

June 18, 2008

Men's golf earns invite into one of nation's top events

Blue Raiders to play in Callaway Golf Match Play Championship

MT Media Relations

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee's success on the links in 2007-08 is already paying dividends for the upcoming men's golf season.

The Blue Raiders earned, and accepted, an invitation to play in the Callaway Golf Collegiate Match Play Championship at The Farms Golf Club in Rancho Santa Fe, Calif., based on their finish at this year's NCAA Division I Men's Golf National Championship.

Middle Tennessee finished 15th at the National Championship and will join 15 other top-ranked men's golf programs for the prestigious event, March 22-24. The event is hosted by the Golf Coaches Association of America.



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"This is a great event and we earned our way in based on our finish at the National Championships," Middle Tennessee Head Coach Whit Turnbow said. "This is arguably one of the very best fields put together during the year and we are excited to be part of this outstanding 16-team field. Our players know they belong now so I expect them to go out there and not only compete with these guys but beat some of these teams. To reach the elite level this is a list of the teams you have to go through."

The 16-team field includes Alabama, Arizona State, UC-Irvine, Charlotte, Chattanooga, Duke, Florida State, Indiana, Louisville, Middle Tennessee, San Diego State, Stanford, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, UCLA, and San Diego, which will serve as the host.

The field is comprised of the top 10-ranked teams nationally at the conclusion of all conference championships in 2008, two sponsor (Callaway Golf) invites, which were San Diego and San Diego State, and the field is completed with the next top four teams from the National Championships not already among the field.

"While we were playing at the National Championships I knew it was out there that we had a chance to play into some of these top tournaments but I did not know exactly which teams it would come down to," Turnbow said. "I knew if we made the cut we could get in the field for one of these match play events so it worked out great for us."

The Callaway Collegiate Match Play Championship and the Hooters Match Play Championship are the only two such events nationally so Middle Tennessee's spot in the Callaway Golf Collegiate Match Play Championship could be huge because of a change in the format for the NCAA National Championships in 2009.

Beginning in 2009, the NCAA National Championships will feature three rounds of stroke play. That will be followed by three rounds of match play for the teams that make the cut to determine the national champion. "Callaway Golf is very pleased with the field for the upcoming Collegiate Match Play Championship," said Jeff Harris, Callaway Golf Collegiate Representative. "This will be the most conferences represented in the Match Play field and consists of teams that played some of their best golf at the end of last season. Hopefully,

with the tournament's format reflecting what will be played at the NCAA Championships and competing at a great venue like The Farms will prepare them for success this spring."

Officials have altered the format for the Callaway Golf Collegiate Match Play Championship after taking into account the proposed changes to the Division I championships. Originally conceived as a true match play event, the Callaway Golf Collegiate Match Play Championship will now contain both a medal and match play component. The 16 participating teams will play 36 holes of stroke play during the first day of competition. The top eight finishers will then advance to a championship match play bracket while finishers nine through 16 will be placed in a consolation bracket. Each team will play three rounds of match play over the next two days. The match play portion will reflect the proposed format of the NCAA Championships.

Turnbow said Middle Tennessee's 2008-09 schedule will be one of its toughest, possibly ever, and the primary reason is the invites the team has received coming off the most successful season in program history.

"The season we had has allowed us to be in a position where we can actually choose where we can go play," Turnbow said. "In the past we have had to take what we could get but this year we have an opportunity to have some choices and choose from some of the best tournaments in the country. Looking ahead, we will see at least 11 Top 25 teams which will benefit our players and prepare them for another trip to the National Championship."

Printed on December 4, 2008

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/32263>