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Blue Raiders draw to begin season Match ends 1-1 after overtime with Jacksonville State

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JACKSONVILLE, Ala.- Middle Tennessee held a 1-0 advantage into the second half but could not hold on as they opened the 2008 season with an away draw against the Jacksonville State Gamecocks in stormy conditions at JSU Soccer Field on Saturday night.

Middle Tennessee took the field for the first time in 2008 with a mix of veterans and newcomers. Despite beginning the game in poor weather conditions, they showed good composure by dominating possession in the early going. The Blue Raiders outshot Jacksonville State 22 to 17 in the match and had 11 shots on goal compared to just four for the Gamecocks.

"I think we played well in spurts moved the ball well in spurts and showed that we have a good fighting spirit," Head Coach Aston Rhoden said. "It is disappointing that we did not finish the game off early."

Middle Tennessee finally broke through in the 30th minute when Blue Raider midfielder **Vanessa Mueggler** hammered home a curling shot from the top of the box after a pass from the right side by freshman **Shan Jones**.

The Blue Raiders had a hard time moving the ball through the Jacksonville State midfield as the game wore on and wasted several chances in the second half to increase their advantage. The Gamecocks leveled the match against the run of play in the 60th minute. A defensive lapse let the ball to bounce in the area and after being knocked around between several opposing players, was tapped into the back of the net by JSU forward Kristi Pereira from five yards.


"Credit goes to Jacksonville State for playing their game and doing what they had to do to grind out a result," Rhoden said.

Middle Tennessee had a chance to win in the eighth minute of the first overtime period when **Hope Suominen** was drew a free kick after being shoved down just outside the box. The ensuing **Fran Howells** kick looped over the wall and came off the crossbar, just inches from winning the match, and the rebound from **Laura Lamberth** was saved by a sprawling JSU goalkeeper Katie Kelly.

The Blue Raiders continued to push forward in closing minutes and **Jen Threlkeld** got past the defense on the far side but her cross was just behind a sprinting Jones in the area.

Middle Tennessee looked to have snatched a last-grasp winner in the final minutes of overtime but a great defensive play by the Gamecock defense prevented JSU goalkeeper Kelly from picking the ball out of the back of her net. **Caitlin Reeves** served in a corner kick that was spilled by Kelly and onto the foot of **Fran Howells**. She watched hard shot



Sophomore Vanessa Mueggler had Middle Tennessee's only goal and led all players with eight shots (MT) 

cleared off the line and then the subsequent rebound skim over the top of the crossbar.

The Blue Raiders return to action when they open the 2008 home schedule against local rival Vanderbilt on Friday at 6:30 PM. The match will be able to be seen live on GoBlueRaiders.com.

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