Morgan scores late as Blue Raiders avoid opening loss

Team battles to 1-1 deadlock in opener at East Tennessee

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JOHNSON CITY, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee senior standout Kala Morgan picked up where she left off last season with a goal in the 81st minute as the Blue Raiders tied East Tennessee 1-1 in two overtimes in the season opener here Friday afternoon. Morgan has scored in three straight matches and eight of the last nine dating to last season. Fellow senior Holly Grogan supplied the assist as Middle Tennessee scored with less than 10 minutes remaining in regulation to even the score. "We had several opportunities to score and didn't put the shots away," Blue Raider coach Aston Rhoden said. "East Tennessee had a good play and executed it really well. We got off to a slow start and really didn't pick it up until later in the match. It's encouraging that we were on the road without some key personnel and competed and did not lose, but it is discouraging to have created so many opportunities and not capitalize. "On the flip side, I guess it would have been more disappointing to have created the opportunities and come away with a loss. We can learn from this but we still have improvements to make." The match was delayed 17 minutes into the contest due to excessive lightning. Once play resumed the match was more of a defensive contest as the teams battled to a scoreless halftime deadlock. One encouraging factor had to be the play of the Blue Raider defense. Middle Tennessee started three freshmen and one junior at the defender positions, along with sophomore Erynn Murray at keeper. Murray was the only returning starter in the

defensive backfield and she was joined by Elise Hutter, a junior making her first career start, along with Fran Howells, Emily Snowdon, and Bethany Bertovic. The unit was pretty much airtight outside of allowing East Tennessee's only goal when Jordan Monty gave the Bucs a 1-0 lead in the 48th minute. The game remained a 1-0 stalemate until Grogan and Morgan teamed for the Blue Raider goal to even the score 1-1. The Blue Raiders started six freshman in the opener. In addition to Howells, Snowdon and Bertovic, Jaimee Cooper, Kelly Downs, and Vanessa Mueggler earned their first collegiate start for the Blue Raiders. Middle Tennessee will look to get into the win column when it plays at Belmont Sunday at 1 p.m.

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