

Sports

Golfers start NCAAs today

By Craig Harris
Of the Emerald

After finishing sixth in the prestigious Phoenix-Thunderbird Collegiate, and with a runner-up position in the Pac 10 Championships, the red-hot Oregon golf team will be looking to stay on its tear when it starts play today in the NCAA Championships in Winston-Salem, N. C.

The Ducks haven't been to the NCAAs since 1983, when they finished 22nd, and Oregon has only one player with national tournament experience. Despite this, golf coach Scott Krieger is confident his balanced lineup of one senior, two juniors, and two sophomores are ready.

"We are real ready, and we are playing our best golf of the year. Our confidence is at a year-long high, and everyone is playing with composure," Krieger says.

Senior George Daves, who played in the nationals on the 1983 team as a freshman, and last year as an individual, says he is ready to end his collegiate career by reaching some goals, as well as having a little bit of fun.

"I would like to see the team make the cut, and see how we do on the last day. (After three rounds only 15 teams are left). For myself I would like to finish in the top ten. I feel both of these goals are well within our reach," Daves says. "When you go to the NCAAs you are going to have a lot of fun, no matter what happens. This goes hand in hand with playing well... You need to show up with confidence, tee it up, and can't be scared or intimidated by other players. Then you just trust yourself and play."

Another golfer who has high expectations for himself and the team is sophomore Steve Rintoul. The Australian native is on a roll. He's been the Duck team leader during the last two tournaments, and finished seventh at the Pac-10s.

"I would like to finish as high as I can, but realistically in the top 15. If the team can make the cut, we could push ourselves to the top. This would really help our program... We can't be intimidated and say 'oh no it's Wake Forest or Florida.' We are a good team, and good enough that we deserve to win," Rintoul says. "Our whole team is confident, and we know what we have to do. We have five guys going back there that want it really bad."

The other three golfers who will be making the trip are sophomore Croy Cochran, and juniors Rob Huff and Tony Joyner. Here is a list of each one's accomplishments.

George Daves—Regarded by Krieger as Oregon's most consistent player. Team leader in both rounds played and stroke average, he tied for the lowest round of the year with a 66, and has a four year average of 74.8. Daves was the 1985 Pac-10 runner-up and twice selected second team all-conference.

Steve Rintoul—Playing his first season with the Ducks after a redshirt freshman year, this "clutch" player finished the year with a 75.9 stroke average.

Croy Cochran—His two years at Oregon he has posted a 76.2 stroke average, with a low round of 71. Last summer he captured the Washington North Shore Amateur title, and is Oregon's best putter.

Rob Huff—Huff has a 75.8 stroke average this year, and a low round of 66. He could play a key role in Oregon's shot at the nationals. Krieger has high hopes for Huff. "Rob is the one guy that can really get it going. If one guy had an outside chance to win the nationals it is Rob. He is an all-or-nothing player, and when he gets it going, he is tough."

Tony Joyner—With a college career average of 76.5, and a low round of 71 in 1986, he is another Krieger hopeful. "Tony is the physically strongest player we have, and puts the ball consistently on the fairway. He has a lot of talent, and I've been waiting for him to break through. The nationals just might be it," Krieger says.

If Oregon can put this all together they may just have a chance in making the team cut, but it will be difficult for them to contend for the championship, especially against the number-one-ranked Cowboys of Oklahoma State University, led

by Scott Verplank, the only amateur in the last 30 years to win a PGA event.

Even Krieger is in agreement with this.

"Oklahoma State is the favorite, period. They are a head-and-shoulders team, and the best team in the country. They may be one of the best teams ever to play. I would be very surprised if they didn't win it, and any one of their players is capable of winning the individual title," Krieger says.

But he also has his optimism for the Ducks.

"In golf you always have a chance. If we played the best tournament of our lives, and no one else was hot, we could squeak in. Realistically we should finish in the top ten," Krieger says.

Other Pac-10 teams competing in the nationals are eighth-ranked Arizona State University and tenth-ranked USC. Tournament play will conclude Friday.

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