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2005 NCAA Division II Men's Golf National Championships

Hosted by Armstrong Atlantic State University
and the Westin Savannah Harbor Resort & Spa
May 17-20, 2005 • The Club at Savannah Harbor



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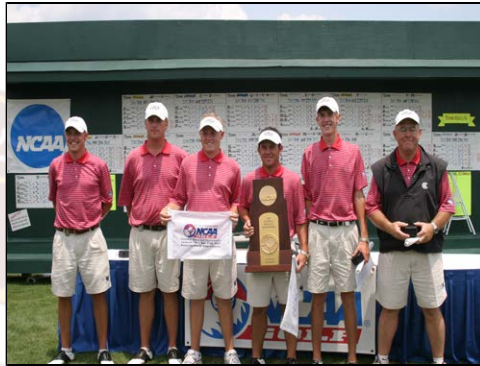
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USC Aiken Holds On To Defend Their NCAA DII Men's Golf Championship Top-ranked Pacers Win By Five Strokes Over Host Armstrong Atlantic

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SAVANNAH, Ga. (May 20, 2005) - As Friday dawned on the Club at Savannah Harbor, the USC Aiken Pacers were 18 holes away from their second straight NCAA Division II Men's Golf Championship. With the threat of afternoon rain, players began the final round early with a 7:00 a.m. starting time and when the midday sun climbed over Hutchinson Island, the Pacers had held on for a five-stroke win over host Armstrong Atlantic, making them back-to-back national champions.

USC Aiken began the day with a four-stroke lead and stretched that lead to as many as nine on the front nine, but the race tightened up on the back nine as the Pirates closed to within two strokes when senior Ashley Loyd carded an eagle-two on the par-4, hole 14. With eight holes to play, that two-stroke edge continued to separate the two Peach Belt Conference schools, but the Pirates gave back three strokes over the next three holes, securing the Pacers' win.

The Pacers shot a final-round 293 to finish the tournament with an 1158 total, 22-over-par. Armstrong Atlantic fired a final-round 294 and finished the tournament with a 27-over-par 1163 total, their best finish nationally in the five years since reinstating the program in 2000-01. St. Edward's (Texas), making its first foray into the 2005 NCAA DII Men's Golf Championship finals, finished third after a final-round 290 to total 1169, 33-over-par. Cal State Bakersfield (1170, +34) and Hawaii Hilo (1173, +37) rounded out the top five schools. Rollins College shot the day's best round on Friday with a two-over-par 286 and vaulted to sixth.

"We wanted to play like we were dead even with (Armstrong Atlantic State) and we had to beat them to win," USC Aiken head coach Michael Carlisle said. "It would have been a disappointing ending [not winning the Championship]. It still would have been a fantastic year. Nothing takes away from the fact that we won our sixth Peach Belt title and fourth straight region championship. It would've been disappointing, because this team knew it was the best team in the country."

The individual race was just as close as the team race was down the stretch. Burkhart began the day with a three-stroke advantage over Nick Mason of Hawaii Hilo, but Mason tied Burkhart on the back nine and it took a birdie by Burkhart on the par-3 hole No. 17 to clip Mason by one stroke. Burkhart shot a one-over-par 72 on Friday and finished the tournament with a five-under-par 279 total, while Mason carded a one-under-par 70 to finish the tournament with a four-under-par 280 total. Todd Dayton of Central Oklahoma had the day's best round on Friday with a four-under-par 67 and moved up to third individually, finishing the tournament with an even-par 284. Brice Garnett of Missouri Western State finished fourth after a final-round 73 to finish the tournament with a one-over-par 285 total. Jonathan Cox (AASU), Marc Peterson (Cal State Chico) and Blake Slaughter (St. Edward's) each finished tied for fifth individually with two-over-par 286 totals.

The win by the Pacers is the second straight and USC Aiken joins a list of eight other schools

now as winners of two or more DII men's golf titles. The last school to win back-to-back titles was Florida Southern, who won three straight from 1998-2000. Burkhart is the first Pacer to earn medalist honors as well.

At around 4:45 p.m. local time on Friday afternoon, a thunderstorm rolled across the Savannah area, meaning that the Championship would have likely been suspended had the regularly scheduled final round tee times been altered.