Former All-American Pays Visit to Blue Raiders

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Last week the Middle Tennessee women's tennis team was afforded the privilege of practicing with one of the great in Blue Raider tennis history - former All-American Manon Kruse, who paid a visit to town on vacation from her native Germany. Kruse spent almost two weeks on vacation in the United States, taking a break from her job in Babenhausen, Germany, with the Siemens Automotive Division. She spent almost every afternoon last week practicing with the current Blue Raiders and second-year head coach Alison Ojeda. "The new team is very talented on the individual level," said Kruse. "The new coaches are very good and are doing a very good job with the team. I really appreciate them letting me practice with them." When asked about the current team Kruse responded, "I had a chance to play with almost of the team and they are strong players. They are a very close group and it would be nice to be apart of their team. "This is the first thing you miss. When you leave the team, you miss being a part of something. When you are working at a job, you are more on your own and don't have the closeness like you have when you are playing on a team." During her career at Middle Tennessee, Kruse posted the best doubles record four straight years and best singles record for three seasons. She ended her collegiate career as the first All-American in women's tennis history at Middle Tennessee along with partner Carien Venter in 2004. "That was the greatest moment of my college career. It was special not only because I was the first to be named an All-American, but even more because I could do it with my doubles partner." After her graduation in 2004, Kruse returned home to live and work in her home country. However, she still finds time to play competitive money tournaments in Germany. "I enjoy playing still. It is different though. I don't train as much as when I was in school. I like this because I don't put as much pressure on myself as I would have before. I get to just go out and enjoy myself." Kruse is also an active traveler. "I love experiencing different cultures and people. In Europe you typically will get at least a month-and-a-half vacation in the summer and it is great to be able to use this time to see the world. "That was something I loved about playing at Middle Tennessee. I got to travel and be with

girls from different countries. I would not have been able to do that if I had stayed in Germany." Even though she is well traveled, Kruse will always remember her home at Middle Tennessee. Highly recruited by both the Blue Raiders and the University of Iowa, she remembers the sincerity and interest taken in her from Middle Tennessee. "Both schools sent me letters when I was a year away from graduating high school. However, Middle Tennessee continued to keep in contact with me while Iowa just sent me the exact same letter a year later. I appreciated that." And the rest is history, with Kruse No. 1 in the Middle Tennessee record books in career singles, doubles and combined victories, as well as tops on the single-season doubles and doubles winning percentage lists.

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