

Blue Raiders Outlast FAU, 4-3

Advance to semifinals to face Denver

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Middle Tennessee dropped the doubles point but battled back in singles, with Morgan Richard coming back from down a set and a break, as the 47th-ranked Blue Raiders outlasted Florida Atlantic, 4-3, Friday in the quarterfinals of the Sun Belt Championships in Denton, Texas. Middle Tennessee (14-11) won its fifth straight match overall and beat the Owls for the second time this season. The Blue Raiders advance to the semifinals to take on 73rd-ranked Denver at 5 p.m. at the Waranch Tennis Center. The Blue Raiders got off to a rough start, dropping the doubles



point. Middle Tennessee seniors Andreas Siljestrom and Marco Born, ranked 11th nationally in doubles, defeated Lawrence Harradine and Corey Smith, 8-5, at No. 1, but FAU's Olivier Sajous and Daniel Vardag won 8-4 at No. 2 over Marc Rocafort and Morgan Richard. The Owls posted the first point of the match when Karol Szmurlo and Eddie Majcher posted an 8-4 triumph against Marc Boiron and Joao Paoliello. The Blue Raiders came back with two quick singles wins, as Rocafort defeated Smith, 6-1, 6-0, at No. 4 and Paoliello won 6-1, 6-2, over Majcher at No. 5. Born, ranked 113th nationally in singles, then gave Middle Tennessee a 3-1 lead with a 6-3, 6-3, triumph at No. 2 against Szmurlo. But the Owls would not go away. Harradine defeated Alex McCann, 6-3, 6-3, at No. 6 and Sajous upset 78th-ranked Siljestrom at No. 1, 6-1, 6-7, 7-5, with Siljestrom dropping the match after going up a set and a break. That left everything to No. 3, where Richard fell behind a set and a break to Vardag. But the sophomore battled back as he has done so often in the second half of the season, pulling out a 1-6, 7-5, 6-3, victory for the clinching point. Short said the match was really what he expected, especially after the Blue Raiders dropped the doubles point. "They stacked their lineup in doubles and that hurt us not getting off to a good start," Short said. "And I knew they had a good chance to win at 1 and 6 and they did. I knew everyone else had to show up and three guys did. "Morgan couldn't keep the ball on the court in the first set and then was broken in the second set. At that point I told him he had to battle because everything was coming down to his match and to his credit, he really buckled down and got it done." Middle Tennessee faces Denver for the fifth time in seven years in the conference tournament. The Blue Raiders have won the previous four

meetings, last a 4-0 decision in 2005. "Denver is a really good matchup for us all the way down the lineup, top to bottom in singles and in doubles as well," Short said. "It will be a challenge and we'll need to play better in doubles." Full results from the Sun Belt Championships may be found at www.sunbeltsports.org and a bracket for the event may be found at

<http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/25553>. **#47 Middle Tennessee 4, Florida Atlantic 3**

SINGLES

1. Olivier Sajous (FAU) def. (78) Andreas Siljestrom (MT), 6-1, 6-7, 7-5
2. (113) Marco Born (MT) def. Karol Szmurlo (FAU), 6-3, 6-3
3. Morgan Richard (MT) def. Daniel Vardag (FAU), 1-6, 7-5, 6-3
4. Marc Rocafort (MT) def. Corey Smith (FAU), 6-1, 6-0
5. Joao Paoliello (MT) def. Eddie Majcher (FAU), 6-1, 6-2
6. Lawrence Harradine (FAU) def. Alex McCann (MT), 6-3, 6-3

Order of Finish: 4,5,2,6,1,3*

DOUBLES

1. (11) Siljestrom-Born (MT) def. Harradine-Smith (FAU), 8-5
2. Sajous-Vardag (FAU) def. Richard-Rocafort (MT), 8-4
3. Szmurlo-Majcher (FAU) def. Marc Boiron-Paoliello (MT), 8-4

Order of Finish: 1,2,3*

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