

# Men's golf, Haas falter after strong start at Augusta

Deacons slip from second to seventh after shooting 14-over in final round of tournament

By Alex Myers  
Assistant Sports Editor

The Wake Forest men's golf team continues to struggle in final rounds. For a second straight tournament, the Deacs were in great position after two rounds but faltered in the third, slipping to a middle-of-the-pack finish.

"For the most part, we've struggled for whatever reason on the last day and I don't know what it is," Head Coach Jerry Haas said. "That bothers me very much that we don't close better, but maybe that will happen with time."

Through two rounds, the Deacon squad found itself in second place of a very prestigious leader-board at the Cleveland Golf/Augusta State Invitational, held on the par-72, 7,231-yard Forest Hills Golf Club in Augusta, Ga., April 2-3. They were ahead of such highly-ranked teams as Augusta State, UCLA and Clemson.

However, a final round of 14-over 302, their worst

round of the tournament by 14 strokes, dropped the Deacs all the way down to seventh.

"Obviously, we're playing two good rounds a week and we can't put three in a row together," Haas said. "But I'm very encouraged."

Senior All-American Bill Haas once again led the Deacs, finishing in third place with an 8-under total of 208. Still, Haas missed out on a chance to tie the Wake Forest tournament wins record for a third-straight event.

After a field-low opening round of 67, Haas looked to be in command to win his ninth collegiate tournament. He began the final round still tied for the lead, but despite shooting a 2-under 70, he was passed by Clemson's Matt Hendrix and Duke's Nathan Smith and finished just one stroke out of the playoff in which Hendrix claimed the title.

Sophomore Kyle Reifers had an excellent complementary performance to his No. 1-ranked teammate. Reifers played consistent golf with rounds of 72, 71 and 73 to finish at even par for the tournament and in a tie for 10th-place, marking his fifth Top-10 finish of the season.

"Kyle has pretty much turned into a Top-10 player every week," Haas said. "With a couple putts here and there, he'll be in the winner's circle very soon."

As for the rest of the team, disaster struck on the

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final day.

Freshman Chad Wilcox, who began the final round at 1-over par, posted an 80 on the last day to drop down to a tie for 52nd place. Unfortunately for Wilcox, he suffered a shoulder injury that will keep him out of the next tournament.

Coach Haas is optimistic that the injury will heal quickly and that other players will get a chance to step up.

"As a team (injuries happen) all the time in sports," Haas said. "You just have to make the best of it."

Fellow freshman Sean Moore didn't fare much

better on Sunday, as he fired a 79 to finish 71st overall.

Senior Buck Williams, making his first start of the season, had an up-and-down tournament. Although he carded a 73 in the second round, he book-ended that with an opening round of 79 and a closing round of 85. Still, Williams will be in the lineup for the upcoming event.

"He's very capable of helping the team," Haas said. "I hope he plays well this week."

The Demon Deacons will continue their busy spring schedule next week at The Intercollegiate at Macgregor Downs in Raleigh, April 9-10. The event will be the final tune-up before the team starts postseason play, beginning with the ACC Championship in Uwharrie Point, scheduled for April 16-18.

Coach Haas noted that The Intercollegiate will provide a great opportunity for those golfers trying to play their way into the postseason lineup and also for the team to get accustomed to the lightning-quick greens it will most likely be seeing in the upcoming events.

"The greens will be fast and in good shape so it will be nice as far as putting and chipping around the green," Haas said. "I think it will really help us for the next week (the ACC Championship)."

# Pressbox: Sox, Phils and Cubs are the teams to watch

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The rest of the East is weak. Over the past two years, Atlanta has lost Tom Glavine, Greg Maddux, Kevin Millwood, Gary Sheffield, Javy Lopez and Vinny Castilla. They are not the juggernaut they used to be. They might not even finish above the Mets, who will get a lot better with their middle-infield duo of Japanese rookie shortstop Kazuo Matsui and emerging star second-baseman Jose Reyes.

The Marlins, while still sporting a strong pitching staff, have lost key elements in Lee, catcher Ivan Rodriguez, outfielder Juan Encarnacion and relievers Ugueth Urbina and Braden Loper. While Mike Lowell is healthy and a lot

is expected from emerging star Miguel Cabrera, the Marlins have lost too much from last year's magical team.

The Phillies will win the division and eventually edge the Cubs to reach their World Series since 1993.

And, no, I didn't forget about the NL West. I see the Dodgers coming out of that division, one of the weakest in the Majors, and losing in the first round of the playoffs.

In the American League, the West and Central will be highly contested, but the East is where to look for the contenders.

Oakland's pitching, led by Tim Hudson, Barry Zito and Mark Mulder, will help the A's win the West.

Despite an infield that makes more money than the entire Tampa Bay Devil Rays squad, I see the Yankees losing to the Red Sox.

Minnesota will be challenged by the Royals and White Sox - and maybe even the retooled Tigers - but they will win the West. Catcher Joe Mauer, the No. 1 overall pick in the draft a few years ago, may not win the Rookie of the Year; but he will prove to be better than A.J. Pierzynski, who the Twins traded to the Giants for salary reasons and to make room for Mauer.

Still, both the Twins and A's will be sent packing in the first round of the playoffs, just as they were last year.

The East is just stacked. The Yankees, when healthy, can field a lineup of Kenny Lofton, Derek Jeter, Alex Rodriguez, Jason Giambi, Sheffield, Jorge Posada, Hideki Matsui, Bernie Williams and Enrique Wilson. As always, George Steinbrenner has made sure to outspend everyone so his team is deeper and better on paper in every area than any other team. But, despite an infield that makes more money than the entire Tampa Bay Devil Rays squad, I see this team losing to the Boston Red Sox.

The Red Sox are just going to play harder, I think. If they stay

healthy, then the Big Three of Pedro Martinez, newly-acquired Curt Schilling and Derek Lowe will be dominant in the postseason, and new closer Keith Foulke rectifies the problem that was Boston's downfall last season.

The Sox and Yankees won't have an easy path to the postseason, though. The Baltimore Orioles signed free agents Javy Lopez, Miguel Tejada and Sidney Ponson. These additions, O's fans hope, will help other guys like Jay Gibbons and Larry Bigbie emerge as stars.

The Toronto Blue Jays will also be a quality team. They have a good, young lineup that could feature two MVP candidates: Carlos Delgado and Vernon Wells. The pitching staff is anchored by Roy

Halladay, one of the best in the game.

And let's not forget that the Devil Rays, who have a decent young pitching staff and a lineup full of potential stars like Rocco Baldelli and Carl Crawford, could open some eyes. Still, they are destined to finish fifth in the Majors' best division.

And while I think the Orioles and Blue Jays could each potentially win the Central Division, they also will not beat out the Yankees or Sox for playoff spots.

In the playoffs, both Boston and New York will get the job done in the first round. In the ALCS, the Red Sox will not only beat the Yankees, but they will defeat the Phillies in the World Series. You heard it here first.

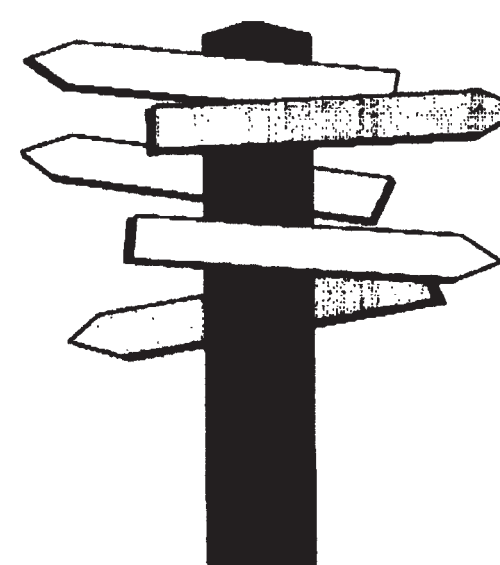
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