

April 22, 2009

Seniors lead way as Blue Raiders capture elusive SBC Men's Golf Championship

Cochran, Narramore combine to shoot 7-under in final round

Athletic Communications



Seniors Chas Narramore, left, Rick Cochran combined to shoot 7-under in the final round and helped lead Middle Tennessee to the SBC Men's Golf Championship Wednesday. (B. Lambert)

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HOUSTON - Middle Tennessee seniors **Rick Cochran** and **Chas Narramore** awoke to the realization that the final round of the SBC Men's Golf Championships could be their last at the collegiate level Wednesday.

Then they went out and made sure it wasn't.

Cochran and Narramore combined to shoot 7-under and Middle Tennessee pulled away from defending champion Denver down the stretch to capture its first SBC Men's Golf Championship and the league's automatic berth into the NCAA Regionals.

Middle Tennessee and Denver entered the final day tied for the lead but the Blue Raiders held off the Pioneers with their best round of the tournament when it mattered most, firing a 4-under 284. The Blue Raiders finished the tournament at 2-over 866, six shots better than second-place Denver (872). North Texas (873) finished third.

The Blue Raiders had four players finish among the top 12. Narramore finished fifth at even-par 216 for his three-day total and sophomore **Jason Millard** tied for sixth at 2-over 218. Cochran and **Kent Bulle** tied for 12th at 3-over 219 and **Craig Smith** (229) tied for 44th.

Narramore and Millard were named All-Sun Belt Conference, marking the third consecutive year for Narramore and first for Millard. Narramore joins Brett Alexander and J.R. Wade as the only three-time all-conference selections in program history. Narramore is the only Blue Raider to be named All-SBC three times. Head Coach Whit Turnbow was named SBC co-Coach of the Year for the second time in as many years.

Key in Wednesday's run to the title was the persistence of two seniors whose play Wednesday defines their career and the team, in particular.

They wouldn't quit.

Not when Denver was rolling along at 9-under and had built a five-shot lead coming down the stretch Wednesday.

Not when facing a 12-shot deficit after the first round.

Not with the missing piece in a career of success - the elusive SBC Championship - within grasp.

"I can't say enough about my two seniors," Turnbow said. "This was the most pressure-packed day we've had all year because our season was riding on this day and (Cochran and Narramore) step up and shoot 7-under between them. This could have possibly been the last tournament for those two seniors and none of us wanted them to go out like that. More importantly, they weren't going to go out like that."

Talk about character and development. Cochran and Narramore walked off the course at

the SBC Championships as freshmen with their heads hung low after a 10th-place finish. Wednesday they walked off the course hoisting the program's first-ever SBC Men's Golf Championship Trophy, and they helped these Blue Raiders become the first in school history to make consecutive NCAA Regional appearances at the Division I level.

"Winning this championship was important to us for a number of reasons," Narramore said. "It's something we had not accomplished so that was a missing piece for us. Winning this championship also assures that we keep playing and have a chance to do what we did last year, possibly even more. It's just great to accomplish something this special with a group of guys like we have here. We have a team and that's why we won. It's not about one player; it's about all of us."

And they all performed at a championship level Wednesday.

Cochran canvassed a masterpiece, turning in the best round of the day by a Blue Raider with a 4-under 68 and Narramore was 3-under 69. Millard fired a 2-under 70. Cochran was stunning throughout and did his best work on the back nine but he had some tournament highlight-reel material from the outset when he eagled two of the first five holes. He opened with an eagle on the par-4 No. 1 and duplicated the feat on the par-5 No. 5.

Cochran played the final 12 holes at 3-under, including a 3-under showing on the back nine.

"Everything felt great today and there could not have been a better time for that," Cochran said. "Getting off to a good start was key and then I was able to settle into a good rhythm out there. This has been one of our goals and to finally accomplish it is a great feeling."

Narramore was equally impressive with his collegiate career on the line. He was 1-over at the turn but then he got into a zone and would not be denied. The Kingston, Tenn., native played the back at 4-under on the strength of three birdies and an eagle on the par-5 No. 12.

Millard, meanwhile, was steady throughout as he managed the course and avoided costly mistakes. He had three birdies, 13 pars and one bogey.

Despite success throughout the lineup, Middle Tennessee still trailed Denver by five shot with six holes remaining as the Pioneers were playing the course at 9-under at the time; however, the Blue Raiders meticulously cut into the lead with precise shots and steady play.

And when Denver stumbled in the final four holes, Middle Tennessee's players always seemed to capitalize.

"We talked about what we wanted to be today at our team meeting (Tuesday night) and the word we came up with was bulletproof," Turnbow said. "They were today. Absolutely nothing that happened today fazed them. That's what we wanted to be and when stuff started happening down the stretch we were prepared for it."

Middle Tennessee will now begin preparing for the NCAA Regionals. Sites and dates will be released in May.

SBC Men's Golf Championships

Houston, Texas

Cypresswood Golf Club - Tradition Course, Par-72

Final Team Results

1 Middle Tennessee 295-287-284 866 +2

2 Denver 391-291-290 872 +8

3 North Texas 297-288-288 873 +9

- 4 Louisiana-Lafayette 298-293-283 874 +10
- 5 South Alabama 283-201-291 875 +11
- 6 UALR 290-295-291 876 +12
- 7 Arkansas State 290-298-299 887 +23
- 8 New Orleans 294-291-306 891 +27
- 9 ULM 306-298-293 897 +33
- 10 Troy 298-303-300 901 +37
- 11 WKU 300-312-293 905 +41
- 12 Florida Atlantic 305-310-305 920 +56

1 MT Team Scores (866)

- 5 **Chas Narramore** 75-72-69 216 E
- T6 **Jason Millard** 75-73-70 218 +2
- T12 **Rick Cochran** 74-77-68 219 +3
- T12 **Kent Bulle** 71-71-77 219 +3
- T44 **Craig Smith** 79-71-79 229 +13

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