

Sophomore Ecker named All-American

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gy Blackmon sees more than a silver lining with the Gamecocks' performance at the Championship; he sees a young team that needed to experience a week of golf at the top level and how that experience will translate into better finishes in the future.

"I'm disappointed for our players that we could not have finished higher, but I could not be more proud of the way they played here this week," Blackmon said. "They fought for 72 holes, and this experience will do so much for the four players who will re-

turn next season. You can't prepare a young team for the physical aspect of playing top-flight golf for six-straight days. This team got here Saturday and has played 18 holes a day (including practice rounds Monday and Tuesday). They were fatigued.

"I saw some of that fatigue yesterday, but we got a fantastic performance from Brent Roof to keep us where we were in the standings. Today, we just couldn't get over the hump and make a move, and I saw that fatigue factor really have an effect on the team. All in all, we continue to make strides toward competing for a

national championship, and our experience here this year, despite how we played today, will go a long way towards helping us reach that goal."

Kransteuber was the only Gamecock to post an even par or better round. Junior Mark Catalano, fifth on the team with a 74.26 stroke average coming into the tournament, had his most consistent performance of the year at the NCAA's, shooting a 73 Saturday to finish at even-par 288 and in 37th place. Sophomore Eric Ecker could not overcome back-to-back bogeys on the back side and finished at three-over 75 and at two-over 290 and in a tie for 48th place. Roof was even par through 14 holes, but went four over par over the last four holes and finished at four-over 76 and in a tie for 60th place at four-over 292. Freshman Kyle Thompson had his second-straight disappointing round after a three-under par start over the first 36 holes. The Easley, S.C., native fired a five-over 77 and finished in a tie for 70th place at six-over 294.

Unlike the third round Friday, the Gamecocks started off Saturday's first round in solid fashion. The Gamecocks were six-over par as a team through three holes Friday and actually stood just one-over par on the tough front side through four holes. But USC could not take advantage of a par 5 9th hole yielding birdies and eagles all week and made the turn identical to Friday

at two-over par. Unlike Friday, however, Carolina never got going on all cylinders on the back side.

The Gamecocks got four birdies on the par 5 10th hole to briefly go under par, but struggled on the middle holes of the back side to fall from the top 10. Kransteuber epitomized USC's day on the final two holes as he took a two-under score to No. 17. He narrowly missed an up-and-down from the sand trap on the par 3 17th hole for a bogey, then had to take a stroke penalty on an unplayable lie on the par 5 18th hole and also bogeyed the hole to finish even par.

On a brighter note, Ecker was named an honorable mention member of the 1998 Golf Coaches Association of America All-America team, the GCAA.

Ecker was one of the more improved players in the country in his second season with the Gamecocks. He finished third in the Southeastern Conference with a team-leading 72.13 stroke average. Ecker led the Gamecocks with six Top 10 and nine Top 20 finishes this season and won medalist honors at the SEC Championships in April with an eight-under 136 score.

The second year player had 23 of his 39 rounds at or below par in the 1997-98 season. Ecker also finished first at the Palmetto Classic in September, but lost a two-hole playoff to teammate Kyle Thompson.

Track teams fare well in Buffalo

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Freshman Kylene Nixon was sixth in the women's pole vault at 12-feet-1. She momentarily held the NCAA record, as this is a new event. Nixon won the event at the SEC Championships two weeks ago.

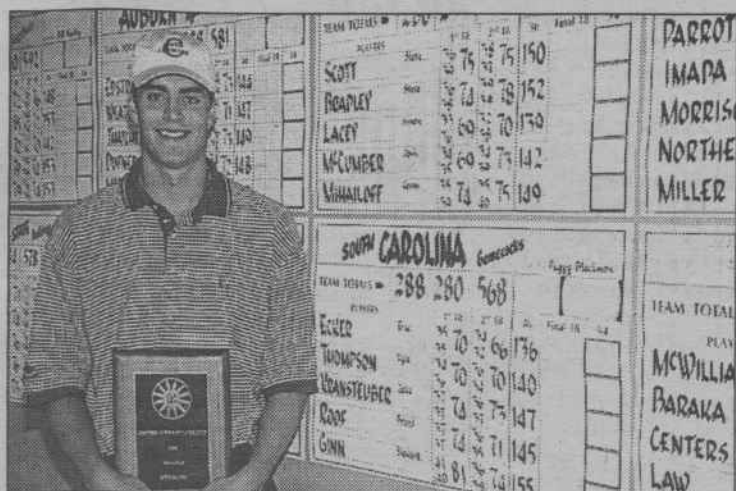
"The wind was incredibly strong in the face when the bar went up (to 12-feet-5)," the San Diego, Calif., native said. "This weather is freezing for me."

Frye said he was pleased with the team's performances.

"We didn't expect to get points out of the discus," he said. "This isn't Brad's favorite event. We are real proud of Charmaine. She was in a terrible position with 300 meters to go, but she is a fighter. Kylene did a wonderful job finishing sixth for a freshman."

The men's 4x100m relay was sixth with a school-record of 39.08 (Terrence Trammell, Jamie Price, Riaan Dempers, Corey Bridges).

"We ran a school record, but I feel like we could have done a little better," Price said. "We were seventh last year and to bump up one place isn't thrilling. I was looking for bigger and better things."



Eric Ecker, posing with his championship trophy after winning the SEC Championships, was named an All-American for his play.

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