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## Soccer battles rival WKU to 1-1 stalemate

### Blue Raiders take No. 2 seed into next week's SBC Championships

MT Media Relations

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**BOWLING GREEN, Ky.** - Friday night's Sun Belt soccer showdown between Middle Tennessee and Western Kentucky was to determine the league's regular-season champion in Bowling Green, Ky., but after 110 minutes of action the two rivals had battled to a spirited 1-1 stalemate.

The Hilltoppers (13-2-3, 8-1-2) earned the regular-season title and the No. 1 seed in next week's conference tournament while the Blue Raiders (10-5-4, 7-2-2) will settle for the No. 2 seed.

"It was exactly the type of match you would expect with the regular-season championship on the line between two rivals," Middle Tennessee coach Aston Rhoden said. "Both teams put forth great efforts and the end result was a draw. Western Kentucky played a great match, as did we, but all they had to do to win the regular-season title outright was play to a tie and they were able to do that. I'm proud of our team. We had opportunities and just didn't take advantage in the second half, but I like the way we are playing heading into the tournament."


Middle Tennessee remained unbeaten in its last nine matches (7-0-2) but couldn't muster enough offense to secure its second regular-season title in four years. The Blue Raiders have finished in the top two of the league standings in each of the last four years.

Western Kentucky's Kristi Cocchiarella's eighth goal of the season provided the Hilltoppers a 1-0 lead in the 31st minute and the score remained a 1-1 stalemate until the half.

The Blue Raiders evened the score 1-1 when freshman [Kelly Downs](#) scored her fifth goal of the season on an assist from [Kathrine Andresen](#) in the 62nd minute. The Hilltoppers had a chance to win the match in the first overtime on a breakaway but Blue Raider freshman keeper [Kela Casiple](#), who entered the match ranked sixth nationally in save percentage, came off her line and hauled in the save to keep the match tied.

Middle Tennessee will begin play in the Sun Belt Conference Tournament Wednesday in Mobile, Ala., at 4 p.m.



Kelly Downs scored her fifth goal of the season in a 1-1 draw against Western Kentucky Friday. (MT) 

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