

Blue Raider golfers turn in second straight Top 5 finish

Wilkins continues strong start with career-best three-round total

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BASTAVIA, Ohio - The Middle Tennessee women's golf team turned in its second straight Top 5 finish to start the 2008-09 season with a fourth-place showing in the Cincinnati Fall Classic at Elks Run Golf Course. Freshman Steph Gough and Murfreesboro native Leigh Wilkins turned in Top 10 finishes leading the Blue Raiders to a three-round total



908. Georgia State won the event with a 16-over 880, followed by Augusta State (896), Cincinnati (907) and Middle Tennessee (908). "Overall we were pretty consistent," second-year coach Chris Adams said. "We are eliminating the big numbers and they are all starting to come around. We should have played a little better but overall I'm pleased with their play. We are getting more consistent and we are getting close but we have to get in the 290 range each round to have a chance to compete and win these tournaments." One reason for Middle Tennessee's strong start is Wilkins who is off to a strong start to her final season. The former Oakland High School standout was eighth overall and the 224 was the best three-round total of her college career. It was her 10th career Top 10 finish and continues a recent upward trend. Wilkins has finished eighth twice and 11th once in her last three tournaments, dating to the 2008 Sun Belt Championships. "Leigh is playing with more confidence and she doesn't make a lot of mistakes," Adams said. "She is putting good rounds together and overall she is probably showing some true signs of improvement and leadership. I look for good things from Leigh this year." Gough turned in the second straight Top 10 finish to start her college career. She tied for sixth at the Cincinnati Fall Classic after turning in a seventh-place finish at the Chris Banister Classic in her college debut last week. Fellow freshman Karisa Akin was 14th with a 13-over 229 and has started her Blue Raider career with a pair of Top 15 finishes. "(Gough and Akin) are years ahead in regard to their maturity as freshmen," Adams said. "They are playing with loads of confidence and they don't look back or think twice about anything. There is showing no signs of lack of maturity and the way they are playing makes our team better as a whole." Mallory Bishop tied for 26th with a 235, Morgan Hale was 30th with a 236 and Clara Leathers tied for 49th with a 249. The Blue Raiders will have two weeks to prepare for the Johnie Imes Invitational in Columbia, Mo., and Adams believes the timing is perfect. "The first two tournaments were back-to-back and now we have a couple of weeks to practice and work on

improving some areas that will help us," Adams said. "Hopefully we will be able to correct some of our mistakes and it will show at our next tournament in Missouri but we are headed in the right direction." The weekend, particularly Sunday's practice round, was adventurous for the 11-team field. Teams practiced in what meteorologists described as Category 1 hurricane winds as the remnants of Hurricane Ivan created wind gusts of up to 85 miles per hour in the Queens City. By Monday the weather was perfect with temperatures in the mid-to-upper 60s but there was a power outage in most the area, including the golf course, and gas was at a premium at stations in and around Cincinnati. **Cincinnati Fall Classic**

Elks Run Golf Course, Par-72

Final Team Results

1 Georgia State 291-298-291 880 +16

2 Augusta State 305-296-295 896 +32

3 Cincinnati 306-298-303 907 +43

4 Middle Tennessee 304-298-306 908 +44

5 Texas-Pan American 309-310-307 926 +62

6 Southern Mississippi 322-309-301 932 +68

7 Xavier 317-315-316 948 +84

8 Bethel College (Ind.) 321-315-313 949 +85

9 Cincinnati-Black 318-336-317 971 +107

10 IPFW 323-332-321 976 +112

11 Memphis 358-349-316 1023 +139

4 MT Scores (908)

T6 Steph Gough 79-71-72 222 +6

T8 Leigh Wilkins 73-72-79 224 +8

14 Karisa Akin 75-77-77 229 +13

T26 Mallory Bishop 79-78-78 235 +19

30 Morgan Hale 77-79-80 236 +20

T49 Clara Leathers 75-87-87 249 +33 *

* - played as individual

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