Men's Tennis Drops Another Tough One to South Alabama

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Middle Tennessee men's tennis team lost the doubles point but came back to lead in four singles matches only to watch 53rd-ranked South Alabama win a pair of three-set matches to win 4-3 in the semifinals of the Sun Belt Championships Saturday afternoon at the David Lubel Memorial Tennis Courts.

The Blue Raiders lost the doubles point in a tiebreaker at No. 3, a sign of things to come in the four-plus hour match on the Jaguars home courts.

Middle Tennessee's Kirk Jackson and Anant Sitaram defeated Evan Fowler and Aurelio Di Zazzo, 8-4, at No. 2, but the 31st-ranked USA duo of Heinrich Heyl and Clinton Jacobs evened the doubles matches with an 8-4 victory over Daniel Klemetz and Brandon Allan at No. 1.

Blue Raiders Trevor Short and Michael Staniak battled Jorgen Vestli and Pavel Mazaev at No. 3, with the Jaguars winning in the tiebreaker, 8-6.

South Alabama took a 2-0 lead as singles play began, with Jacobs defeating an ailing Jackson, 6-2, 6-2, at No. 2. Jackson has been battling back problems for the past month before severely spraining his ankle Friday at the championships.

The 16th-ranked Klemetz defeated No. 90 Heyl, 7-6, 6-4, at No. 1 to pull the Blue Raiders to 2-1, but Vestli took care of Rishan Kuruppu in three sets at No. 5, 6-1, 4-6, 6-3, for a 3-1 USA advantage.

Allan got the Blue Raiders closer again with a 6-7, 6-3, 6-3 triumph over David Nylen at No. 6.

The deciding match came down to Staniak and Di Zazzo at No. 3, with Staniak winning the first set and taking a 5-3 advantage in the second set. But Di Zazzo rallied to win the second set in a tiebreaker before taking the final set, 6-4, giving the Jaguars their second win of the season against

the Blue Raiders.

At the match that did not finish, Sitaram and Mazaev split set and Sitaram held a 5-3 lead in the third set when the match ended.

The Blue Raiders have now lost eight in a row to the Jaguars and three straight in the Sun Belt Championships, including losses in 2001 and 2002 in the title match.

The Blue Raiders play their final match of the season against Louisiana-Lafayette at 9 a.m. Sunday at the Mobile Tennis Center.

#53 SOUTH ALABAMA 4, MIDDLE TENNESSEE 2

SINGLES

1. (16) Daniel Klemetz (MT) def. Heinrich Heyl (USA), 7-6, 6-4
2. Clinton Jacobs (USA) def. Kirk Jackson (MT), 6-2, 6-2
3. Aurelio Di Zazzo (USA) def. Michael Staniak (MT), 4-6, 7-6, 6-3
4. Pavel Mazaev (USA) vs. Anant Sitaram (MT), DNF
5. Jorgen Vestli (USA) def. Rishan Kuruppu (MT), 6-1, 4-6, 6-3
6. Brandon Allan (MT) def. David Nylen (USA), 6-7, 6-3, 6-3

DOUBLES

1. (31) Heyl-Jacobs (USA) def. Klemetz-Allan (MT), 8-4
2. Jackson-Sitaram (MT) def. Evan Fowler-DiZazzo (USA), 8-4
3. Vestli-Mazaev (USA) def. Staniak-Trevor Short (MT), 9-8 (6)

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