Doubles sweep sparks strong first day in Alabama for Blue Raiders

MT posts 12-4 singles and 4-0 doubles record

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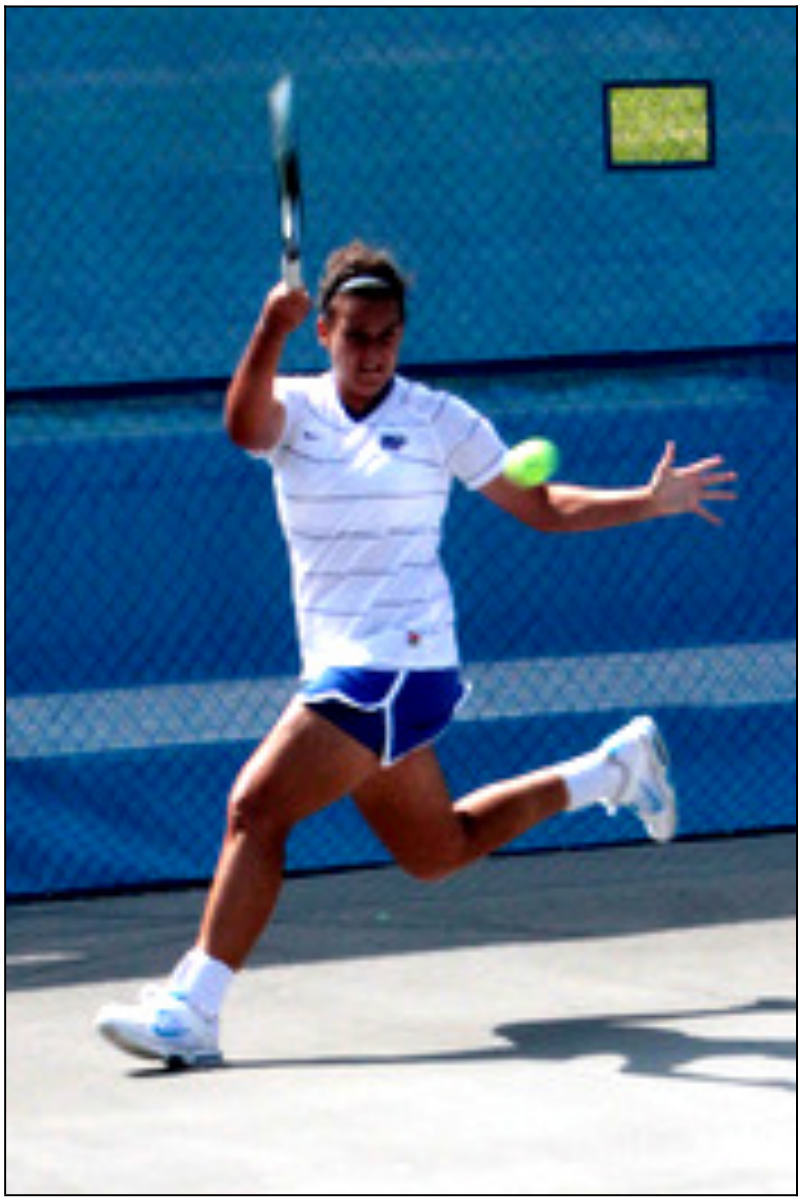

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. – Middle Tennessee won all four of its doubles matches and used the momentum to post a strong singles record during opening day action of the Roberta Alison Fall Classic in Tuscaloosa, Ala., Friday. The Blue Raiders, playing all eight of their team members for the first time this season, started the day by not dropping a doubles match in compiling a 4-0 ledger. Two of the MT pairings were seeded in their respective flights, while another duo knocked off a seeded opponent to highlight the morning session. The tandem of freshman Nayara Moraes and senior Carla Nava continued to play strong for the second-straight event, as they were seeded No. 3 in the Laffy Taffy bracket and tallied an 8-6 victory over Kentucky's Caitlin McGraw and Misha Testerman. The Blue Raider duo advances to the semifinal round Saturday where it will battle No. 2 seed Emily Mallory and Madelie Van Rensburg of Samford. Also playing as a seeded pair, seniors Marietta Bigus and Alex Dachos knocked off Alabama-Huntsville's Melanie Junod and Maria Lawton 8-5 in the quarterfinals of the Starburst flight. The MT tandem is the No. 4 team in the bracket and will square off against Northwestern State's top-seeded pair of Tatiana Nedorostova and Tatiana Larina in the semifinals Saturday. Sophomore Flavia Nagayama and junior Yuiri Nomoto pulled off the upset over the No. 3 team of Mami Venter and CeCe Witten of Kentucky by handing the Wildcats' an 8-5 setback in the Jelly Bean bracket. MT's pairing will face No. 2 seed Whitney

Byrd and Masa Grgan of Georgia State in Saturday's semifinal. The final Blue Raider victory of the day came via junior Lexi Brand and senior Taylor Coffey in the Milk Dud flight. Middle Tennessee's group earned an 8-2 triumph over Alabama-Huntsville's Kasi McDonald and Amanda Sippel to advance to Saturday's semifinal against UAB's Paula Alvarez and Rachel Cohen. In singles quarterfinal action, the Blue Raiders captured victories in six of their eight matches before picking up another half-dozen wins in their follow-up matches, with a trio of Middle Tennessee players advancing to the final of their respective flights Saturday. Nava won both of her contests in the Gummy Bear flight, picking up two three-set decisions. She started the day by rallying for a 6-7, 6-4, 6-4 victory against the bracket's top seed, Mississippi's Iris Verboven. Nava then concluded the day with a 6-3, 3-6, 6-2 win over Samford's Kristin Lewis in the semifinals to advance to Saturday's final against No. 3 seed Toni Foehse of host Alabama. Nomoto also will be competing in Saturday's championship of her Hershey's bracket. In the quarterfinals, she advanced past Houston's Maja Kazimieruk when her opponent was forced to retire in the second set. Nomoto dropped the initial set before leading when the match was called at 4-6, 3-0. She then handed the flight's top-seed, Georgia State's Whitney Byrd, a 6-2, 6-3 setback to set up a meeting with Olfa Dhaoui of Troy in Saturday's final. The other MT player in Saturday's championship is Nagayama. She opened with a 6-2, 6-0 quarterfinal triumph over Mississippi's Paige Keating, then gutted out a 6-0, 7-6 (4) victory against top-seed Christy Sipes of North Carolina State. The Blue Raider newcomer will face No. 2 seed Roseline Dion of Mississippi State in Saturday's Jolly Rancher final. Other Middle Tennessee players to win both their matches Friday were seniors Taylor Coffey and Alex Dachos. Both players are competing in round robin flights. Coffey defeated UAB's Rachel Cohen 6-3, 6-2 and then Alabama-Huntsville's Lina Carvajal 6-3, 6-0 in the Snickers bracket. Dachos handed Alabama-Huntsville's Ale Pacheco a 6-0, 6-0 setback before defeating West Alabama's Emily Gerding in the Twix bracket. Bigus registered an even singles mark in the Milky Way flight after starting her play with a win. She opened with a 6-2, 6-2 quarterfinal victory against Southern Miss' Alex Bradley before she suffered a loss in the semifinals. Bigus will play in the third-place match Saturday against UAB's Menanteau Moolman. Brand has the same record as Bigus after she bounced back from a quarterfinal loss to defeat Southern Miss' Mackenzie Oskin 6-1, 6-3 in the consolation semifinal. The Blue Raider junior will face West Alabama's Angy Cueller in the Kit Kat consolation final Saturday. Competition at the 24th annual tournament, hosted by Alabama, will conclude Saturday with the final two doubles rounds and the final set of singles matches. **Middle Tennessee Results**

Gummy Bear singles
Quarterfinal: Carla Nava def. (1) Iris Verboven (MISS) 6-7, 6-4, 6-4
Semifinal: Carla Nava def. Kristin Lewis (SAM) 6-3, 3-6, 6-2

Skittles singles
Quarterfinal: (2) Elja van Berlo (USM) def. Nayara Moraes 6-3, 6-1
Consolation Semifinal: Plamena Kurteva (AUB) def. Nayara Moraes 6-1, 6-4

Hershey's singles
Quarterfinal: Yuiri Nomoto def. Maja Kazimieruk (HOU) 4-6, 3-0 (ret.)
Semifinal: Yuiri Nomoto def. (1) Whitney Byrd (GAST) 6-2, 6-3

Jolly Rancher singles
Quarterfinal: Flavia Nagayama def. Paige Keating (MISS) 6-2, 6-0
Semifinal: Flavia Nagayama def. (1) Christy Sipes (NCST) 6-0, 7-6 (4)

Kit Kat singles
Quarterfinal: Jessica Diamond (SAM) def. Lexi Brand 6-4, 6-3
Consolation Semifinal: Lexi Brand def. Mackenzie Oskin (USM) 6-1, 6-3

Milky Way singles
Quarterfinal: Marietta Bigus def. Alex Bradley (USM) 6-2, 6-2
Semifinal: Emily Hangstefer (UTC) def. Marietta Bigus 6-2, 7-6 (4)

Snickers singles (round robin)
Taylor Coffey def. Rachel Cohen (UAB) 6-3, 6-2
Taylor Coffey def. Lina Carvajal (UAH) 6-3, 6-0

Twix singles (round robin)
Alex Dachos def. Ale Pacheco (UAH) 6-0, 6-0
Alex Dachos def. Emily Gerding (UWA) 6-2, 6-0

Laffy Taffy doubles
(3) Moraes/Nava def. Caitlin McGraw/Misha Testerman (UK) 8-6

Jelly Bean doubles
Nagayama/Nomoto def. Mami Venter/CeCe Witten (UK) 8-5

Starburst doubles
(4) Bigus/Dachos def. Melanie Junod/Maria Lawton (UAH) 8-3

Milk Dud doubles
Brand/Coffey def. Kasi McDonald/Amanda Sippel (UAH) 8-2

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