

# KEISSER: Early rising means low golf scores

By Bob Keisser, Sports Columnist  
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Today's local-and-vocal edition of The Sporting Muse:

When Sue Ewart and the 49ers women's golf team heads to Tempe, Ariz., this week for the NCAA West Regional, the coach will be hoping for one thing: A very early wake-up call for Saturday morning.

Most of us want to sleep in on the weekends, but early tee times on the final day of the tournament means the 49ers are part of the first wave of teams with low scores and a good shot at a top-eight finish and trip to the NCAA championships.

"Avoid the later tee teams, avoid any bad weather, avoid courses worn down," said Ewart, who said she will trade any gray hairs, the worry and a.m. alarm for a clear shot at a trip to Maryland.

"That's where we want to be," she said, "and we're more than capable of doing so. Only one of our players has never seen the course. It's all part of course management."

Ewart has managed her team well in 2009. She returned senior Kay Hoey after a redshirt season, welcomed freshman Lee Lopez, and saw her other players step up with consistent seasons.

"I knew Lee would give us a 1-2 punch with Kay, and the other girls were all capable," she said. "I actually had a sense since last fall that this would be a good season, especially when everyone came back in good shape after winter break. I thought after our break this season that we were deeper and solid, and lo and behold, here we go."

gladly Ewart is especially pleased that the team has received some nice notices in the media and from colleagues. Women's golf is at the low end of most college totems. There are very few home events, the team spends an inordinate amount of time on the practice range, and it travels often.

"I told the kids in the past that they if they want some publicity, they needed to start rattling some chains," she said. "It's good for them. We don't have an offseason and it's phenomenal what they accomplish when they have to balance academics, travel and play."

The 2006 team advanced to the NCAA West Regionals and finished 17th of 21 teams. Teams the 49ers will compete against this week include Arizona State, USC, LSU, Pepperdine, Arizona, Cal, UC Irvine and Texas.

The top two individuals advance to the NCAAs as well.

While the golfers are in Arizona, the women's tennis team will be in Palo Alto, preparing for the NCAA team tournament. Jenny Hilt-Costello's team is a No. 3 seed and will face No.2 LSU in their first-round match.

A win would send them to the regional finals, probably against Stanford. Their chances took a hit when Jessica Weeks underwent surgery to repair a hip ailment that has bothered her most of the season, so Hilt-Costello will have to shuffle some of the double teams and the order with the loss.

It's the second time a late-season elective surgery decision has vexed the 49ers. Sandra Rocha missed the NCAAs under similar circumstances a few years ago.

Hannah Grady didn't get the Big West's automatic bid to the individual NCAA tournament, losing the bid to a player with a higher ranking.

Grady will be part of the teaching staff at Hilt-Costello's Beach Youth Tennis Camp that will be held June 22 through Aug. 14. Camp sessions run from 9 a.m. to noon.

Former Wilson and Angels standout Bobby Grich is participating in the inaugural Hall of Fame Classic in Cooperstown June 21. Hall of Famers Bob Feller, Ferguson Jenkins, Paul Molitor, Phil Niekro and Brooks Robinson will play in a seven-inning exhibition game along with 20 other former major league stars like Grich.

This game replaces the annual Doubleday Field exhibition game between major league teams that was scrubbed thanks to the lack of foresight and commitment by the player's association and MLB commissioner Bud Selig.

Good luck to 49ers marketing chief Tim Dickson, who is leaving to return to his alma mater, Pacific, as director of external affairs and major gifts.

Congrats to soccer star Mariko Strickland, who is a finalist for the Arthur Ashe Jr. Sports Scholarship Award.

**Some of the live-auction prizes for the May 16 "Jewels of the Night" have been announced, including a trip to Australia and New Zealand, a week's stay in Del Mar, a golf package, four tickets to the 2010 Rose Bowl National Championship game, and on-field events with former Dirtbags stars Evan Longoria, Troy Tulowitzki and Jered Weaver.**

Keep a good thought in your mind for Boston John Connolly, who is fighting leukemia. The long-time Dirtbags fan and Acapulco Inn denizen is one of the nicest human beings you will ever come across, and the former Boeing employee and his extended family are taking a vigilant attitude toward his illness.

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