Best start in school history continues for Blue Raider soccer

Team is 7-1-1 through first nine games

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Two goals in the first half, within four minutes of another, was all the Middle Tennessee soccer team needed to open successfully in Sun Belt action Friday night with a 2-0 home victory over FIU at Dean A. Hayes Track and Soccer Stadium in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

The Blue Raiders extended their winning streak to four and unbeaten run to five matches with the victory. Middle Tennessee (7-1-1, 1-0 Sun Belt) also continued the best start in school history with its seventh win in the opening nine matches of the season.

"It was definitely a great way to start the conference season, especially at home in front of our awesome fans once again," head coach Aston Rhoden said. "We played a good, complete game against a strong opponent. To be able to get the shutout is a testament to how hard this team has been working lately."

Although visiting FIU controlled much of the offensive attack during the opening 45 minutes, holding an 8-4 shot advantage at the half, it was the Blue Raiders who found the back of the net behind goalie Melaine Raimo.

Junior Jaimee Cooper became the 12th different Middle Tennessee player to score in 2009 when she knocked home an assist from classmate Vanessa Mueggler on a corner kick at 31:47.

A short time later, a foul on the Golden Panthers inside the 18-yard box set up a penalty kick situation at 35:33. MT's Shan Jones lined up and placed it behind Raimo for her conference and team-leading eighth goal of the season, just three shy of the total she completed her freshman campaign with last fall.

The Blue Raiders were able to rebound offensively in the second half, holding a 7-4 edge on shots against FIU (2-5-2, 0-1 Sun Belt).

Sophomore Rebecca Cushing was tested in the cage for Middle Tennessee, but she finished with seven saves in registering her second solo shutout of the season.

Jones and freshman Paige Goeglein led the Blue Raiders with three shots apiece, while Marina Pappas was the top offensive threat for the Golden Panthers with four attempts.

Middle Tennessee will continue its Sun Belt-opening weekend with a Noon Sunday match against Florida Atlantic, also at Dean A. Hayes Track and Soccer Stadium. The Owls dropped a 4-2 decision at Western Kentucky Friday.

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