

April 20, 2009

Women's golf opens strong at SBC Championships

Bishop tied for second, three Blue Raiders among the Top 15 entering second round

Athletic Communications

HOUSTON - [Mallory Bishop](#) led three Blue Raiders in the Top 15 as Middle Tennessee's women's golf team started strong in the first round of the SBC Women's Championships at Cypresswood Golf Course in Houston Monday.

- Photos: [First Round Gallery](#)

Bishop shot even par 72 and is tied for second following the first round of the three-day, 54-hole event on the Cypress Course. Her stellar play, coupled with that of [Leigh Wilkins](#) and [Morgan Hale](#), led Middle Tennessee's strong opening day. The Blue Raiders are in second after shooting 304 on the challenging course and are 11 shots behind defending champion Denver, which opened with a 5-over 293.

"I'm very proud of the team and they manner in which the players battled today," Middle Tennessee second-year coach Chris Adams said. "It's a tough course and you have to avoid a lot of trees for sure but we hung in there and gave ourselves a good chance after the first round."

Bishop enjoyed one of her best rounds of the season at the most important time Monday. The Knoxville, Tenn., native knocked in six birdies and demonstrated outstanding course management to put herself among the top competitors in the field.

"We feel good about our chances and we're really close but we have to stay calm and patient and keep playing it one shot at a time," Bishop said. "I wasn't really hitting the driver well today but when I missed the fairway I tried to play smart and salvage something, but when I did hit the fairway the irons were really good and I gave myself chances for birdies and pars. It was a good day all-around and we need to come back and do that again (Tuesday)."

Wilkins also remained solid and is among the Top 10 performers after the first round. Wilkins shot a 3-over 75 and is tied for eighth after playing the final seven holes at 1-under. Hale also stepped up with a 5-over 77 and is tied for 15th overall. [Clara Leathers](#) and [Karis Akin](#) each shot 8-over and are tied for 31st.

One big key for Middle Tennessee in the opening round was its course management as the Blue Raiders avoided big numbers. In fact, Leathers' double on the par-4 No. 12 was the only double of the day. Otherwise, the Blue Raiders salvaged bogeys when they missed the fairways or took advantage of good first shots with pars and birdies.

"As a team we were very steady," Adams said. "We took advantage of the good shots and the opportunities they presented and when we didn't hit the fairways the girls did a good job of keeping their composure and getting what they could out of it. We have to maintain that mentality going into (Tuesday) and keep ourselves in position. We have a long way to go but it was a good start."

The Blue Raiders will tee off in the final group beginning at 10:40 Tuesday morning.

SBC Women's Championship

Houston, Texas

Cypresswood GC - Cypress Course, Par-72

First Round Team Scores

1 Denver 293 +5

2 Middle Tennessee 304 +16

3 UALR 305 +17

4 Florida Atlantic 309 +21

5 Troy 312 +24

6 ArkansasState 313 +25

7 FIU 314 +26

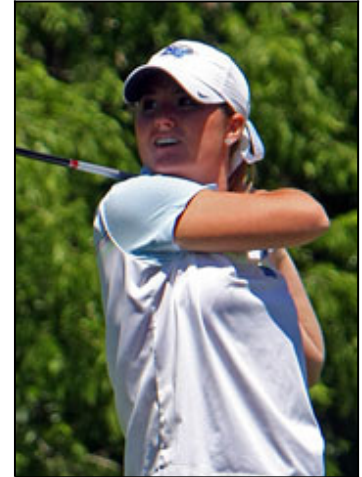
8 South Alabama 317 +29

9 North Texas 318 +30

10 WKU 319 +31

10 ULM 319 +31

2 MT Scores (304)



Mallory Bishop shot even par 72 and is tied for second after the first round of the SBC Women's Golf Championships. (B.

Lambert)

T2 [Mallory Bishop](#) 37-35 72 E
T8 [Leigh Wilkins](#) 38-37 75 +3
T15 [Morgan Hale](#) 41-36 77 +5
T31 [Karisa Akin](#) 40-40 80 +8
T31 [Clara Leathers](#) 42-38 80 +8

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