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## 2009 season memorable for Blue Raiders

### McKenzie, Peers guide team throughout season

MT Athletic Communications

**MURFREESBORO, Tenn.** - The Blue Raider tennis team continued its winning ways in 2009 as it won the Sun Belt Tournament for its first automatic bid to the NCAA tournament since 2005.

The Blue Raiders received an automatic invitation to the NCAA tournament after defeating Florida Atlantic 4-1 in the championship match of the Sun Belt Championships.

It was the ninth appearance in the NCAA tournament for the Blue Raiders whose last postseason appearance was in 2006 after receiving an at-large bid. Middle Tennessee won the SBC tournament in 2005 which was the last time a Blue Raider squad received an automatic bid to the NAAs.

Middle Tennessee defeated ranked opponents East Tennessee State (38), Old Dominion (74), Western Michigan (73), Brigham Young (65) and Denver (69) during the 2009 season.

The Blue Raiders ended the campaign ranked 57th as a team which is the highest they have been ranked at the end of a season since 2006 when the team was 33 in the final ITA rankings. [Robert McKenzie](#) and [John Peers](#) also ended the season in the ITA rankings after posting impressive seasons. McKenzie and Peers were 96 and 101 respectively in singles and 33 as a doubles pair. Peers was also in the doubles ranking at 59 with teammate [Victor Melo](#).

The duo also participated in the NCAA Individual Championships. McKenzie lost a three set battle to New Mexico's Johnny Parkes in the first round of singles. McKenzie and Peers then paired up for doubles action.

The two defeated the duo of Austen and Simon Childs of Louisville 7-6 (3), 6-4 to advance to the round of 16, avenging a regular season loss. McKenzie and Peers fell in the round of 16 but posted impressive performances in the tournament.

Andreas Siljestrom and Marco Born were the last Blue Raiders to compete in the NCAA Individual Championships in both singles and doubles in 2006.

McKenzie ended the 2009 season 21-2 and went 18-1 in dual matches while Peers posted a 24-3 overall record and was 20-1 in dual matches. As a doubles pair, they were 10-2 and 9-1 in dual matches.

[Morgan Richard](#) and Melo also performed well for the Blue Raiders throughout the season. Richard put the championship match away for Middle Tennessee to clinch the title with his 6-2, 7-5 win over FAU's Joshua Scholl. Melo, hampered by injuries much of the season, had clutch victories for the Blue Raiders in big matches which included a singles win against No. 74 Old Dominion to help the team win the match.

The Blue Raiders met another goal in 2009 as they were invited to the 2010 ITA Kick-Off Weekend. Middle Tennessee's final ITA ranking of 57 put it in the top 60 earning it a spot in the tournament. The Blue Raiders will play in the Texas Regional with host Texas, Texas Tech and California. There are 15 host sites with four teams at each site. The 15 schools who win both matches at the event will be invited to play in the ITA National Team Indoor Championships.

Middle Tennessee also got it done in the classroom during the 2009 season winning the Team G.P.A award within the athletics department. The Blue Raiders had a 3.39 team G.P.A. with three of the eight members posting a 4.0 for the semester.

**23rd Annual Pro-Am Tennis Classic** The Blue Raiders will play host to the 23rd annual Pro-Am Tennis Classic on Saturday, Sept. 12 prior to the football game against Memphis set for 6 p.m. that night. There will be a dinner on Friday, Sept. 11 with the tennis tournament set to begin Saturday morning. More details on the event will be released on [goblueraiders.com](http://goblueraiders.com) as they become available.



Robert McKenzie represented the Blue Raiders at the NCAA Individual Championships in singles and posted a 21-2 overall record and went 18-1 in dual matches during the 2009 season. (UA Photography)