Tennis Reaches Title Match with 4-0 Victory

April 22, 2006 · MT Media Relations

MOBILE, Ala. - Middle Tennessee won the doubles point and the first three completed singles outings, defeating Denver, 4-0, Saturday afternoon at the Mobile Tennis Center. The win puts the 32nd-ranked Blue Raiders into the Sun Belt Tournament championship match for the second year in a row and the fourth time in six years in the league.

- **Photos:** Semifinal Gallery

  The Blue Raiders (16-6) won their eighth straight match overall and fifth consecutive in the Sun Belt Championships, though it was not as easy as the score would indicate. Two of the three unfinished matches had split sets and Denver was up a set in the other.

  The Blue Raiders won the doubles point with convincing victories at Nos. 2 and 3.

  At No. 3 Greg Pollack and Morgan Richard broke Denver's Aljosa Nipic and Victor Zetterholm in their last three service games, cruising to an 8-2 triumph. Middle Tennessee's Brandon Allan and Kai Schledorn broke twice, defeating Neja Smole and Steve Flaks, 8-3, for the first point of the match.

  "Our guys really played well and I'm really proud of what we did at [Nos.] 2 and 3 doubles," head coach Dale Short said. "If we can play a little bit better [Sunday], we'll be in good shape."

  Middle Tennessee took the first set in three of five singles matches, with Schledorn and Niklas Perrson at No. 3 playing a first set that lasted more than an hour.

  Senior Rishan Kuruppu started quickly and never looked back, breaking twice in the first set

and running Zetterholm all over the court, winning 6-1, 6-4, at No. 5.

Born took care of an injured Smole, 6-2, 6-1, serving and volleying with ease for his 23rd singles victory of the year.

Fellow senior Pollack followed Kuruppu's script at No. 6, running down ball after ball in defeating Nipic, 6-1, 6-2.

Pollack stepped in when Richard was pulled from the lineup before singles, pushing Kuruppu up to No. 5 and Pollack to No. 6.

"Rish stepped up and Greg played really solid. Both of those guys are seniors and I knew what I had with those two, so we went that route," Short said of his decision. "It'll be a gametime decision [Sunday] as well."

Siljestrom and Adam Holmstrom split sets at No. 1 and Siljestrom led 2-1 in the third set, while Allan and Flaks split sets and Allan was up 1-0 in the third set. Schledorn dropped the first set, 7-5, and was tied 1-all in the second set.

The Blue Raiders take on Louisiana-Lafayette at 2 p.m. Sunday in the championship match, the second year in a row the two teams have met for the conference title. Short says he expects a match similar to last year, when Schledorn won the deciding point in a third-set tiebreaker for the victory.

"I expect a lot of tough matches. With the hot weather there will probably be some cramping. We have to play a little better in doubles than the last time against them, but I feel good going in. We've played a lot of nail-biters with [UL] recently."

#32 Middle Tennessee 4, Denver 0
SINGLES
1. (46) Andreas Siljestrom (MT) vs. Adam Holmstrom (DU), 4-6, 6-3, 2-1 DNF
2. Marco Born (MT) def. Nejc Smole (DU), 6-2, 6-1
3. Kai Schledorn (MT) vs. Niklas Persson (DU), 5-7, 1-1, DNF
4. Brandon Allan (MT) vs. Steve Flaks (DU), 5-7, 6-2, 1-0, DNF
5. Rishan Kuruppu (MT) def. Victor Zetterholm (DU), 6-1, 6-4
6. Greg Pollack (MT) def. Aljosa Nipic (DU), 6-1, 6-2
Order of Finish: 5,2,6*

DOUBLES
1. (5) Born-Siljestrom (MT) vs. Holmstrom-Persson (DU), 6-6, DNF
2. Allan-Schledorn (MT) def. Smole-Flaks, 8-3
3. Pollack-Morgan Richard (MT) def. Nipic-Zetterholm, 8-2
Order of Finish: 3,2*