

March 18, 2010

Peers leads improving men's team

Blue Raiders to face No. 44 Notre Dame

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Playing against the No. 1 singles player on some of the best collegiate tennis teams in the country is a hard way to build a resume, but that is what Middle Tennessee's [John Peers](#) has done. And he has done it well.

After winning the Sun Belt Player of the Year Award in 2009, and leading the team to the Sun Belt Championship, Peers came back in the fall more prepared than ever.

"Winning the Player of the Year in the Sun Belt was a big confidence builder, and to get that award was really pleasing," noted Peers.

While the Blue Raiders have struggled to build a 4-11 record in one of the toughest schedules in the nation, Peers has posted a mark of 11-2 while being matched up against the best player on the opposing teams.

The junior from Melbourne, Australia, is on an 11-game win streak at No. 1 singles, and has posted a 3-1 record against ranked opponents. He is currently ranked 43rd in the national rankings.

Peers and his teammates will travel to Montgomery, Ala., this weekend to play in the Blue Gray Classic. Middle Tennessee will open the tournament against Notre Dame on Thursday, March 18 at 4:30 p.m., and then will face the winner or loser of the match between third seeded Fresno State and Boise State on Friday. Texas Tech, Oklahoma and Arizona are the other top seeds in the Blue Gray Classic.

We are looking forward to another opportunity to play another ranked opponent in No. 44 Notre Dame. It is a privilege to be a part of this prestigious tournament," head coach David McNamara said. "This is the best collegiate tennis tournament in the country and for us to be one of 16 teams here is certainly something that I and my players are excited and privileged to be involved with. The emphasis is character and sportsmanship. We try to play with class and respect the people around us and be mature and play our hearts out. If we do that then we are winners!"

Joining Peers on the court this weekend will be [Victor Melo](#) at No. 2 singles, [Richard Cowden](#) at No. 3, and [Matthew Langley](#), [Alex McCann](#) and [Shaun Waters](#) filling the last three spots.

"All the guys are really working hard, and it's starting to pay off," said Peers. "It's just a matter of time before the whole team starts to click."

For Peers, it will be another weekend of strong challenges, but he feels that his confidence level is rising. He was named the Sun Belt Conference Player of the Week for the week of Feb. 19-23rd. He went 7-1 that week, and launched his current win streak.

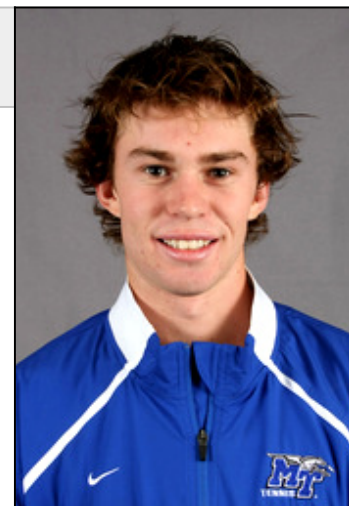
One of the biggest wins in the streak was his impressive 6-2, 6-3 triumph over Vanderbilt's Ryan Lipman two weeks ago. Peers ranked that as one of his two biggest victories of the year, the other being against Chase Buchanon of Ohio State in the fall.

"We are going to play three ranked opponents over the next three days and those are great opportunities. We have been close all season and it is time that this team and individuals step up and win. For every individual to get better they must beat some players that they are probably not supposed to," McNamara said. "When these guys start doing that then we as a team will start winning against these quality opponents."

Peers is 5-6 in doubles play, partnering with three different teammates in the No. 1 slot, the most often with junior [Kyle Wishing](#) who does not play singles. Peers and Wishing got off to a 1-3 start, but have now evened their record at 4-4.

The schedule has been brutal, but Peers sees the light at the end of the tunnel.

"We can definitely win the tournament," declared Peers. "It is just a matter of all the guys clicking on the same day. We are very close to knocking off some teams ranked in the Top 30. It is just a matter of all the guys hanging in there, and eventually things will start to fall our way.



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"Coach (David) McNamara has said we have the toughest schedule in the country, but I think that is good for the guys to play these sorts of teams week in and week out. It makes you see where your game is at. Once we get to conference, we should be ready and fire off together because we have already played the tough schedule."

Middle Tennessee's next home appearance will be two matches on April 12th, vs. Memphis and North Florida at the Buck Bouldin Tennis Center.

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