

## **Young Florida State Women's Golf Team in Position to Pursue First ACC Title**

By Curt Weiler

Tallahassee Democrat

April 17, 2019

The Florida State women's golf team has a chance at history this week.

The Seminoles enter this week's ACC Championship at the Sedgefield Country Club in Greensboro, North Carolina looking for their first ACC title in program history.

Year after year, FSU has flirted with that elusive ACC Championship. The Seminoles finished second each of the last two seasons and have amassed 19 top-four finishes in their 27 years in the conference.

That title has remained just out of arm's reach, however, through close call after close call.

This year, the Seminoles enter the ACC Championship -- held over three days from Thursday through Saturday -- as the No. 9 team in the country per Golf Stat, behind only No. 3 Duke and No. 8 Wake Forest among conference opponents.

"I think the biggest thing is we've worked really hard at getting better each and every day we come out here. Now's the postseason," FSU head coach Amy Bond said.

"You really just treat it as any other regular day because it's still 54 holes, they've got to go out and play the golf course rather than other people. I'm really excited just to see them compete with the best teams in the ACC and kind of see how we compare as we're heading into the big part of the season."

FSU enters the postseason in the strong position it's in despite the fact that four of the five Seminoles that will compete in the ACC Championship are freshmen.

Junior Amanda Doherty will be the only Seminole with postseason experience as she's joined by freshmen Frida Kinhult, Beatrice Wallin, Puk Lyng Thomsen and Amelia Williamson.

Still, Bond believes that the freshman quartet's prior experience on similar stages will prepare them for what to expect at Sedgefield.

"They really are a veteran group. They've got experience. They're young to the college world, but they're experienced players from around the world," Bond said.

"This is the very first ACC Championship for them so just playing 12 other teams is the smallest event we've played all year. For them, it'll be a little bit different, but we hope we keep the same atmosphere, same practice routine, just have a lot of fun out there and see what happens."

Doherty -- who finished tied for fifth at last year's ACC Championship -- has the same impression from FSU's freshman foursome that has impressed all season long.

"I think they kind of understand that this time of year is important. We're not really going to change anything at practice. Just keep doing what we've been doing, it got us this far," Doherty said.

"I think they're prepared. They're all good golfers, they know what they're doing."

All four freshmen have had their moments of brilliance, but Kinhult stands out as FSU's best chance at the first individual ACC Championship in program history.

Kinhult enters her first ACC Championship with a stroke average of 69.65 this season, making her the only ACC golfer with a sub-70 stroke average.

She's finished in the Top 10 of all seven tournaments she's competed in and finished at par or better in 16 of the 20 rounds she's played this year.

Her current stroke average would break the FSU freshman record of 71.83 by Matilda Castren in 2014 by over two full strokes.

"I anticipated that she would play pretty well. She's got a lot of experience all around the world. She's been the fourth-ranked (amateur) player in the world so she really knows what she's doing around the golf course," Bond said.

"To have her as a member of the Florida State Seminoles is a bonus. She still surprises me with the shots she hits...I think she has yet to reach her potential, but she's off to a great start."

Kinhult currently sits as the No. 2 player in Golf Stat's Individual NCAA rankings behind only Andrea Lee of Stanford.

That puts her even ahead of Wake Forest's Jennifer Kuccha -- the defending NCAA Individual Champion who is ranked third entering ACCs -- who Kinhult could very well be matched up with for Thursday's first round.

"I tried to not have too many expectations coming in, but it's been great," Kinhult said.

"I'm just trying to improve and do my best all the time and learn from my tournaments. I'm very excited to keep going."

While FSU enters ranked behind Wake and Duke, it has brought in recent wins over both programs.

The Seminoles won the Darius Rucker Invitational March 8 through 10 with a team score of two-under par, 17 strokes clear of the Demon Deacons and 19 strokes ahead of the Blue Devils.

FSU also beat Duke by four strokes at the Evans Derby Invitational in Opelika, Alabama March 23 through 25.

"It's a great experience to have been in the situations before and also that we made it through those times," Kinhult said.

"I think we're all looking for a win this week and we're all very excited."

This recent string of success -- FSU won its last two full-strength tournaments entering this week -- has the Seminoles feeling good about their chances even though it's a course none of them have played before.

"I think the biggest thing is for them not to have any preconceived ideas about the golf course itself. It's a great golf course. It's going to present a challenge, both with weather and with the course itself, but I think it'll be fun," Bond said.

"If we stay within ourselves and play the golf course, I think we'll be in good shape come the final round. That's the biggest thing is taking one day at a time as it comes and then see what happens at the end of the 54th hole."