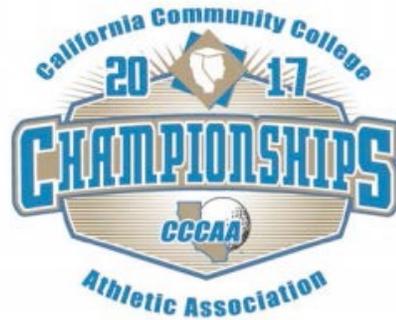


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The Best Community College Golfers Vie For State Title on Monday

The California Community College Athletic Association (CCCAA) 2017 men's golf state championship will be held on Monday, May 15, at the Cypress Ridge Golf Course in Arroyo Grande with eight teams and 60 individuals battling for championship honors.

Cypress Ridge is a Peter Jacobsen Signature course located on California's Central Coast, utilizing the natural landscape of mature Cypress trees to assist with habitat enhancement and wildlife conservation in order to earn signature status from Audubon International. Birdies will be seen in the trees but will be harder to come by on the greens as golfers will play from the tips, utilizing the black tees to stretch the par-72 course out to its maximum length at 6,803 yards.

The defending 2016 state champion Reedley College Tigers have returned and will serve as tournament hosts for this year's state championship. The Tigers captured the Central Valley Conference title this season, led by Israel Garcia and Ben Kinsley. They will be joined by a Chabot College (Hayward, Calif.) team which recently captured the CCCAA North Regional title with a 36-hole team score of 753. Zack McClure and Heetae Yang led the charge for the Gladiators. Folsom Lake College (Folsom, Calif.) has also qualified as a team after winning the Big 8 Conference title and finishing second at the North Regional (777). The Falcons are led by sophomore Mason Troike who earned Big 8 MVP honors for the second consecutive season. Modesto Junior College rounds out the teams from Northern California playing at the state championship. Justin Schroyer led the Pirates in scoring at the regional event at 5-over-par 149.

Riverside City College leads a four-team contingent from Southern California. The Tigers, who captured their first state golf title in 2014, captured both the Orange Empire Conference and CCCAA South Regional title this year. Everett Najera leads the Tigers and was selected as the conference player of the year this season after averaging 71.0 strokes per round. He has only posted two scores above par this season and has to be considered one of the favorites to vie for individual medalist honors after capturing the South Regional title with a pair of even-par rounds. Sophomore Robby Melton also has state championship experience, playing for the Tigers on the 2015 team which reached the state tournament.

Cypress College was the runner-up to Riverside in conference play as well as at the South Regional. The Chargers are making their first state championship appearance in seven years and are led by South Regional runner-up Dylan Hall (4-over-par 148). College of the Canyons (Santa Clarita, Calif.) will be playing in its sixth consecutive men's golf state championship, capturing state titles in 2015 and 2013

during that stretch. Western State Conference co-MVP Ben Campbell leads the Cougars, shooting a 7-over-par 151 at the South Regional. Ventura College returns to the state championship tournament for the first time in eight years after placing fourth at the South Regional (774). Joey Herrera, who shared the Western State Conference's co-MVP award with Campbell, led the Pirates by tying for individual runner-up honors at the regional event (4-over-par 148).

Canyons and Chabot have the most experience at the state championship event with both colleges qualifying as a team in 14 of the past 18 seasons. Canyons has seven total titles to its credit while Chabot has two golf titles. Reedley and Folsom Lake have qualified for the state tournament in each of the previous two seasons with Reedley winning last year's title. Riverside is participating in the state tournament for the third time in the past four seasons.

Cypress, Folsom Lake, and Ventura have never won a men's golf state title. Modesto won three of the first six state titles (1951, 1954, 1955) but has not been back in many years.

There will be 60 individuals participating in this year's state championship, including 12 individuals not attached to one of the eight teams mentioned above. Players to watch include San Joaquin Delta College sophomore Addison Gallagher, Orange Coast College sophomore Josh McCollum, Mt. San Jacinto College freshman Kieran Blundell, and Palomar College sophomore Mitch Cannon. Gallagher shot a 36-hole score of 2-over-par at the North Regional while McCollum was 4-over at the South Regional and both Blundell and Cannon were 5-over at the South Regional.

Tee times for Monday's state championship event will begin at 7:30 a.m. for the morning rounds and approximately 1:00 p.m. for the afternoon rounds with the awards ceremony scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Galleries are welcome to walk the course but must remain on the cart paths.

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