

## Saint Mary's Golf Finishes Stellar Season 30th In the Nation

By David Anderson



Senior Chadd Cocco, who has three top-five finishes this season, had the lowest round of any St. Mary's Gael at the NCAA Championships

Photo submitted by Rich Davi

The Saint Mary's Men's golf team finished the season thirtieth in the country this past weekend after qualifying and competing in the National round of the 2008 NCAA Championship Tournament in West Lafayette, Indiana.

The team advanced to the final round after finishing seventh out of 27 teams in the West Regional tournament in Bremerton, Washington. This appearance marks the first time that a Saint Mary's Men's golf team has advanced to the National Championship round of the NCAA tournament, while being just the team's second NCAA tournament appearance.

Saint Mary's ended their run at the championship with a final score of 307, or 19 over par for the round. Chadd Cocco, a senior from Bend, Oregon, came painfully close to securing one of the six individual spots in the finals after posting a score of 225 for the tournament, which forced a three way playoff with Scott Langley of Illinois, and Jurrian van der Vaart of Virginia Tech. Cocco ended up missing the cut after a van der Vaart birdie on the fourth playoff hole forced him out of the running for the final spot in the six man final.

Despite not playing as well as they would have liked, the Gaels finished with their best season in school history. Head Golf Coach Scott Hardy said about competing in the finals that "it was an exciting and good opportunity to get there [with the great competition], but it would have been nice to be able to put up a better fight."

The team's success this year and in previous years is due in part to the work of Hardy. Hardy seems to have a knack for keeping up with the bigger and stronger teams such as Stanford and UCLA that seem to get first pick when it comes to recruiting.

After taking over in 2001, the team has seen a vast improvement. The Gaels advanced to the Regional finals for the first time in history in 2005, and this season marks the first time the Gaels have advanced to the NCAA Championship Tournament in school history.

Things are looking good for the future of Men's Golf at Saint Mary's. As Hardy points out, "I'll be interested to see how we do. We've got a great recruiting class, and if we can do the same thing with the young guys [next year] that would be great."