Blue Raiders keep soccer title hopes alive with 1-0 win

Grogan scores winner in pivotal match vs. Denver

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Holly Grogan scored in the 32nd minute and the Middle Tennessee defense made it stand for a 1-0 win against Denver as the Blue Raiders kept alive their hopes of a Sun Belt Conference championship. While Middle Tennessee was earning its seventh shutout of the season, Western Kentucky was securing a 1-0 overtime win against North Texas. It was the exact scenario the Blue Raiders needed to still have a chance to share the league title and carry the No. 1 seed into the conference tournament. If the Blue Raiders win their two remaining matches (vs. North Texas, at Western Kentucky) and Denver wins at Western Kentucky Sunday, Middle Tennessee would win a share of the title and own the tiebreaker over the Hilltoppers. "After the slow start that we had I am just glad that we were able to clinch a spot in the tournament," Middle Tennessee coach Aston Rhoden said. "We had a slow start but it's great to see us finally starting to put things together here at the end." Middle Tennessee (9-5-3, 6-2-1) extended its unbeaten streak to six matches and remained hot down the stretch to get back into the thick of the title chase despite an uncharacteristic 1-2 start to the conference race. Grogan scored the only goal of the match in the 32nd minute when she stole the ball, cut inside the defense and went 1-v-1 against keeper Snyder Mackenzie and came out a winner. It was Grogan's 13th career winner and made her the only player in program history with 100-plus (101) career points. It was her 38th career goal, also tops in school history. "This was a big win because we still have a chance for a high finish in the league," Grogan said.

"These are very big games for us and Denver is always a tough team so it was good to get this result." Defense dominated the intense match as the teams combined for 14 shots. Blue Raider keeper Kela Casiple improved to 7-2-1 in goal and earned her sixth shutout to move into second on the single-season list. The freshman lowered her goals-against-average to a Sun Belt best 0.51 and remained on pace to shatter the school record (1.06). Casiple had six saves but the biggest came in the 81st minute when she denied Jenna Billingsley's shot inside the box. The Blue Raider defenders and midfielders had to play well because the Pioneers had the ball on their side of the field the better part of the second half and for most of the match. The Blue Raiders will face North Texas in the final home match of the season Sunday at 1 p.m. It will be Senior Day at Blue Raider Field as Ingrid Christensen, Kaley Forrest, Grogan and Kala Morgan will be recognized in a prematch ceremony at 12:45 p.m.

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