Heartbreaking setback in season opener

Blue Raiders on the road for first seven matches

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – Middle Tennessee rallied twice to keep within striking distance of claiming the match but a third effort fell just short, as the Blue Raider women's tennis team opened the 2012 campaign with a 4-3 loss at Samford Friday afternoon in Birmingham, Ala. The contest served as the first in the head coaching career of MT's Shelley Godwin. The two teams split the six singles matches after the Bulldogs won two of three meetings to earn the doubles point. The lone Middle Tennessee (0-1) decision came at the No. 3 slot, as sophomore Flavia Nagayama and junior Yuiri Nomoto held off Adri Lochner and Stephanie N'tcha, 8-3. In singles, the Blue Raiders found themselves tied 2-2, then down 3-2 before rallying to knot it up again at 3-3. In the final match of the afternoon, a three-set heartbreaker turned the tide in Samford's favor to clinch the overall team win in the season opener for both programs. Middle Tennessee singles victories came at the No. 3, 4 and 5 positions, including Blue Raider dual match debuts from Nagayama and freshman Nayara Moraes. Nagayama battled throughout her No. 3 meeting with N'tcha but pulled out a straight-set, 7-5, 7-5 triumph. Moraes responded from dropping her first set to win the next two against Lindsey Mallory in the No. 5 match and register the 1-6, 6-3, 6-2 victory. Junior Lexi Brand also provided the Blue Raiders with a win, handing the Bulldogs' Rebecca Kirven a 6-3, 6-4 setback at the No. 4 slot. Nomoto and Madelie Janse Van Rensburg of Samford (1-0) traded sets in their No. 2 contest but unfortunately for Middle Tennessee, Nomoto came up just short in the third and decisive set to hand the Bulldogs the win after battling through adversity. The Blue Raiders will look

to regroup Saturday when they stay in Birmingham to face UAB at 1 p.m. **Samford 4, Middle Tennessee 3**

Singles

No. 1 Kristin Lewis (SAM) def. Carla Nava (MT) 6-3, 6-1
No. 2 Madelie Janse Van Rensburg (SAM) def. Yuiri Nomoto (MT) 6-4, 4-6, 6-2
No. 3 Flavia Nagayama (MT) def. Stephanie N'tcha (SAM) 7-5, 7-5
No. 4 Lexi Brand (MT) def. Rebecca Kirven (SAM) 6-3, 6-4
No. 5 Nayara Moraes (MT) def. Lindsey Mallory (SAM) 1-6, 6-3, 6-2
No. 6 Emily Mallory (SAM) def. Marietta Bigus (MT) 7-5, 6-1

Doubles

No. 1 Lewis/L. Mallory (SAM) def. Moraes/Nava (MT) 8-4
No. 2 Janse Van Rensburg/Kirven (SAM) def. Bigus/Brand (MT) 8-4
No. 3 Nagayama/Nomoto (MT) def. Adri Lochner/N'tcha (SAM) 8-3

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