Blue Raiders play well against No. 38 Notre Dame

Peers, Melo, Wishing guide team on Thursday

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MONTGOMERY, Ala. - Middle Tennessee performed well against No. 38 Notre Dame in its opening match of the Blue Gray Classic but the Irish pulled out the win late in the match. Sophomore Richard Cowden and freshman Shaun Waters fell 8-3 to David Anderson and Daniel Stahl to open doubles play. Then juniors John Peers and Kyle Wishing defeated No. 61 Steven Havens and Casey Watt 8-4. Senior Victor Melo and sophomore Matthew Langley battled in No. 2 doubles to Niall Fitzgerald and Tyler Davis but fell 8-6 as the Irish took the doubles point and a 1-0 lead to begin play. "I have to give a lot of credit to John and Kyle. They beat a ranked team and that is huge for Kyle. It's the first win over a ranked player in his career and it shows him he can play with these top players. I am very proud of his progression the last three years and he is playing with a lot of confidence right now. What he is doing in doubles is impressive and John, who is a great doubles player, has really helped Kyle with his game and his confidence," head coach David McNamara said. "We had an opportunity in No. 2 doubles and we had a number of chances to win points but were unable close at the end." Melo opened singles play with his 6-1, 6-2 over Havens to knot the score at 1. "Victor probably played his best match of season and had passion and desire to finish this guy off. He has struggle this season with closing out matches and did not have an issue with it today. He and John are both leading the team and doing a great job helping our team get to where we want to be,"

McNamara said. Then Blas Moros defeated Langley 6-3, 6-3 in No. 6 singles and Waters lost his match 6-3, 6-4 to Anderson putting Notre Dame up 3-1. Peers, ranked 43rd in singles, closed the gap as he defeated No. 27 Watt 7-5, 6-4 for his 12th consecutive singles win. "John had a great win today beating another top ranked player. Since the fall he has played five Top-10 players, seven in the Top-20, he is playing with these guys and is beginning to believe he is a Top-20 player. John is really doing great on and off the courts and I am really proud of the way he is playing right now," McNamara said. Notre Dame sealed the win as Stahl defeated Cowden 6-1, 1-6, 6-0 in No. 3 singles. "After we lost doubles point I told the team individually someone is going to have to beat someone they aren't supposed to beat and until that happens it will continue to be close matches. We can't afford to have one or two players not show up to play and that is what is happening right now which is really hurting our chances to pull away and win matches," McNamara said. "What is really frustrating is that all of these teams who are supposed to be really good teams and yet we are constantly close to winning and in situations to win. We are giving ourselves chances but not finishing points and sets the way we need to for us to be successful." The Blue Raiders will be back in action Friday afternoon at 4:30 p.m. when they face No. 71 Boise State. Middle Tennessee played Boise State last season in the first round of the NCAA Tournament losing 4-0. The Blue Raiders will be looking for a different outcome tomorrow when they hit the courts. "Ultimately we are still a work in progress. There are nine matches until the conference tournament and I still believe we have a shot at causing a few headaches in the tournament," McNamara said. "Boise State lost their No. 1 and 2 players but had a really good player become eligible last week so they will be a tough team. We are going to go out there and compete like we do every match and I feel if everyone comes ready to play we have a really good possibility at taking a win."

#38 Notre Dame 4, Middle Tennessee 2

Singles
1. #43 John Peers (MT) def. #27 Casey Watt (ND) 7-5, 6-4
2. Victor Melo (MT) def. Steven Havens (ND) 6-1, 6-2
3. Daniel Stahl (ND) def. Richard Cowden (MT) 6-1, 1-6, 6-0
4. David Anderson (ND) def. Shaun Waters (MT) 6-3, 6-4
5. Samuel Keeton (ND) vs. Alex McCann (MT) 4-6, 6-3, unfinished
6. Blas Moros (ND) def. Matthew Langley (MT) 6-4, 6-3

Doubles
1. John Peers/Kyle Wishing (MT) def. #61 David Anderson/Daniel Stahl (ND) 8-4
2. Steven Havens/Casey Watt (ND) def. Victor Melo/Matthew Langley (MT) 8-6
3. Niall Fitzgerald/Tyler Davis (ND) def. Richard Cowden/Shaun Waters (MT) 8-3

Match Notes:
Middle Tennessee 4-12
Notre Dame 8-7; National ranking #38
Order of finish: Doubles (3,1,2); Singles (2,6,4,1,3)