

A memorable season for Blue Raider men's tennis

MT defeated seven nationally ranked foes

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

The 2011-12 campaign was another memorable one for the Blue Raider men's tennis team. Middle Tennessee secured its second consecutive Sun Belt Championship title and earned the 11th NCAA Championship appearance in program history under the direction of second-year head coach Jimmy Borendame. The 2012 spring campaign was the best in 15 years, as the Blue Raiders amassed 19 wins, the most since 1997 when MT finished 24-5. Prior to the NCAA tournament, MT only dropped three matches over the final two months of the season, a 17-match stretch, with each of those losses coming to nationally ranked opponents. At season's end, the Blue Raiders raked in awards. Borendame became the first Sun Belt coach to win back-to-back Sun Belt Coach of the Year accolades since Danny Westerman at Denver did so



in 2007 and 2008. He also is the second Blue Raider coach in program history to earn consecutive conference awards, joining former coach Dale Short. Short won seven consecutive Ohio Valley Coach of the Year honors spanning from 1991-97. A trio of Blue Raiders earned conference accolades. Sophomore Ben Davis took home All-Sun Belt singles honors for the second year in a row and received doubles recognition as well, along with partner Christoph Lang. Prior to the NCAA tournament, Davis won 11 singles matches in a row, while the tandem won nine of 10. After MT claimed the league's tournament title, senior Matthew Langley was named the tournament's Most

Outstanding Player for the second consecutive season. Langley won all three singles matches in the No. 2 spot at the tournament and claimed victory in 10 of his last 12 matches. The success began in the fall, with two Blue Raiders defeating nationally ranked opponents in singles competition. Davis knocked off 77th-ranked Maniel Bains (Oklahoma State) at the 2011 ITA All-American Championships, while Langley took down 99th ranked Jesus Bandres (ETSU) at the USTA-ITA Ohio Valley Regional Championships. Freshman Ettore Zito made an early impact as well, winning four consecutive singles matches at the Crimson Tide Fall Championships to take his flight title. He earned straight-set victories in three of the four matches. Two more nationally ranked opponents fell early in the spring campaign. Langley beat his second nationally ranked opponent of the year with a three-set win over No. 71 Luca Oliveira (Virginia Tech), and Davis teamed with Lang to take down the 51st-ranked duo from Virginia Tech. Following a loss to No. 20 Auburn, the Blue Raiders heated up, winning four of their next five dual contests. MT's first win of the season over a nationally ranked team came in a 4-3 victory over No. 74 ETSU. The Blue Raiders would go on to defeated seven nationally ranked teams during the spring. MT earned its first national ranking of the season entering the HEB Tournament of Champions in the first week of March, coming in at No. 63. The Blue Raiders eventually worked their way up to No. 46 in the nation at the end of the season, the highest ranking since 2006 when MT finished the season ranked 33rd. Perhaps one of the most impressive weekends for the program came in the Sun Belt Shootout in Murfreesboro. The Blue Raiders breezed through Austin Peay to open the tournament, then defeated No. 71 Georgia State and No. 57 South Alabama, 4-3 and 4-0, respectively, on the same day to claim the tournament title. It kickstarted a string of seven consecutive dual match wins for MT. The Blue Raiders downed another nationally ranked opponent in No. 59 UAB before the winning streak came to a close at the hands of No. 72 USF. MT quickly bounced back, though, reeling off victories in the next four matches, including three in the Sun Belt tournament. MT dominated its Sun Belt competition en route to the league title, defeating WKU, No. 70 Louisiana and No. 57 South Alabama by a combined score of 12-1. With the three tournament victories, the Blue Raiders won 11 of its last 12 matches heading into the NCAA tournament. MT became the first Sun Belt team to win back-to-back titles since South Alabama accomplished the feat in 2007 and 2008. The back-to-back tournament titles also marked the first since the Blue Raiders won two straight Ohio Valley Conference tournaments in 1997 and 1998. The Blue Raiders were paired against No. 21 Michigan for the opening round of the NCAA tournament. Despite dropping the 4-0 decision, MT battled against some of the nation's top competitors. And with seven starters returning next season, the future continues to look bright for Blue Raider men's tennis.

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