

Local golf: Cotton States qualifying begins today

By Keith Prince • kprince@thenewsstar.com • June 24, 2008

Bayou DeSiard Country Club is buzzing today as 144 top amateur golfers play the first of two qualifying rounds with hopes of taking away the W.E. Cole Cotton States Amateur Invitational title come Saturday.

The field includes players from over 50 universities, 16 states, five continents and seven countries.

Only 64 players will make Wednesday's 36-hole cut and then begin single elimination match play Thursday, which is the exact same format used in the U.S. Amateur, a tourney several of these fellows will be in later this summer.

"The field keeps getting deeper and this year's tournament looks very strong," said Bayou DeSiard pro John Pruitt.



David McKendrick, ULM's top golfer, will participate in qualifying. (News-Star file photo)

Playing for the 58th time this week since beginning in 1949, excluding three years when course renovations were being completed, the Cotton States is currently ranked No. 48 out of over 1500 amateur golf events worldwide that are included in the amateur rankings conducted by Scratch Players World Amateur Rankings.

Several players with local ties are participating, including last year's Cotton States runner-up David McKendrick, an Australian who is also ULM's top golfer.

McKendrick was also sixth in the 2007 Louisiana state amateur and a first alternate in the U.S. Amateur qualifier.

Also, 1999 Cotton States champ Bob Cooper of Monroe is participating along with former Monroe resident Matthew Harvey, a semi-finalist in 2006, who is now Louisiana Tech's top golfer.

Harvey, returning to competitive golf after surgery for a collapsed lung seven weeks ago, was named All-WAC for the 2007-2008 school year.

Louisiana Tech also has four other area golfers participating this week and they include Clinton Shephard of West Monroe, Chad Bailey and Patrick Blunt of Ruston and Corey Bartlett of Lake Providence.

ULM coach Chris Wilson is also entered along with a pair of local prep golfers, Tanner McDonald of Ouachita Christian and Will Ticheli of West Monroe, along with former Quitman standout Clay Shovan.

Top LSU golfers here this week include 2005 state junior champ Andrew Loupe, John Peterson and Austin Gutsell, a new recruit from Mandeville. A couple of other SEC standouts participating include Vanderbilt's Hudson Johnson and Mississippi State's Matt Fast.

Also, Trent Whitekiller of Oklahoma State, who finished seven in the recent NCAA championships, and Baylor star Colton Williams are on board.

International standouts playing include Grant Scott and Luke Bleumink of Australia and New Zealanders Leighton James Auckland and Kevin Smith.