Blue Raiders drop 4-1 decision at Denver

Eight-game win streak comes to halt

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DENVER, Colo. - Middle Tennessee's eight-game winning streak came to an abrupt halt in a 4-1 setback at Denver Friday as the Pioneers erupted for four unanswered second-half goals to secure the victory.

The Blue Raiders (14-3, 8-1) dropped out of a tie for first and fell to one game behind SBC co-leaders Denver and North Texas with two games remaining in the regular season.

"It was a tough game, as was expected, and the bottom line is we did not play as well as we should have," Middle Tennessee coach Aston Rhoden said. "We did not play as well as we are capable and when you play a team such as Denver, especially at Denver, you have to play better than we did today."

The physical and competitive game was scoreless through the first half; however, things looked good when Kala Morgan, the nation's leading scorer, knocked in a goal from the top of the box on an assist from Holly Grogan to give the Blue Raiders a 1-0 lead in the 46th minute. It was Morgan's 19th goal of the season and tied former standout Debs Brereton for the single-season goals scored record.

Morgan's record-tying day would become bittersweet; however, when Denver turned the tables

shortly thereafter.

The Pioneers scored four goals over a 36-minute stretch to pull away from Middle Tennessee and maintain its share of the conference lead with North Texas. The Blue Raiders were forced to play a majority of the second half a person down after midfielder Katie Daley was given a red card in the 52nd minute with the score still 1-0 in favor of the Blue Raiders.

It was a match that saw two red cards - one on Daley and another on Blue Raider senior defender Katy Rayburn. Additionally, Blue Raider sophomore Nenita Burgess and Denver midfielder Lizzy Carlson were hit with yellow cards. Daley and Rayburn will be unavailable for Sunday's match at North Texas due to the red cards they were given.

Rhoden, ,who was displeased with the officiating, has not had a player receive a red card in his coaching career; however, two of his players received one in the second half of one match Friday.

"It was interesting to say the least," Rhoden said. "I don't think the officiating was slanted toward one team or the other. I just think it wasn't very good all-around. We just have to regroup and see what we are made of at North Texas. I just hate it for the two players involved because I don't think either red card was warranted. Then again, I'm the coach, not the official."

Denver tied the game on Jenna Billingsley's 10th goal of the season in the 51st minute and then scored what would prove to be the game-winner on a Carlson goal in the 64th minute. Both goals scored against the Blue Raiders occurred with Middle Tennessee playing a person down.

The Pioneers would score two insurance goals to secure the pivotal league win. Middle Tennessee returns to action when it faces North Texas Sunday.

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