

Soccer turns back Tulsa 3-1 in home-opening triumph

Estimated 945 cheer team to 22nd straight at Blue Raider Field

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Protecting the home pitch has enabled Middle Tennessee's soccer team to enjoy strong success under sixth-year head coach Aston Rhoden and the Blue Raiders continued the trend with a 3-1 win triumph against Tulsa in the home opener Friday night. The Blue Raiders (1-1-1) delighted the energetic partisan crowd of an estimated 945 with dazzling play, rock-ribbed defense and opportunistic offense on their way to increasing the win streak to 22 at Blue Raider Field on the opening day of the Middle Tennessee Classic. Western Kentucky beat Mississippi State, 2-1, in the first match of Friday's event. Middle Tennessee improved to 7-0 in the Classic and 5-1 in home openers under Rhoden, including five straight. The Blue Raiders also improved to 40-6 overall at Blue Raider Field since Rhoden's arrival.



His army, the student section known as "Aston's Army" was out in force Friday. They wouldn't leave disappointed as Holly Grogan scored one goal and assisted another on a record-tying night, Jen Threlkeld scored and had a super strong all-around performance, and Kala Morgan continued her scoring prowess. "The crowd tonight was unbelievable and our success has at home has a lot to do with our fans," Rhoden said. "When you walk out and there are about 100 fraternity members and a stadium full of people, you kind of know you are going to have a fantastic game. It's a matter of taking advantage of opportunities and we did tonight. You want to play well, entertain the fans, win and hope they will keep coming back." They have no reason not to as Middle Tennessee put forth a complete game that seemed to keep the fans tuned into the match. The defense was aggressive and

stingy. Keeper Erynn Murray collected eight saves and notched career win 13 in goal. Freshman Fran Howell enjoyed a breakout game and senior stopper Ingrid Christensen returned to the field for the first time this season. Kaley Forrest also enjoyed a solid match at her midfield position. Grogan's goal in the 22nd minute, her first of the season, enabled her to tie Rebecca Rodriguez for the all-time goals scored record at Middle Tennessee with 33. She also increased her career points total to 85 and moved to within four of tying Rodriguez's all-time mark of 89. Grogan assisted Threlkeld with the first goal of the match in the sixth minute. Grogan lofted a free key high in the direction of Threlkeld, who powered a header out of the reach of keeper Kenall Harclerode for a 1-0 lead. Grogan followed with her goal off an assist from Vanessa Mueggler in the 22nd minute when she rifled a shot into the back of the net from 20 yards out. Threlkeld drew a penalty in the box in the 61st minute and Morgan cashed in on the penalty kick to extend the margin to 3-0 in the 61st minute. Middle Tennessee will face Mississippi State in the final game of the Classic Sunday at 3:30 at Blue Raider Field. Western Kentucky and Tulsa will play in the first match at 1 p.m. The Blue Raiders embark on a four-game road trip following Sunday's match. **NOTES:** Middle Tennessee won its 22nd straight at Blue Raider Field and improved to 5-1 in home openers under Aston Rhoden, including five straight wins. The Blue Raiders are 6-5-1 all-time in home openers ... The Blue Raiders improved to 7-0 all-time in the Middle Tennessee Classic ... Middle Tennessee improved to 40-6 under Rhoden at Blue Raider Field ... Holly Grogan tied Rebecca Rodriguez's career goals scored record with her 33rd in the first half ... Grogan was credited with the game-winning goal, adding to her all-time record with 11 in that category ... She had one assist and is alone in third all-time with 19, four away from second ... Grogan now has 85 points, four shy of Rodriguez's all-time record ... Sophomore keeper Erynn Murray collected her 13th career win in goal to move into fourth all-time in that category ... Senior defender Ingrid Christensen returned to the field after missing the first two games with an injury ... Grogan was named the GoBlueRaiders.com Offensive Player of the Game, and freshman Fran Howells was named the GoBlueRaiders.com Defensive Player of the Game.

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