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Blue Raiders lose 1-0 to Denver

Second-half goal proves the difference

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Head Coach Aston Rhoden and the Blue Raiders now switch their focus to the regular-season finale against rival Western Kentucky. The match is scheduled for 6:30 p.m with Senior Day festivities set for twenty minutes prior to kick-off. ()

DENVER, Colo. - Middle Tennessee allowed goal midway through the second half and could not overcome the deficit in the final 30 minutes as they fell 1-0 to the Denver Pioneers at Pioneer Field on Sunday afternoon.

Middle Tennessee (9-7-2, 7-3-0) came into the match sitting fourth place in the Sun Belt Conference after a hard-fought 2-1 loss to North Texas on Friday evening. The Blue Raiders found themselves trailing by two goals before **Jen Threlkeld** pulled one back for the away side with a 74th minute header.

Despite the defeat, Middle Tennessee had a chance to keep themselves in the thick of the chase for the Sun Belt Conference regular season crown with a win against the Pioneers.

Denver (15-2-2, 8-1-1) were coming off a disappointing 1-0 home loss to Western Kentucky on Friday that saw the Hilltoppers vault over the Pioneers into first place in the conference. The loss was their first in conference play and just the second overall on the season.

Both teams came out fighting from the opening whistle and it was Middle Tennessee that created the first chance of the match. **Shan Jones** received a good ball in the eighth minute but her resulting shot was driven wide of the Denver goal.

The Pioneers almost opened the scoring in the 26th minute when Jessie Rogers got her head to the ball off a corner kick, but the defender's shot went over Kela Casiple and the Blue Raider goal. The home side won five corner kicks in the first half and 11 overall for the match.

Denver scored the match-winning goal in the 59th minute. Midfielder Bria Beardsley served in a cross from the right side that eventually found Mariah Johnston at the top of the box. The forward nailed a shot through a crowd from 17 yards and into the back of the net.

The Pioneers outshot Middle Tennessee 21-to-6 in the match. Sophomore midfielder **Vanessa Mueggler** led the Blue Raiders with three shots. Casiple had three saves in goal to move her single-season total to a career-high 85.

"I was very proud of the effort and spirit shown by our players over the last two matches," Head Coach Aston Rhoden said. "We played solid defensively and had a couple of lapses that proved the difference this weekend. We now have to turn our preparations to Western Kentucky and the conference tournament."

Middle Tennessee concludes Sun Belt Conference regular season play against rival Western Kentucky at Blue Raider Field on Friday night. The match is scheduled for 6:30 p.m with Senior Day festivities set for twenty minutes prior to kick-off.

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