Brand clinches women's tennis victory Sunday

Blue Raiders pull out close win over USA

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Sophomore transfer Lexi Brand pulled out a singles win to give the Middle Tennessee women's tennis team a 4-3 victory over South Alabama Sunday at the Buck Bouldin Tennis Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn. The two teams traded points all day, but with one match left to decide the winner, it was the Blue Raiders who came out on top. "What a gutsy win by our team today," said head coach Melissa Schaub. "It was bitterly cold, which made conditions tough, but each one of the girls proved they could fight through adversity and still be successful. I am very proud of all of them for the effort they showed today." The match was tied 3-3 when Brand was still challenging Jess Courtnell at the No. 4 position. Needing straight sets to clinch the victory, Brand posted a 6-3, 6-2 decision to snap a three-match losing streak by Middle Tennessee (6-8). Neither school was able to pull away in the tightly-played contest, as the Jaguars gained an early 1-0 lead by earning the doubles point. It looked like the Blue Raiders may get the point after the No. 3 tandem of Alex Dachos and Carla Nava knocked off Bridgette Gale and Julia Ivanova 8-2 to start the day. However, South Alabama (1-9) answered with an 8-6 triumph at the No. 1 slot to set up the decisive point in the No. 2 contest. The Middle Tennessee pairing of Brand and Marietta Bigus trailed early, rallied to tie it at 7-7, before the Jaguars' Courtnell and Alina Volman won the last two games for a 9-7 win. Dachos then evened the score at 1-1 with a quick, 6-0, 6-0 victory against Ivanova at the No.

6 singles position. The Blue Raiders went up a point as Taylor Coffey knocked off Gale 6-1, 6-4 during the No. 5 matchup. South Alabama again forced a tie with a triumph at No. 3 singles, but Middle Tennessee's No. 1 singles player, Yuiri Nomoto, gave the Blue Raiders a slight, 3-2, edge with her 6-2, 6-0 victory against Katie Welch. Again, the Jaguars fought back and knotted the scoring at 3-3 with a No. 2 singles triumph, only to set the stage for Brand's match-clinching win. Middle Tennessee will return to action when it closes its eight-match homestand with a 1 p.m. Sunday tilt next week, April 3, when it plays host to UAB at the Buck Bouldin Tennis Center before closing the regular season with three-straight contests on the road. **Middle Tennessee 4, South Alabama 3** *Singles* No. 1 Yuiri Nomoto (MT) def. Katie Welch (USA) 6-2, 6-0 No. 2 Alina Volman (USA) def. Carla Nava (MT) 6-1, 6-0 No. 3 Chane Hines (USA) def. Marietta Bigus (MT) 6-1, 6-0 No. 4 Lexi Brand (MT) def. Jess Courtnell (USA) 6-3, 6-2 No. 5 Taylor Coffey (MT) def. Bridgette Gale (USA) 6-1, 6-4 No. 6 Alex Dachos (MT) def. Julia Ivanova (USA) 6-0, 6-0 *Doubles* No. 1 Hines/Welch (USA) def. Lisa Maas/Nomoto (MT) 8-6 No. 2 Courtnell/Volman (USA) def. Bigus/Brand (MT) 9-7 No. 3 Dachos/Nava (MT) def. Gale/Ivanova (USA) 8-2

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