Volleyball opens SBC Tournament with a sweep of South Alabama

Blue Raiders will play in tournament semifinals Friday night at 7:30

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - After winning the conference regular season title, the Middle Tennessee volleyball team began the Sun Belt Tournament with a 3-0 (25-16, 25-21, 25-13) decision over eighth-seeded South Alabama at Alumni Memorial Gym on Thursday evening. "I think we started out slow, and I was a little disappointed with games one and two," head coach Matt Peck said. "Game three was a different story. We had some people do some very nice things, but we need everybody tomorrow because both North Texas and Arkansas State are capable of beating us if we're not playing well." A day after taking home the Sun Belt's Player of the Year award, Izabela Kozon hit a blistering .516 en route to a match-high 17 kills. Stacy Oladinni also had an efficient night offensively, posting eight kills with a .538 attack percentage. Maria Szivos and Brandi Waller recorded seven and six kills, respectively. Morgan Peterson tallied a team-best 19 assists, and Angela Peyton was second with 15. After going into the intermission hitting .227, the Blue Raiders hit .630 in the third frame. For the match, Middle Tennessee outhit the Jaguars .334 to .149. Defensively, Brynne Henderson put up the match-high in digs with 13. At the net, Oladinni notched three total blocks, and both Peterson and Waller chipped in two. Led by five kills from Kozon, Middle Tennesse cruised to a 25-16 first set victory. The Blue Raiders scored the first three points of the frame, and would never trail. USA attempted to pull it

close at 10-6, but MT ran off the next three points and the Jaguars never seriously challenged the lead down the stretch. Kozon continued to shine in the second frame, posting six kills to lead the Blue Raiders to a 25-21 wire-to-wire victory. Middle Tennessee grabbed an early 6-1 edge, which would hold for much of the frame. However, after MT inched the lead out to eight at 22-14, USA recorded six of the next eight points to cut the deficit to three at 23-20. Kozon notched the final two points of the set to send the Jaguars into the break down 2-0. Middle Tennessee's offense caught fire in the third set, winning 25-13. The Blue Raiders outhit the Jaguars .630 to .227 in the frame. Kozon once again posted a team-best six kills, and Szivos went a perfect five-for-five attacking. Middle Tennessee has now won nine straight matches and 23 of their last 24. The Blue Raiders (26-5) will now prepare for a match-up with North Texas in the Sun Belt Tournament Semifinals on Friday at 7:30 p.m. at Alumni Memorial Gym.

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