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Women’s Golf Opens Spring in Texas

Georgia Southern University

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STATESBORO, Ga. –
The recent weather in Statesboro may not be a good indicator, but spring has sprung, and the Georgia Southern women's golf team will open its spring season at the All There August Challenge in San Antonio Sunday.

A first-year program, Georgia Southern made strides as the fall season rolled along. The Eagles posted their first sub-300 round at the Wendy's Invitational Oct. 6, and Ariana Macioce collected the program's first top-5 individual finish at the Fighting Camel Classic in the final event of the fall.

"The fall was good preparation," said Georgia Southern coach Emily Kuhfeld. "Obviously, with a brand new team and a lot of freshmen, it was difficult, but I think now that they are used to it, it will be better. They've put in great work by themselves over break; I can see a lot of improvements. I feel good about their preparation. They kind of understand what's coming now."

Kuhfeld was happy with the ball-striking ability of the squad and their length in the fall but noted the Eagles' short game needed improvement. With over three months off of competition, improving the short game became the focus. The Eagles worked diligently on it individually over the break and have spent the first couple weeks of team practice improving that area as well.

"As a team, we've done a lot of up-and-down exercises and a lot of putting," Kuhfeld said. "They are starting to get it. I feel really good about the improvements we've made around the greens."

Kuhfeld also orchestrated introductions between a couple members of the team looking for new leadership.
to work on their swings and renowned instructor Shane LeBaron, who works out of Hilton Head. They took lessons from him during the break, and Kuhfeld has seen improvement - not just on the range but in competition.

"He is helping them kind of get rid of the left side of the golf course, shall we say, so they can get the accuracy down," she said. "I feel like they have done a good job trying to incorporate their new moves in their golf swing to the golf course and being competitive and not just hunkering down on the range. The next step will be carrying that into tournament play. We talk a lot about the value of one shot at a time, and being able to be in that mindset is really, really important."

The strides the Eagles have made will get tested this weekend as the Eagles open the spring at the tournament hosted by fellow Sun Belt member, Texas State. The field features five top-100 teams.

"It's a great opportunity to play a conference team and travel a little bit," said Kuhfeld. "Right now, Texas State is the highest ranked team in our conference so it will be great to see how we stack up with them."

It's one of three tournaments in three weeks to start the spring for Georgia Southern. Following the Kiawah Island Invitational Feb. 28-March 1, the Eagles will have two weeks to take their breath, assess their play and plot their course for the stretch run, which culminates with the Sun Belt Championship in Destin, Fla., April 17-19.

"We'll be able to do a lot of reps, a lot of practice and a lot of match-play situations before conference and maybe play some other golf courses in the area," Kuhfeld said. "I really feel like the University Course can prepare us for anything, especially around the greens. If you can chip and putt and get it around that golf course, I truly believe you're prepared for whatever we're going to be playing."

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