Blue Raiders set to begin Sun Belt play

Face FIU Friday night; FAU Sunday afternoon

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MIAMI - Middle Tennessee soccer begins Sun Belt Conference play this weekend when they go on the road for matches against the Florida International Golden Panthers and Florida Atlantic Owls. Middle Tennessee is coming off a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Southeastern Conference foe Ole Miss last Friday at Blue Raider Field. The home side scored in the final seconds of the opening half through a fine strike by forward Shan Jones. With just seven seconds remaining until halftime, sophomore Jaimee Cooper struck a long shot from 30 yards that was deflected into the path of Jones. The freshman struck a bending first-time effort into the far corner of the goal as the clock hit just two seconds remaining for what proved to be the game-winning score. The Blue Raiders begin the weekend with a match against the Golden Panthers at University Park in Miami on Friday night. Kickoff is slated for 7 PM EDT. Middle Tennessee and Florida International are meeting for the 10th time in program history, with the Golden Panthers currently holding a 5-3-1 advantage. The Blue Raiders have won the last two contests including a 3-0 victory

last season at Blue Raider Field. Florida International comes into the match winless with a 0-7-0 record after losing 5-0 at Cal-Poly last Sunday. The Golden Panthers have not scored in five straight matches. Middle Tennessee finishes the weekend just north along the coast in Boca Raton, Fla. with a match against Florida Atlantic. Kickoff is set for Sunday at Noon EDT. The Blue Raiders and Florida Atlantic have met four times previously, with the Owls defeating Middle Tennessee 2-1 last season in Murfreesboro. FAU currently holds a 1-5-0 record and opens conference play against Western Kentucky on Friday evening. They have dropped four straight matches including a tough 1-0 double-overtime decision to regional rival South Florida last Sunday. "It is great to finally start conference play. We expect to face two tough teams on the road," Blue Raider Head Coach Aston Rhoden said. "I think our team has prepared well and we are up to the challenge that our opponents present."

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