NCAA Tournament awaits Middle Tennessee men's tennis

Blue Raiders face No. 16 Georgia Tech Friday

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - For the second time in three years, the Middle Tennessee men's tennis program will head to the NCAA Tournament as it opens 2011 competition at No. 16 Georgia Tech at Noon (CST) Friday in Atlanta.

The Yellow Jackets are playing host to a four-team regional for the first two rounds at the Bill Moore Tennis Center, also welcoming No. 21 Mississippi State and No. 47 Florida State to town.

"We know what we are up against this weekend but we always welcome a challenge," Blue Raider head coach Jimmy Borendame said. "We surprised a lot of people when we won the Sun Belt and we hope to do the same over the next two days."

Middle Tennessee is making its 10th overall appearance in the field after winning the Sun Belt's automatic bid with a 4-3 triumph against league tournament host South Alabama April 23. The Blue Raiders, in Borendame's first season at the helm, have won their last four matches to enter the NCAA Tournament with a 13-12 mark.

Middle Tennessee has made nine previous trips to the NCAA Tournament, the last in 2009. The Blue Raiders are 2-9 all-time in the field, having advanced to the Second Round in 1997 and 2002. Langley and Wishing are the only members of the MT squad to be a part of the 2009 roster, with Langley the only one of the two to compete in the First Round against Boise State in Tuscaloosa,

Ala.

Junior Matthew Langley was named the Sun Belt Tournament Most Outstanding Player after winning all three of his matches at the No. 3 position. He won two of the contests in straight sets and had to rally to capture a three-set decision over his opponent from No. 72 Denver in the semifinals. He will enter the event with 12 singles wins on the campaign.

Freshman Ben Davis garnered an All-Sun Belt nod after topping the squad with a 19-5 record. He was most effective at the No. 3 spot, posting a 12-1 ledger. Sixteen of his triumphs have come in straight sets and he has won seven of his last eight contests entering the NCAAs.

Other singles players with double-digit victories include redshirt freshman Dimitri Pippos (14) and true freshman Elliot Barnwell (13).

Solidifying the bottom of the lineup is the team's lone senior, Kyle Wishing.

The top Middle Tennessee doubles tandem has been the combo of Davis and freshman Shaun Waters. The pair has combined for 10 wins, all at the No. 1 position.

Georgia Tech counters with a 19-5 overall and 8-3 Atlantic Coast Conference record. The Yellow Jackets, who lost to No. 1 Virginia in their last outing during the ACC semifinals, have been nationally ranked all season and currently sit at No. 16 in the latest Campbell's/Intercollegiate Tennis Association listings. No. 14-ranked Guillermo Gomez leads the squad after being selected as the ACC Player of the Year with a 31-7 singles and 21-6 doubles marks.

Middle Tennessee and Georgia Tech have met 10 times previously but not since 2006 when the Blue Raiders dropped a tough 4-3 decision to a 29th-ranked team. The series is tied at 5-5 entering Friday's match.

Friday's other matchup will pit No. 21 Mississippi State against No. 47 Florida State. The Blue Raiders and Bulldogs have squared off 18 times over the years with MSU holding a 16-2 advantage in the all-time series, including the 2011 NCAA Tournament First Round in Champaign, Ill. Middle Tennessee and the Seminoles have met only three times previously with FSU claiming a slight 2-1 edge in the series, although the two programs have not played since 1976.

"Each one of these programs has a long tradition of successful tennis. We know not to take any of them lightly, as they all are quality teams who are well coached."

Live stats are available for all matches this weekend and can be found linked on GoBlueRaiders.com.

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