

Fighting Illini Battle at Southern Highlands: Voois Leads as Team Sits in 10th

LAS VEGAS, NV – Under the desert sun at Southern Highlands Golf Club, the No. 12 Illinois men's golf team has faced its share of challenges through the first two days of the prestigious Southern Highlands Collegiate. Now, as the tournament nears its conclusion, the Fighting Illini sit in 10th place at 25-over-par, looking to have a strong finish in the final round.

The Illini opened play Sunday with an up-and-down round, but it was freshman Trey Marrion who stole the show early. The first-year golfer carded a 1-over-par round, leading the team and finishing the day tied for 11th individually. As a group, Illinois posted a 14-over-par 302, slotting into a tie for 6th on the leaderboard.

Monday's second round saw the Illini drop to seventh place, with some steady play from the whole squad. Sophomore Max Herendeen and Marrion traded places on the board after Herendeen's 1-over-par performance. The team's overall score improved from an 14-over-par day one, to an 8-over-par day two, keeping them in the mix among the top teams in a stacked field.

As Tuesday's final round unfolds, the Illini are battling to regain ground after slipping back to 9th place. Junior Ryan Voois has stepped up as the team's leader, currently tied for 24th individually at 5-over-par. The squad collectively stands at 21-over-par, looking to close strong as they wrap up play in Las Vegas.

Coach Mike Small, who spoke ahead of the tournament, anticipated a tough test for his squad. "Southern Highlands is always one of the most challenging courses we play all year, and it demands a lot from every part of your game," said Small. "We've been preparing well, and I'm looking forward to seeing how our guys handle the competition."

Small also highlighted the role of his younger players, including freshman Trey Marrion. "We have a mix of experience on this team, and this kind of event is a great opportunity for our younger guys to step up," he said. "It's a long season, but we're at our halfway point, and tournaments like this help us learn where we stand and what we need to improve on as the BIG10 tournament gets closer."

With the tournament winding down, the Illini are pushing for a late surge to climb the leaderboard. As they prepare for the remainder of the spring season, Small and his team will take lessons from their performance at Southern Highlands into the crucial weeks ahead.

"At this point in the season, we're looking for consistency," said Small. "Every round is a chance to get better, and I know our guys will take what they learn here and apply it moving forward."