Blue Raiders head to Mobile for league tournament

MT enters field as No. 9 seed

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Sun Belt Championships Bracket

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Middle Tennessee women's tennis team will open the 2011 Sun Belt Championships as the No. 9 seed at 9 a.m. Thursday by facing No. 8 seed Troy at the Mobile Tennis Center in Mobile, Ala.

"We are excited about the championships and feel we have a chance to start anew as we enter the postseason," first-year head coach Melissa Schaub said. "Every team begins with a blank slate, so we have to put the regular season behind us and get ready for what should be an exciting four days of solid competition."

The Blue Raiders finished the regular season with a 7-10 record featuring a roster short on depth and no seniors the entire spring. Injuries limited Schaub's inaugural campaign to six players throughout the majority of the season; however, Middle Tennessee managed to post five home wins, including three during an eight-match homestand.

The squad won its first three contests of the year for the second-straight season and then closed the home slate in strong fashion, winning its last two to help earn the conference's No. 9 seed.

Four players have all attained at least seven singles triumphs, including a team-high nine from junior

Carla Nava. She owned a season-best four match winning streak during mid-March and played primarily at the No. 3 position.

Sophomores Yuiri Nomoto and Lexi Brand were next with eight victories apiece this spring. Nomoto, who played all season at No. 1 joined newcomer Brand, who has registered wins in three of her last four matches at the No. 4 slot, as solidifying a pair of key positions in the lineup.

Junior Alex Dachos was another contributing factor, winning seven times overall and six at the No. 6 position to give top-to-bottom balance for the young Blue Raider squad.

In doubles play, Brand paired with junior captain Marietta Bigus to form MT's most formidable tandem. The duo collected nine victories at the No. 2 slot, including four in its last six decisions. Dachos and Nava gave the Blue Raiders another solid doubles team, as they tallied eight wins during the spring.

Junior Taylor Coffey returned from injury in late March and quickly won two of her first three singles matches. Freshman Lisa Maas was a factor early in her first collegiate season, winning twice in her opening four singles contests.

Troy captured a 6-1 victory over Middle Tennessee April 16 in the regular-season finale in neutral site action in Denton, Texas.

The two teams have never met previously in the Sun Belt Championships, although Troy owns a 5-3 all-time series advantage.

The Trojans concluded their 2011 regular season with an 11-13 mark, but head coach Eric Hayes' squad has won just twice in their last five outings. Leonie Guijt paces the team with 14 singles wins, all at the No. 3 position, while No. 1 player Karoline Grymel also contributed 14, 13 of which came at the top spot.

The duo were the school's top doubles tandem, earning 15 victories during the spring, all at the No. 1 slot.

There will be no live stats available for the Sun Belt Championships, which is being hosted by South Alabama. The winner of the Middle Tennessee/Troy match will face No. 1 seed and 63rd-ranked FIU at 9 a.m. Friday.

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