

ULM's McKendrick continues strong play in opening round of Cotton States

By Michael Kern

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Two years ago, ULM sophomore David McKendrick came to Monroe to play in the W.E. (Winnie) Cole Cotton States golf tournament as part of a summer tour of amateur events.

The Australian-born golfer wanted to test himself as a full-time golfer against some of the world's top amateur golfers during his native country's winter months. He never planned to be back in the event this year as a Monroe native.

Something about the experience stuck with McKendrick, though.

"I had no intention of going to college when I came here to enter events in the U.S.," said McKendrick before the start of the tournament on Tuesday. "I came over here and stayed with the president of Bayou DeSiard Country Club. His family looked after me for the week. They showed me around, and I decided I wanted to come to school here."

McKendrick enrolled at ULM and instantly became one of the team's top golfers. He emerged this spring as the Warhawks' best player and has continued to raise his level of play.

The sophomore finished sixth at the Louisiana State Amateur at the TPC Louisiana in New Orleans two weeks ago. Then he won the second event of the Collegiate Players Tour at Black Horse Golf Club in Cypress, Texas, shooting one-under-par for the tournament.



ULM's David McKendrick watches his shot during Tuesday's play at the Cotton States amateur tournament.

"This is (David's) time to breakout," said ULM coach Chris Wilson, who also played in the tournament and shot an opening round 71. "He played well this spring. He finished as the runner-up at the Victorian Amateur over Christmas. That event has been won by some big names like Stuart Appleby and Adam Scott. It's a who's who of Australian golf, and he lost one down in a 36-hole final."

In the opening round of stroke play on Tuesday, McKendrick shot a 68, which placed him in the top five. Andrew Landry, a late entry from the University of Arkansas, grabbed the early lead with a 65. Abilene Christian's Stephen Knight and Lamar's Oliver Bekker were one stroke back at 66.

"I was putting really well today," McKendrick said, "but I played the par 5's 1 over par, so that was a little disappointing. Overall, I've obviously happy with the way I played."

Playing golf and going to school so far away from home wasn't an easy adjustment for McKendrick, however.

He suffered through some serious bouts with homesickness during his freshman year. Last summer he chose to skip the Cotton States so that he could return home to Australia during summer break and see his family and friends.

"I was ready to go home after six months," McKendrick said. "I called home and told them I was thinking about leaving, but I stuck it out. Three weeks into the second semester, I began to have a wonderful time."

Playing in America was also a big adjustment on the golf course.

Back home, most of the focus in teaching golf was on technique and building strong fundamentals. Wilson said that Australian golfers often have some of the best swings in terms of fundamentals because of that emphasis.

In college in the U.S., McKendrick had to shift his focus to making low scores. It became less about competing with himself and more about competing with others.

"I think the competition in the U.S. has made me better," McKendrick said "You're not going to get any strong amateur competition than in American college golf. The best players from all around the world come here to play."

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