



## ARKANSAS STATE ATHLETICS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### **A-State Men's Golf Placed at No. 72 in Final 2017-18 Golfstat National Rankings**

JONESBORO, Ark. (6/8/18) – The final 2017-18 Golfstat national rankings were published this week, and the Arkansas State men's golf team finished among the top 87 teams for the third consecutive season by claiming the No. 72 position.

The Red Wolves were the second-highest ranked team in the Sun Belt Conference behind only Georgia Southern, which finished No. 69. A-State also ended the year ranked No. 79 in the nation by Golfweek, matching the program's 2015-16 finish that was its highest since ending the 1999-2000 season at No. 65.

Arkansas State ended the season with a 100-37-3 head-to-head record for a .725 winning percentage, while also collecting at least a runner-up finish in six of 11 tournaments. The Red Wolves won their annual home event, the Bubba Barnett Intercollegiate, for the second consecutive season for the first time in 16 years.

The squad also tied a school record for the third consecutive year by placing three student-athletes on the 2018 All-Sun Belt Conference Team, including senior Tanner Napier, junior Joel Wendin and sophomore Zan Luka Stirn. A-State's nine all-conference players over the last three seasons ties Georgia State for the most in the league.

Napier ended the 2017-18 season ranked No. 189 in the nation by Golfstat after becoming the fourth A-State men's golfer to ever compete as an individual at an NCAA Regional. He went on to complete the NCAA Norman Regional tied for 29th place, picking up the best finish ever by an A-State golfer competing as an individual at an NCAA Regional.

"I think you can see how our tournament schedule has transformed and evolved to where we are now constantly competing against top teams in the nation, and that's important in terms of both attracting new talent to your program and improving your chances at postseason play," said A-State head coach Mike Hagen. "This past year we had some strong runner-up finishes, were competitive and there was some growth there. It was reflected in the rankings, and we're now closer to solidifying a spot in the postseason as we take that next step."

A-State's No. 72 ranking for this past season came one year after the squad ranked No. 87 in 2016-17 and represented an eight-position jump over its No. 80-ranking in 2015-16 during Hagen's first season as head coach. Hagen was promptly named the Red Wolves first ever Sun Belt Conference Coach of the Year as the squad made one of the nation's best improvements after finishing the 2014-15 campaign ranked No. 199.

Arkansas State's most recent national rankings reflect the growth of the men's golf program over the last three seasons, which has seen the Red Wolves claim 10 tournament championships and place among the top three teams in 19 of 34 tournaments (56 percent). During the same span, the program has compiled a 330-102-10 combined head-to-head record for a .758 winning percentage.

The Red Wolves placed among the top three teams at the Sun Belt Conference Championships in back-to-back years while advancing to the league's tournament semifinals two of three years (2016 & 2017) a match play format has been used to determine a champion.

Since the 2016-17 season, A-State has 61 combined individual top-10 finishes for an average of 20 per year. An Arkansas State player has been named the Sun Belt Conference Golfer of the Week five times, including the league's 2017 Sun Belt Conference Newcomer and Freshman of the Year in Stirn.

Stirn advanced to the NCAA Baton Rouge Regional in 2017 as well and with Napier competing in the NCAA postseason in

2018, they combined to give the Red Wolves two different players in a regional in back-to-back years for the first time in school history.

Named a Golf Coaches Association of America (GCAA) All-Academic Team in 2016 and 2017 as well, Arkansas State has been equally successful off the golf courses. A-State has also seen two players named Srixon/Cleveland Golf All-America Scholars, including Andrew Huseman and Napier. The 2018 selections for both the All-Academic Team and All-America scholars haven't been announced yet.

The men's golf team has also seen six players earn their bachelor's degree from Arkansas State University over the last three years, including Seth Garner, Huseman, Kevin Kramarski, Matt Loiacano, Napier and Oswin Schlenkrich. The A-State Athletics Director's Honor Roll has featured 15 members of the team during at least one semester.

The Red Wolves will return five lettermen, including All-Sun Belt picks Wendin and Stirn, in 2018 and will welcome three newcomers to the team. The signing class features Indian Hills Community College All-American Julien Sale, who is also the No. 1 ranked junior college player in the nation.

"I'm excited for next year," Hagen said. "We hope to release our 2018-19 schedule later this month, and we have five outstanding players back who have all spent time in our starting lineup. When you add to that the nation's top-ranked junior college player and two highly-successful incoming freshmen, these are exciting times for our program."