

Quick strikes carry Middle Tennessee to road win at Evansville

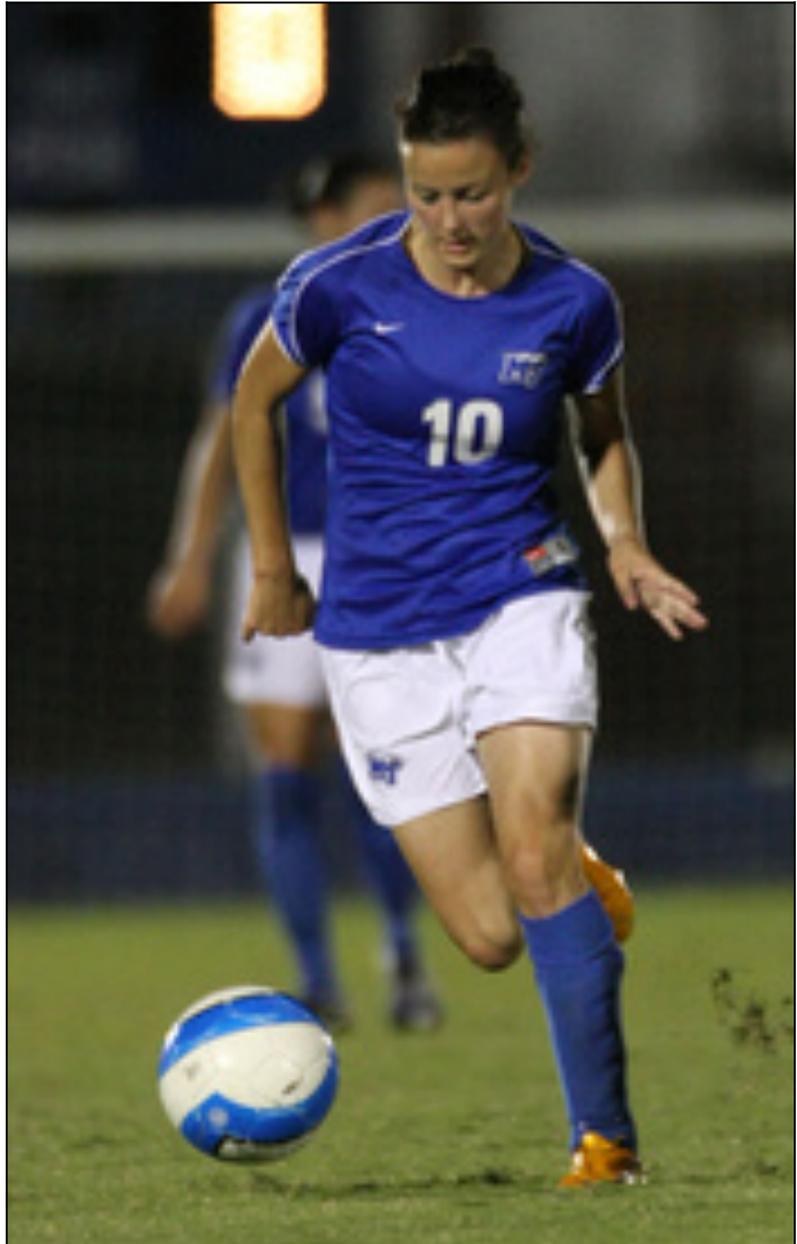
Blue Raiders build 3-0 first half lead

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EVANSVILLE, Ind. - Middle Tennessee scored twice in the opening 10 minutes and withstood a late rally in claiming a 4-3 victory at Evansville in non-conference soccer action Sunday afternoon in Evansville, Ind. The Blue Raiders continue their second-best start in eight years.

"It is good to get a win on the road," head coach Aston Rhoden said. "I think we played really well in the first half and you have to credit Evansville for never quitting despite being down three goals. I am proud of our team for showing the resiliency for not panicking."

The MT scoring flurry started at 5:14 when Regina Thomas netted her second score of the season after kicking the ball in with her heel from six yards out on assists from Hope Suominen and Whitney Jorgenson. The assist is Suominen's team-leading sixth of the campaign.



Just over two minutes later, at 7:45, Jorgenson again helped her teammates find the back of the net behind goalkeeper Chaviel Harrison as she sent a cross to the head of Paige Goeglein, who placed the ball between the pipes for her third score.

Vanessa Mueggler gave the Blue Raiders a 3-0 first half cushion as she went to the left post with her shot from 10 yards away at 26:49 following a pass from Shan Jones.

Middle Tennessee (5-1-1) continued to dominate the opening 45 minutes, but allowed a penalty kick goal by Kasey Kutzler just before the intermission, at 44:22, for a 3-1 halftime lead.

The Purple Aces continued the momentum with the first strike of the second half at 71:58 when Kutzler tallied her second goal. Teammates Amanda Malone and Kaitlin Oldfield were credited with assists on Kutzler's header past Rebecca Cushing.

Jones, however, halted the run by collecting her sixth goal of the season at 77:21 to continue leading the Blue Raiders and Sun Belt Conference. Jen Threlkeld found Thomas, who turned and located Jones for the score from 10 yards out in the middle of the box for what proved to be the game winner.

Kutzler and Evansville (1-5), however, did not quit as she registered her third goal of the contest at 86:14 to pull the Purple Aces within one. Katelyn Smith and Dani Langness set up the hard shot from 15 yards.

Jones had two more attempts at the net in the final couple minutes, but neither shot put the Blue Raiders back up a couple of goals. She finished with a game-high six shots, while Goeglein added three. Middle Tennessee held a 17-13 overall advantage on shots against Evansville, who was led by Kutzler's four attempts.

The Blue Raiders will continue their two-game road swing by playing at Austin Peay in Clarksville, Tenn., at 7 p.m. Friday.

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