Blue Raiders win 12th straight vs. SBC foes

Following 3-0 shutout at UALR

October 7, 2006 · MT Media Relations

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. - The depth of Middle Tennessee's team was on display as the Blue Raider bench supplied a bulk of the offense in a 3-0 blanking of Arkansas-Little Rock here Friday night.

Middle Tennessee (11-2, 5-0) ran its win streak to five as freshman Jen Threlkeld returned from injury to supply two goals and sophomore Katie Daley notched another as the Blue Raiders secured their 12th consecutive triumph against Sun Belt Conference foes.

Threlkeld, who had missed three games due to injury, came off the bench to score her fifth and sixth career goals, while reserve Kaley Forrest added a pair of assists. In all, Middle Tennessee's bench accounted for six of the team's nine points against the Trojans (4-8, 2-3).

"It just goes to show the quality depth of our team," Middle Tennessee Head Coach Aston Rhoden said. "So many players have contributed to the success of our team this season and the fact we do have 'team' wins and don't rely on certain individuals to carry us speaks volumes of the value each player brings to our program. This was another good win, a team win."

The Blue Raiders have been on a scoring spree of late but they would have to call on a rock-solid defense to continue its stingy play against Arkansas-Little Rock. The competitive match was scoreless into the 41st minute and a battle throughout; however, the defensive counterparts

continued to be stalwarts as Middle Tennessee notched its fifth shutout of the season. The Trojans managed just one shot on goal and freshman keeper Erynn Murray pounced on it to keep her impressive scoreless streak alive.

The rookie is showing why she earned All-State honors and recorded 15 shutouts during her senior season at R.J. Reynolds High School in Winston-Salem, N.C., during what has proven to be a smooth transition into the college game.

Murray, who is 6-2 with two shutouts in her first season, has allowed just one goal in five conference matches and that score was 11 minutes into her first Sun Belt game. The freshman standout has worked 378:03 in succession without allowing a goal to a SBC opponent and has a miniscule 0.23 goals-against-average in league play.

The Blue Raider defense notched its fifth shutout of the season and remains on pace to shatter the school records for goals-against-average and least goals against. The mark for least goals against is 22 in 2004 and the 2006 squad has allowed just 12 to date, while the standard for goals-against-average is 1.11 and this year's unit currently has a mark of 0.91.

"Ours is a team defense and everyone plays a part, which is why the defensive numbers mean so much," Rhoden said. "We take pride in our defensive play and the girls have been solid. It's important because everyone is involved, even our attackers, because we generate scoring opportunities from our defense."

While the defense continued to do the things it has done consistently during Rhoden's five seasons leading the program, the offense got untracked just before the half when Threlkeld powered a shot past Ashley Boccarossa on a well-placed pass from Forrest to give the Blue Raiders a 1-0 lead in the 41st minute.

Threlkeld's second goal came 10 minutes into the second half on an assist from Kathrine Andresen to give the Blue Raiders what proved to be unnecessary margin for error. The final score of the evening was also historical as Katie Daley scored from 15 yards out on a brilliant pass from Forrest.

The assist from Forrest was Middle Tennessee's 47th and set the single-season team record for assists.

Middle Tennessee will look to remain atop the Sun Belt Conference standings when it completes the weekend swing at Arkansas State Sunday at 1 p.m.

NOTES: Middle Tennessee won its 12th straight against Sun Belt competition and improved to 25-8-5 against league foes under fifth-year head coach Aston Rhoden ... The Blue Raiders moved into fourth on the single-season list for wins with 11. The record is 13 ... The Blue Raiders set a new single-season assist record with three against UALR to give them 47 for the season ... Senior defender Katy Rayburn started in her 72nd career match, which ties Laura Miguez-Howarth for fourth all-time in that category. The school record for games started is 77, held by Sheri Robbins (1999-02) ... Middle Tennessee improved to 10-2-0 all-time against UALR, including 6-0 under Rhoden.

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