Four players score in 4-1 win

Blue Raiders off to 2-0 start

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn.- Middle Tennessee increased its winning streak to 13 at Blue Raider Field, while ending Alabama A&M's 15-match unbeaten string, in a 4-1 triumph in front of 243 Monday night.

Four different Blue Raiders scored and six earned points in the impressive team win that lifted Middle Tennessee to 2-0 at the start of a season for the first time since 2003. Kala Morgan, Jennifer Threlkeld, Kaley Forrest, and Holly Grogan scored their first goal of the season, while Rebecca Rodriguez, Sara Beth Lee and Grogan were credited with assists.

Alabama A&M entered the contest coming off identical 1-0 blankings of High Point and South Alabama and the Lady Bulldogs owned a 1-0 lead against the Blue Raiders when they scored in the 34th minute.

"Alabama A&M is a very good team and they are well-coached," Rhoden said. "(Alabama A&M coach Frank Davies) and I have been friends for 20 years. We went to college together, played soccer together, and were roommates. I know his teams are always well prepared. He is a defensive coach and they made it difficult on us tonight."

Only for a while it seemed.

Middle Tennessee tied the game 1-1 when Morgan scored in the 43rd minute. The ball was played into the box and headed clear by an A&M defender. Morgan calmly brought the ball down and smashed it past keeper Priscilla Mensah into the top corner.

Mensah was under attack the entire evening as Middle Tennessee launched 30 goals; however, the talented keeper was credited with 16 saves in the contest. Some attempts were too brilliant to be denied.

Such was the case when Threlkeld delivered what proved to be the winner, picking an excellent moment to score her first career goal. Rodriguez bent in a superb corner and Threlkeld bravely made a darting run to the front post, across the out-rushing Mensah, and headed the ball at the near post.

Her daring play and display of guts and determination not only gave Middle Tennessee a 2-1 lead in the 56th minute, but also lit a spark that would not be extinguished as the Blue Raiders were in the midst of four unanswered goals.

"It was a mentality. We didn't want to lose," Rhoden said. "I think Jennifer Threlkeld came in and ignited this team with her mentality inside the box. She scored a brilliant goal to send us ahead. It was a change in mentality and a change in attitude. It is good to see us do that this early in the season. We were behind early in the game and it was great to see our girls persevere and come from one goal down to win by three goals against a very good team."

Grogan was the architect of Middle Tennessee third goal. She picked the ball up 30 yards out, drove inside and played a reverse ball to the overlapping Forrest, who noticed Mensah off her line and produced an excellent chip that went in off the far post for a 3-1 lead in the 75th minute.

Grogan had a say in the final goal of the match when she started and finished an excellent move. Grogan picked the ball up near the halfway line and released the overlapping Lee on the right side before making a determined run into the box. Lee played an early ball between the keeper and defenders and Grogan finished first time on the volley to cap an excellent move.

Middle Tennessee's defense continued to shine, allowing just two shots in the match and they were in succession, the second coming off a rebound and resulting in Alabama A&M's only goal. Ingrid Christensen, Kate Donnelly, Katie Rayburn, and Sara Wohlhueter were the stalwarts, while strong midfield play continues to be a strong suit.

The Blue Raiders return to action when they play host to Evansville Friday at 7 p.m. in the annual Middle Tennessee Invitational. Western Kentucky faces Jacksonville State at 4 p.m.

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