

May 31, 2008

Final round of National Championships 'unbelievable experience'

Bailes' final postcard from final round

By Nick Bailes

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. - Middle Tennessee senior golfer Nick Bailes has been writing a daily postcard from the NCAA Division I National Championships at Purdue University's Birck Boilermaker Golf Complex this week. Following is his final installment.

At 10:30 (Saturday) morning it was official, we made the cut in the National Championship. We received help from Auburn, Texas, Indiana, UC Irvine, and of course Mother Nature.

Conditions were once again brutal for those teams who had to finish this morning, and one by one those teams fell backwards and outside of the top 15. It was a great feeling to know that we were among the top 15 teams in the nation and that we were going to play for a National Title.

Although our final round was a little less than our best, it was still an unbelievable experience. We played the final 18 holes of one the hardest and most difficult tests in all of college golf.


Jason Millard played a phenomenal tournament and barely missed finishing in the top 15 individuals, which would've have gotten him an NCAA trophy. For those of you who don't know, Jason's nickname is "Rizzle" and Rizzle played fantastic for a freshman. At the beginning of this year he confided in me that he gets nervous in tournaments, his hands shake, and that he could barely take the club back. He played with ice water in his veins this week, and it's pretty safe to say he has overcome his fear. What a difference a year makes.

As a senior, I had the opportunity to watch this program go from ranked 178th in the nation when I signed as a freshman all the way to playing for a National Championship. It was a long, bumpy road and it took a lot of hard work. I can't tell you what a great job Coach (Whit) Turnbow has done, and will no doubt continue to do in the future. He will tell you that he never hit a shot, but I promise you he can take a lot of the credit for this team's success. This program has a very bright future.

To anyone who might wonder what it's like to play for a National Championship and represent a university and a community, it's a feeling like no other. Each and every one of us was proud to wear the Middle Tennessee logo on our shirts and hats this week. We will remember this week for the rest of our lives and remember what it felt like to walk among the greatest teams in college golf knowing that we had a right to be there.

Lastly, to quote Rizzle, "Pete Dye won this week." He has never been more right.



Senior Nick Bailes tees off on No. 9 at the NCAA National Championships Saturday, the final hole of his excellent Blue Raider career. (Tony Stinnett) 

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