

May 4, 2009

Regional draw pleases Blue Raider men's golf team

Linksters familiar with course they will play in Bowling Green, Ky.

Athletic Communications

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee's golf team would have been pleased with any of the potential six regional destinations for the 2009 NCAA Division I Men's Golf Championships, but the Blue Raiders did have a preference and they got what they had hoped for when the field of 81 was announced Monday.



Rick Cochran, left, studies the field for the NCAA Men's Golf National Championships and Chas Narramore calls family members after the field of 81 was announced Monday. (B. Lambert)

Video: [Coach Whit Turnbow Interview](#)

Middle Tennessee will be one of 14 teams participating in the regional at The Club at Olde Stone in Bowling Green, Ky., hosted by Western Kentucky May 14-16. The low five teams from six regionals will advance to the NCAA National Championships at the Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio May 26-30.

The Blue Raiders are making their second straight regional appearance after reaching the NCAA National Championships and eventually making the cut in 2008.

Reasons for Middle Tennessee hoping to land at the regional in Bowling Green were plentiful. Two players (**Kent Bulle** and **Rick Cochran**) are Kentucky natives. With the location less than 90 minutes from Murfreesboro it's possible for golf enthusiasts to follow the team at a high-level postseason event.

Perhaps the biggest reason, though, is Olde Stone is a course Middle Tennessee linkers have played, thus possibly giving them a different insight than others.

"I think we got a great draw," said Middle Tennessee second-year Head Coach Whit Turnbow, the two-time SBC Coach of the Year. "Most of our guys have played the course and are familiar with it so I think that gives you a bit of a leg up because it's going to be difficult. Being close enough where their families and people in the community can go watch them play is something you couldn't have scripted any better."

Like the others, it's a regional loaded with the nation's top contenders. If Middle Tennessee is to reach the NCAA Division I Men's Golf National Championship for a second straight year it will have to finish in the top third of a field that includes defending National Champion UCLA, along with two of the nation's Top 10 teams, four of the Top 20 and eight of the Top 50. In addition to UCLA, the field also includes the likes of No. 7 Georgia Tech, No. 18 N.C. State, No. 29 Mississippi, No. 31 East Tennessee, No. 42 Duke, No. 44 Louisville, No. 53 Ohio State, No. 55 Vanderbilt, as well as Austin Peay, Cleveland State and Bucknell.

Middle Tennessee returns four players from last season's lineup that made the memorable postseason run - seniors Cochran and **Chas Narramore**, junior **Kent Bulle**, and sophomore **Jason Millard**. The addition to the lineup happens to be one of the top players in the Sun Belt Conference - junior **Craig Smith**. A lower-back injury forced Smith to miss the 2008 postseason after earning SBC Player of the Year and Freshman of the Year honors in 2007.

"We have five solid guys in our lineup and our depth is a big key so I expect us to do well," said Narramore, who becomes the only Blue Raider to participate in three consecutive

NCAA regionals at the Division I level. "From what I can tell I think we received a good draw. We usually play better on tougher courses and Olde Stone is definitely tough so I'm looking forward to it."

Turnbow said Olde Stone's challenging layout could benefit the Blue Raiders.

"We have a tendency to play better on courses that make par a good score and Olde Stone is certainly going to be that set up," Turnbow said. "We are excited about Olde Stone. It's going to be a very, very challenging set-up. It's challenging on a day-to-day basis and I can't imagine how they are going to set it up for this type of competition."

At least the Blue Raiders will know the lay of the land.

2009 NCAA Men's Golf Regional

Bowling Green, Ky.

The Club at Olde Stone

Host: Western Kentucky University

Washington, Georgia Tech, N.C. State, UCLA, Mississippi, East Tennessee, Duke, Louisville, Ohio State, Vanderbilt, **Middle Tennessee**, Austin Peay, Cleveland State, Bucknell.

Low five teams advance to NCAA Division I Men's Golf Championships at the Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio May 26-30.

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