

Women's golf faces huge challenge on tough course

Field includes 10 highly-ranked teams in Pinehurst Challenge

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Middle Tennessee's women's golf team will face one of its toughest tests of the year when they travel to Pinehurst, N.C., for the Pinehurst Challenge on Monday and Tuesday. In addition to playing an extremely tough course on Pinehurst #6, the tournament format will be 54 holes, 36 on Monday and 18 on Tuesday. And, as if that won't be tough



enough, ten of the 17 teams in the tournament are ranked among the Top 100 teams in the nation. North Carolina State, ranked 21st, will be the team to beat. Others are East Carolina (51st), Maryland (53rd), UNC Greensboro (75th), Penn State (78th) and host College of Charleston (85th). Other teams participating are Elon, Georgetown, Samford, James Madison, UNC-Wilmington, Marshall, Old Dominion, Richmond, Tennessee Tech and Western Michigan. Coach Chris Adams sees it as an opportunity for her team, which is ranked 79th, to beat some teams ranked ahead of them, and move up in the ratings. She also thinks the golf course is suited to the make-up of her team. "None of us have ever even seen the course, much less played on it, but from what we have been able to learn, it is tight off the tees, and the greens are very firm and very fast," she revealed. "That should favor us because we hit the ball straight, and we are used to greens like that because they are very similar to those at Stones River where we play a lot. "It requires a little bit more thinking because you can't just fly a shot toward the hole and expect it to stick." Pinehurst #6 is a Par 72 layout, 5,993 yards with fairways over-seeded with rye. Adams selected six players who will make the trip to North Carolina after nearly two weeks of practicing since their last tournament. She will take senior Karisa Akin, who tied for 17th out of 179 at Kiawah, juniors Ashley Haggard (T-31st) and Olivia Love (T-43rd), and freshman Allie Knight (T-55th). Love's 73 on the final day was the team's low round for the tournament. The fifth player will be either junior Stephanie Smith or sophomore Natalie Chrisopulos. "This is almost the same team we took to Kiawah Island in late February. Since then, we have had a good two and a half weeks off, including spring break, and we had some good weather in that stretch. At Kiawah, we got a little better each day, and that is good. And we are also playing a little better over the break," said Adams. "What is hurting us right now is finding that fifth scorer. We've been relying on the top four, and so far it hasn't hurt us because we haven't had to use the fifth scorer. But, we need that because it gives us a cushion. We've been playing a lot lately, so hopefully we are ready." Live scoring updates for the Pinehurst Classic will be

available on GolfStat.com both days, and daily wrapups may be seen on GoBlueRaiders.com. Tee-times are also available on GolfStat.com.

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