Blue Raiders Fall in Semis, 4-0

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BOWLING GREEN, Ky. - North Texas scored three goals in the second half to open a very physical match and defeat Middle Tennessee, 4-0, in the semifinals of the 2003 Hardee's Sun Belt Championships Friday night. The Blue Raiders end their season with the most wins in school history as well as advancing in the conference tournament further than ever before. North Texas advances to the tourney final to face Denver Saturday at 1 p.m. The Blue Raiders had a chance in the first five minutes to get on the board, as Christina Mascaro got a through ball down the leftside and took a hard shot, but North Texas keeper Briana Buchanan made the save. Mascaro had a rebound, but her shot sailed well wide and back toward the playing field, where Laura Miguez's shot went just wide. The Mean Green got on the board just three minutes later when Marilyn Marin dribbled her way through several defenders before crossing into the middle, where Angela Hawkins stopped the ball, turned and hit a ground ball into the right corner of the net at 8:08 of the first half for a 1-0 UNT lead. In the second half Middle Tennessee continued to pressure, but found few quality chances against the UNT defense. The Mean Green expanded the lead in the 70th minute when Jessica Koschmann and Elaine Bacchus worked the ball down the rightside and crossed to a streaking Melinda Pina on the back post, with Pina redirecting the ball into the net for a 2-0 UNT lead. Five minutes later Marin fed Danielle Smith for the third Mean Green score of the match. Middle Tennessee continued to fight, pressuring Buchanan and the Mean Green defense, with Mascaro firing two shots from the top of the box. North Texas had been working to find Marin the entire match into space, and it finally happened in the 85th minute, as the senior took a pair near midfield and raced toward the goal, sliding it past a diving Danielle Perreault. UNT could have added to the score in the 89th minute when Perreault was given a yellow card after a tackle in the box. The Mean Green's Caree Ridenour took the penalty shot, but Perreault was up to the challenge, making the save. The Blue Raiders had several chances in the final five minutes, including a left-footed shot by Emily Carter that was deflected by Buchanan and trickled toward the goal line before Ridenour cleared the ball. Several other shots were blocked from deep in the box, preserving the shutout for the second seed in the tourney. MATCH NOTES The Blue Raiders and Mean Green met for the

second straight year in the conference tournament. UNT defeated Middle Tennessee, 4-1, in the first round last season in Mobile, Ala. ... Senior Christina Mascaro returned to the starting lineup after not starting the last two matches. The Osteen, Fla., native had started every match before last Sunday's tilt at Louisiana-Lafayette.

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