contributions throughout their Blue Raider career and they have been the program's backbone during the rise to national respectability.

Both players earned All-Sun Belt Conference honors last season, marking the second straight year Narramore was so honored, and they combined for three Sun Belt Players of the Week in addition to teaming for nine Top 10 and 16 Top 20 finishes. And that was just last year.

"Chas and Rick are two great seniors," Turnbow said. "They are both all-conference and they really have been the foundation of our improvement over the last four years. I know they want to go out on top and they are determined to set an example for the young guys coming into the program. Not only will they play well and have an outstanding year, but they also will leave a legacy of how to do things the right way for years to come."

Bulle and Smith also have a wealth of tournament experience to their credit. The junior duo has qualified for the U.S. Amateur and Smith became the first Blue Raider to make the cut at the event when he accomplished it in 2007. They have combined for 44 tournaments and each has a tournament win.

"Kent and Craig may as well be seniors. They have played in just about every event since they stepped on campus," Turnbow said. "They already play a role in the leadership of this team and they have enjoyed a high level of success. I know that will continue this season."

Millard burst onto the scene during a striking freshman season. He earned honorable mention All-American honors from the Golf



Seniors Chas Narramore, left, and Rick Cochran earned first-team All-Sun Belt honors in 2008. (MT)

Coaches Association of America after turning in six Top 20 finishes, including leading the Blue Raiders with an 18th-place finish at the National Championships. He also had a seventh-place finish at The All-American. Millard qualified for the U.S. Amateur during the summer and joined Smith as the only other Middle Tennessee player to make the cut.

"Jason certainly is ahead of the curve as far as young players but he has to continue with the mindset that he's not there yet," Turnbow said. "He can't ever reach a point where he feels he has arrived and doesn't have to put in the time it takes to be successful. Jason has enjoyed some early success but there is so much he can do. He understands this is just the beginning."

Middle Tennessee will open the 2008-09 campaign at the Aldila Intercollegiate. The event is a two-day, 54-hole event with two rounds Monday and the final round Tuesday.

Printed on February 10, 2012

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/33872>