

May 4, 2005

No. 30 Middle Tennessee To Face Auburn In NCAA Tennis Regional

MT Media Relations

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee's nationally-ranked men's tennis team is back in the NCAA Regionals for the first time since 2002, but the Blue Raiders are extremely familiar with the landscape of their postseason destination as they venture onto the national stage for the seventh time in school history under veteran Head Coach Dale Short.

The No. 30-ranked Blue Raiders (18-6) were paired against No. 36-ranked Auburn (12-9) in the first round of the regionals in Oxford, Miss., and will play either May 13 or 14. Dates and times will be assigned in the near future. No. 3-ranked Ole Miss (21-3), the host and No. 3 national seed, and Jacksonville State (14-9) complete the four-team regional.

Middle Tennessee also played in Oxford, Miss., when they last reached the NCAA Regionals in 2002. The Blue Raiders beat Alabama, 4-3, in the first round before falling to Ole Miss, 4-1, in the second round. Middle Tennessee also has played the Rebels in Oxford during the regular season each year since 2002.

"It's not a foreign place. We have played there plenty of times and we played there earlier this season," senior **Greg Pollack** said. "We think we have a great opportunity because we believe we can beat Auburn and Ole Miss."

The Blue Raiders, who earned the Sun Belt's automatic berth into the NCAA Regionals by winning the league tournament for the first time since joining the SBC in 2001, appeared pleased with their postseason assignment as they gathered for the Selection Show at Toot's Restaurant. Short, who has fashioned a sterling 291-183 record in 18 seasons at his alma mater, said he expected Middle Tennessee to land in Oxford for the postseason.

"I kind of expected Oxford based on looking at everything," Short said. "We would love to get the chance to play Ole Miss again because we played them (in the NCAA Regional in 2002) and we won the doubles point and certainly were in position to win at least three or four of the singles as four of the six matches went three sets, so we know we are capable and if we are 100 percent the sky is the limit for this team because we have a lot of talent."

"I want to thank Toot's Restaurant and Comcast for teaming to make it possible for us to come here and gather with people from the community to watch the Selection Show. It is very much appreciated."

Whether Middle Tennessee will be at 100 percent is questionable as **Kai Schledorn**, who plays at the No. 3 singles position and teams with **Brandon Allan** to form the No. 26-rated doubles team in the nation, returned to Worms, Germany, Wednesday morning, to be with his mother, Volia, who is suffering from brain cancer.

"The big caveat that we have right now is (Schledorn), whose mother is dying of brain cancer, had to fly home (Wednesday) so we don't know the situation with that," Short said. "We are hoping he can get back here next week. I honestly think if Kai can find a way back and we can pull together then we have a good chance of getting through Auburn, but we have to play well because they are a very good team, and then having an opportunity to take it a step further against Ole Miss."

Middle Tennessee is led by **Andreas Siljeström**, who is 13-6 and ranked No. 100

nationally in singles. Siljestrom also teams with **Marco Born** to form the No. 45-rated doubles tandem in the nation.

"I am really excited and happy that we have this chance," said Siljestrom, a sophomore making his first regional appearance. "I think we have a really good chance to at least make the Sweet 16 and I'm looking forward to it. We have a good draw. I don't know anything about Auburn, but I know Ole Miss because we played them earlier this year. If we all step up then I think we have a very good chance."

Following are Middle Tennessee's players and their records in singles play this season: Brandon Allen (16-4), Born (13-9), Pollack (12-10), Schledorn (15-7), Sitaram (15-7), and Siljestrom (13-6). In doubles play, Born and Siljestrom have a sparkling 19-2 mark, while the tandem of Allan and Schledorn are 16-6. Pollack and Schledorn are 15-6 in doubles play.

Teams in the 64-team field will play a single-elimination tournament. The matches will be regulation dual matches with three eight-game, pro-set doubles played for one team point, followed by six singles matches, each valued at one team play, played best of three sets.

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