Blue Raiders' triumph sweet 16th of season

Rodriguez scores twice in 3-1 win against rival Western Kentucky

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - "Senior Night" is always special and Middle Tennessee made sure its outgoing veterans enjoyed an evening they will always remember as the Blue Raiders (16-3, 10-1) concluded the regular season with a 3-1 win against rival Western Kentucky. It's a night senior forward Rebecca Rodriguez won't soon forget as the Dallas, Texas native supplied two goals, including the game winner, and became the program's all-time leader in points and goals scored in the triumph. Rodriguez scored her fourth and fifth goals of the season to regain the all-time goals scored mark from teammate Holly Grogan with 33 career goals, while also surpassing former teammate Laura Miguez-Howarth for the career points lead with 88. "If you are going to accomplish something like that it's always nice but it's even more exciting since we won, and my parents (Javier and Angie) were here, as well as my two aunts and my uncle, so it was really fun to play in front of them and score some goals," Rodriguez said. "This was a big win for us to continue momentum into the tournament." Rodriguez and senior teammates Katy Rayburn and Sara Wohlhueter were honored prior to the game, along with Jenna Capitena, who was medically discharged by the NCAA prior to the start of the season. The group is Aston Rhoden's first signing class and it has achieved four straight winning seasons and the program's first SBC Championship

in 2004. These seniors have fashioned a 54-19-6 overall record and a 26-2 mark at Blue Raider Field, including a current 21-game winning streak on the home soil. "This senior class has been very special," Rhoden said. "They have accomplished a great deal but we hope their greatest achievements are yet to come. This was a night they can remember fondly. Rebecca Rodriguez will always remember this night as a senior. It's her last game at Blue Raider Field, she plays against one of our big rivals, and she comes up with two big goals to help us to a 3-1 win. It was good to see her back in the scoring charts. I hope it is a sign of things to come." Middle Tennessee wrapped up the No. 2 seed for next week's SBC Championship in Lafayette, La. The Blue Raiders will face seventh-seeded South Alabama in quarterfinal action Wednesday at 4 p.m. The Blue Raiders had to battle from the outset to maintain the Sun Belt's longest home win streak as Western Kentucky (11-7, 7-4) proved to be a formidable foe. Rodriguez knocked in her fourth goal of the season in the eighth minute when she gained control of a rebound and fired a shot into the top far corner over an outstretched Meredith Goodson for a 1-0 lead. Western Kentucky's only goal came in the 30th minute when it benefited from an own goal that evened the score. The game remained a stalemate into the 55th minute when Rodriguez struck again, this time on a brilliant pass from Katie Daley, who spun, delivered the ball, and Rodriguez finished from 17 yards out to regain the all-time lead in goals and become the all-time points leader. Daley capped the scoring in the 87th minute on a penalty kick for her third goal of the season. The game featured outstanding play from the defense and keepers. Goodson had 13 saves for the Hilltoppers, including two dazzling stops to deny Kala Morgan and Mary Zapapas, while Blue Raider rookie Erynn Murray was equal to the task. Murray tallied six saves to run her record to 11-3 and move into a tie for third on the single-season wins list with Danielle Perrault. Murray is two wins shy of tying the record for wins in a season by a keeper. Middle Tennessee's back line of Rayburn, Wohlhueter, Ingrid Christensen, Caitlin Reeves, and Kate Donnelly was solid, as was the midfield play of Daley, Zapapas, Kaley Forrest, and Kathrine Andresen. **NOTES:** Middle Tennessee extended its win streak to 21 at Blue Raider Field and increased its single-season record for wins to 16 ... Rebecca Rodriguez became Middle Tennessee's all-time leader in points (88) and goals (33) in the win ... The Blue Raiders honored seniors Rodriguez, Katy Rayburn, Sara Wohlhueter and Jenna Capitena prior to the game ... Rayburn tied Sheri Robbins for the all-time mark for games started with her 77th starter, while Wohlhueter started her 69th game, which is tied for fifth-most in a career with Kenya Hickey ... Freshman keeper Erynn Murray improved to 11-3 in goal to move into a tie for third with Danielle Perreault on the single-season wins list ... Her current 1.20 goals-against-average is third on the single-season list. With six saves against Western Kentucky, Murray moved into a tie with Jennifer Robb for 10th on the single-season list with 50 ...Katie Daley's game-clinching goal in the 87th minute was the 75th of the season for Middle Tennessee.

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