Blue Raiders Fall, 4-2, at SBC Championships

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MOBILE, Ala. - Middle Tennessee dropped the doubles point in a tiebreaker and the final three completed singles matches, dropping a 4-2 decision to North Texas in the first round of the Sun Belt Championships Friday afternoon at the Mobile Tennis Center.

- **Photos:** SBC Championship Gallery

The Blue Raiders (7-15) fought back after losing the doubles point, with Ann-Kristin Siljestrom and Pooja Kommireddi both winning in straight sets for a 2-1 lead. But North Texas won the final three completed singles matches to move into the quarterfinals.

In doubles UNT won the final two completed matches to pick up the match's first point.

Middle Tennessee's Kommireddi and Elvira Yusupova broke at 4-3 and went on to an 8-5 win at No. 3 over Sara Giles and Lynley Wasson.

Both teams broke early at No. 1, and UNT's Megan Schmulbach and Sammie Moreton broke again at 5-all, tying the doubles with an 8-6 victory over Claudia Szabo and Marlene Chemin.

At No. 2 Siljestrom and Kelly Adams led 4-1 early, but North Texas battled back to 4-all and then took the lead at 5-6. UNT's Ina Wieding and Aziza Aba Butain led 6-7 before another Middle Tennessee break tied the match. The teams went to a tiebreaker, with North Texas losing the first point before taking seven of the next eight, winning the tiebreaker, 7-2, for the doubles point.

Head coach Alison Ojeda said her team didn't take advantage of opportunities when they presented themselves during the doubles matches.

"The big thing was we knew Claudia wasn't going to be able to move that well, so we were really counting on [Nos.] 2 and 3 in doubles. Claudia really gutted it out to make a match in both doubles and singles. [At No. 2] we had chance after chance after chance and you only get so many opportunities and we didn't convert."

In singles Siljestrom quickly dispatched of Moreton, 6-1, 6-1, breaking five times in the victory at No. 3. Kommireddi was broken at 3-all in the first set but won the next three games, then took the second set 6-2 in a victory at No. 5.

But North Texas began to put the match away with a 6-3, 6-4, victory at No. 4 by Schmulbach, who got early breaks and went on to the triumph over Yusupova.

Wasson then beat a badly-injured Szabo, 6-2, 6-2, winning the final four games of each set at No. 1.

Wieding won the deciding match at No. 2 over Chemin. The two traded a pair of breaks in the first set and Wieding led the tiebreaker, 5-1, before Chemin tied it at six. But Wieding won the next two points for an 8-6 breaker win and the first five games of the second set. She won the second set, 6-1.

"All year long Marlene has battled her confidence," Ojeda said. "We've continued to work everyday but you have to win matches to build that confidence and she hasn't been able to do that because of her place in the lineup."

Adams won a first-set tiebreaker at No. 6 over Giles, 7-5, but dropped the second set and trailed 4-2 in the third and final set when the match was stopped.

Ojeda said there are many things to take from this season, positives in place with her players as they prepare for next year.

"The positive we take from this season is we came in with a group of girls who didn't know each other and we got them to play for each other and become a team," Ojeda said. "They really had to commit to what they were doing. Next year we'll still be young but we'll have experience and we've laid the foundation and can work to improve when next season comes."

North Texas 4, Middle Tennessee 2
SINGLES
1. Lynley Wasson (UNT) def. Claudia Szabo (MT), 6-2, 6-2
2. Ina Wieding (UNT) def. Marlene Chemin (MT), 7-6 (6), 6-1
3. Ann-Kristin Siljestrom (MT) def. Sammie Moreton (UNT), 6-1, 6-1

4. Megan Schmulbach (UNT) def. Elvira Yusupova (MT), 6-3, 6-4
5. Pooja Kommireddi (MT) def. Aziza Aba Butain (UNT), 6-4, 6-2
6. Kelly Adams (MT) vs. Sara Giles (UNT), 7-6 (5), 3-6, 2-4, DNF

Order of Finish: 3,5,4,1,2*

DOUBLES

1. Schmulbach-Moreton (UNT) def. Szabo-Chemin (MT), 8-6
2. Wieding-Aba Butain (UNT) def. Adams-Siljestrom (MT), 9-8 (2)
3. Kommireddi-Yuuspova (MT) def. Giles-Wasson (UNT), 8-5

Order of Finish: 3,1,2*

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