Middle Tennessee Survives Marathon Match

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MOBILE, Ala. - Tanja Buchheim prevailed 7-5 in the third set in a three-plus hour match to give the 61st-ranked Middle Tennessee Lady Raiders a 4-3 victory Saturday in the Sun Belt Championships at the Mobile Tennis Center. Saturday's match took more than five hours to complete after the Lady Raiders (13-9) played for more than four hours Friday against Arkansas State. Senior Michaela Gridling was taken to the hospital after her singles match, suffering from dehydration. The junior Buchheim won the opening set of her match, 6-3, over Montserrat Flores, but Flores came back to win a tiebreaker for the second set. The two were the only ones left on the court in the third set, and continued to battle back-and-forth, with the match tied at four all when Flores began cramping. Flores battled through the cramps but eventually succumbed to Buchheim, 7-5, in the final set, giving the Lady Raiders the 4-3 victory. Middle Tennessee started the match unlucky by dropping the doubles point in a tiebreaker. Jennifer Klaschka and Carien Venter won 8-3 at No. 3 doubles over Alejandra Lopez and Vanessa Nieto, but Gridling and Emily Vest dropped a 9-7 decision to Flores and Cecilia Poveda. At No. 1, 12th-ranked Stacy Varnell and Manon Kruse lost to Maria Julieta Lillo and Layla Tohme, 9-8 (4), dropping the doubles point for the second straight day. But the Lady Raiders started the singles with a bang, winning the opening set in four of the six matches. Venter rolled to a 6-1, 6-3 win at No. 5 over Lopez, and Klaschka also won easily, 6-2, 6-1, at No. 2 over Tohme. Vest lost at No. 6 and Gridling dropped her match in straight sets, but the33rd-ranked Kruse tied the match at three with a 6-2, 6-3 victory over Lillo at No. 1, leaving the match to Buchheim, who delivered in the clutch. The Lady Raiders take on New Mexico State at 9 a.m. Sunday in the fifth-place match of the tournament at the Mobile Tennis Center. **#61 MIDDLE TENNESSEE 4, ARKANSAS-LITTLE ROCK 3**

SINGLES

(33) Manon Kruse (MT) def. Maria Julieta Lillo (UALR), 6-2, 6-3
Jennifer Klaschka (MT) def. Layla Tohme (UALR), 6-2, 6-1
Cecilia Poveda (UALR) def. Michaela Gridling (MT), 6-3, 6-1
Tanja Buchheim (MT) def. Montserrat Flores (UALR), 6-3, 6-7 (5), 7-5

Carien Venter (MT) def. Alejandra Lopez (UALR), 6-1, 6-3
Carmen Torres (UALR) def. Emily Vest (MT), 6-0, 6-0

DOUBLES

1. Lillo-Tohme (UALR) def. (12) Kruse-Varnell (MT), 9-8 (4)
2. Flores-Poveda (UALR) def. Vest-Gridling (MT), 9-7
3. Klaschka-Venter (MT) def. Vanessa Nieto-Lopez (UALR), 8-3

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