

Skyhawks hope to make ... A LOT OF RACKET

Team excited to make short trip to No. 4 Vanderbilt

MARTIN, Tenn. --- The Tennessee-Martin Skyhawk women's tennis team will meet No. 4 Vanderbilt in the first round of the NCAA tennis tournament at 3 p.m., Friday, May 13 in Nashville.

Immediately following the tournament pairings on ESPN News Wednesday afternoon, Skyhawk head coach Dennis Taylor said jokingly, "I guess we better go practice now."

Taylor and the Skyhawks are happy with the location of their first round match.

"We are just as comfortable at Vanderbilt as Vanderbilt is," Taylor said.

Skyhawk team captain Elly Shearman said Nashville is fine with her.

"We all wanted to go somewhere nice, but Nashville is great. Now everyone can come and see us play," Shearman said.

"We are all very excited about playing in the tournament."

The Skyhawks earned a berth in the NCAA tournament by winning the Ohio Valley Conference tournament and posting a perfect 9-0 record in league play and a 14-3 overall record.

Senior Sari Nortje was named the OVC's Player of the Year. Nortje plays No. 1 singles for the Skyhawks and went undefeated during the regular season.

The Skyhawks' three losses came during spring break against North Florida, Valdosta State and Georgia State.

Vanderbilt enters the regional tournament seeded No. 4 in the country with a 20-5 overall record.

The Commodore women are led by Southeastern Conference Freshman of the Year Taka Bertrand (18-6 overall and 8-3 SEC).

Bertrand is ranked No. 73 in the nation according to the ITA and has played matches at No. 2, 3 and 4 for the Commodores.

Audra Falk is 17-7 overall and she will play No. 1 singles for the Commodores.

Freshman Elizma Schoonees was optimistic about the Skyhawks' chances in the NCAA regional.

"At least we are not playing No. 1 (Stanford), No. 2 or No. 3."

Schoonees, who plays No. 6 singles, was one of three Skyhawks named to the All-OVC first team. Also making the league's first team were Katrina Domela, No. 4 singles, and Nortje, No. 1 singles.

Shearman, No. 5 singles, was named to the All-OVC second team.

Taylor was named the OVC's Coach of the Year.

For the Skyhawks, the OVC championship was their third since 1994. However, this is the first trip to the NCAA Regional tournament for Taylor and the team.

The Skyhawks finished as OVC runners-up a year ago and set their sights on the championship and the NCAA tournament this year.

After winning the conference crown, Taylor said the mission was accomplished.

Experience was the key to the Skyhawks' success this season. Surrounding Schoonees, one of three freshmen on the team, are five players who advanced to the OVC championship match a year ago. Among those are seniors Nortje, Gayatri Ramesh, Shearman; and juniors Jeanne De Wet and Domela. The other two freshmen on this year's team are Monica Bertram from Crossville, Tenn. and Mary Beth Gunn from Shelbyville, Tenn.



Sari Nortje
Paarl, South Africa



Gayatri Ramesh
Kerala, India



Elly Shearman
Bristol, England



Katrina Domela
Bandung, Indonesia



Jeanne de Wet
Ashton, South Africa



Monica Bertram
Crossville, Tenn.



Mary Beth Gunn
Shelbyville, Tenn.



Elizma Schoonees
Stellenbosch,
South Africa

