Blue Raiders seal first round win over Trojans

MT picks up second-straight shutout victory

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NEW ORLEANS - Middle Tennessee left nothing to chance Thursday morning as it kicked off the Sun Belt women's tennis championships with a 4-0 victory against UALR at the UNO Tennis Center in New Orleans, La.

The Blue Raiders, seeded No. 7, won two doubles matches for the first point and then swept through three singles contests to clinch the triumph against the No. 10-seeded Trojans.

"We went to sleep last night excited to start tournament play and we woke up ready to go," head coach Alison Ojeda said. "UALR is a good team who won the doubles point against us earlier this season. We knew we were going to need to step up and figure out a way to win the doubles point. And we did. It was a huge help because we were able to go confidently into singles play.

"Natalie (Araya) and Taylor (Coffey) both led the team in singles by winning their matches and giving us a 3-0 lead. Anna, Carla (Nava) and Marietta (Bigus) were all up a set but battling for the 2nd when Yuiri (Nomoto) clinched the match.

"We could not be more happy with Yuiri clinching today's match. She should build off the match today and be more ready for North Texas tomorrow than she was last weekend. When it is all said and done, we either win and stay, or lose and go home. We plan on staying."

The match began with Middle Tennessee (11-9) locking up the doubles point with wins at the top-two positions. Senior Anna Djananova and freshman Yuiri Nomoto defeated Rebecca Van Den Houte and Anne Weijenborg, 8-3, at the No. 2 spot. The point then went to the Blue Raiders' favor after sophomore Marietta Bigus and senior Carla Nava topped Veronique Luksich and Yana Kakovkina,

8-5, in the No. 1 meeting.

Using the momentum from doubles, MT blitzed through three singles matches, all in straight sets, to knock off UALR (11-13). Sophomore Taylor Coffey started the action at No. 6 with a 6-1, 6-1 win against Nathalia Garay. Senior Natalie Araya then handed Fanny Lopez a 6-3, 6-2 setback at the No. 4 slot, pulling the Blue Raiders within one matchup of a win.

Nomoto went to a tiebreaker in the second set, but withstood Van Den Houte's challenge at the No. 5 position, for a 6-3, 7-6 (1) match-clinching victory.

Nava, Djananova and Bigus all won their respective first sets before the matches were called due to the Blue Raiders already having enough points for the win.

Middle Tennessee advances to Friday's Second Round where it will face No. 2 seed North Texas at 8 a.m. The Blue Raiders and Mean Green just met last Friday in Murfreesboro with North Texas earning a 4-0 triumph.

No. 7 seed Middle Tennessee 4, No. 10 seed UALR 0

Singles
No. 1 Carla Nava (MT) vs. Veronique Luksich (UALR) 7-5, 4-5, DNF
No. 2 Anna Djananova (MT) vs. Anne Weijenborg (UALR) 6-4, 4-4, DNF
No. 3 Marietta Bigus (MT) vs. Yana Kakovkina (UALR) 7-6 (4), 4-5, DNF
No. 4 Natalie Araya (MT) def. Fanny Lopez (UALR) 6-3, 6-2
No. 5 Yuiri Nomoto (MT) def. Rebecca Van Den Houte (UALR) 6-3, 7-6 (1)
No. 6 Taylor Coffey (MT) def. Nathalia Garay (UALR) 6-1, 6-1

Doubles
No. 1 Bigus/Nava (MT) def. Luksich/Kakovkina (UALR) 8-5
No. 2 Djananova/Nomoto (MT) def. Van Den Houte/Weijenborg (UALR) 8-3
No. 3 Araya/Coffey (MT) vs. Garay/Lopez (UALR) 7-5, DNF

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