Fairy Tale Ending for Blue Raider Tennis

Seniors end careers and send head coach out with national championship; Gathering tonight at 7:30 PM at Don Pablos in Murfreesboro

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - In the final match of head coach Dale Short's storied career, seniors Marco Born and Andreas Siljestrom made history on Monday, winning the NCAA Doubles Championships, 4-6, 7-6 (5), 7-6 (4), in Athens, Ga., over defending national champs, Kevin Anderson and Ryan Rowe of Illinois. The Blue Raider duo claimed the program's fourth national title in tennis and the first-ever NCAA Championship. The Blue Raiders were broken late in the first set and then again at 4-all in the second set and looked to be done in the program's first NCAA championship match. But Born-Siljestrom broke back in the next game and forced a tiebreaker in the second set, evening the match. In the third set the Blue Raiders nearly broke the Illini in the first game and Siljestrom overcame a pair of double faults in the 12th game to force a deciding tiebreaker. In the breaker Middle Tennessee started fast, dropping the first point before rattling off three straight and five of six for a 5-2 advantage. The Illini held their two serves before Born finished off the victory with his two serves, setting off the celebration between the two seniors and their head coach. "I'm a little bit at a loss for words. To go out like that is a dream of a lifetime," head coach Dale Short. "I have to give credit to the guys. They kept their composure, didn't think too far ahead and stepped up when it mattered. "It was a great match and a huge win, not only for the guys but also for the University. I hope this is a sign of things to come for Marco and Andreas and also for our tennis program at Middle Tennessee." In the first game of the match, Illinois had a break point but Siljestrom's miss-hit volley fell on the end line. After two deuces the Blue Raiders held serve. Illinois held serve on four points and Born-Siljestrom stayed on serve after two more deuces for a 2-1 lead. Illinois overcame break points in the fourth game to stay on serve, but the Illinois got the first break in the match when Siljestrom double faulted at 15-40 in the sixth game for a 4-3 Illini advantage. Anderson-Rowe served out the first set, 6-4. Neither team had trouble with their serve until the ninth game of the second set. Illinois won the first two points against Born's serve, but the Blue Raiders took the next two for 30-all. Illinois answered with the final two points of the game for what looked to be the back-breaker in the match. But Born-Siljestrom answered in the following

game with four consecutive points, breaking Illinois and tying the second set at 5-all. The Blue Raiders fought off two break points on Siljestrom's serve to go ahead, 6-5. Illinois then held serve, forcing a tiebreaker. The Blue Raiders started fast in the breaker, winning three of the first four points, including a double fault by Illinois and a volley that went off the top of the net and fell just out. But a miss-hit return of serve changed the momentum toward the Illini, who took three straight points for a 4-3 advantage. Born answered with two good serves and after Illinois tied the breaker at 5, the Blue Raiders won the final two points to force a third and deciding set. Middle Tennessee thought it had broken Illinois in the first game of the third set at 30-40, but an overrule made it deuce and the Illini held serve. The Blue Raiders held serve and were up Love-30 on the next Illinois service game, but again the Illini fought off back to hold serve. Neither team had much trouble again on serve in the third set until Siljestrom had two double faults at 5-6, but Illinois failed to capitalize on its only match point, hitting a return into the net for deuce. Siljestrom held serve to force the deciding tiebreaker. The match will be shown in full at a later date on ESPNU and the Tennis Channel. Full results from the match and tournament may be found at http://admin.xosn.com/ViewArticle.dbml?DB_OEM_ID=8800&ATCLID=751695.

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