Middle Tennessee falls in soccer match Sunday to UALR

Thomas nets team's lone goal

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Visiting UALR scored twice in the second half, including the game winner with just over six minutes remaining, to overcome a one-goal deficit and pull out a 2-1 victory against host Middle Tennessee in Sun Belt soccer action Sunday afternoon at the Dean A. Hayes Track and Soccer Stadium.

Neither team was able to put a dent on the scoreboard during the opening 45 minutes, despite the Blue Raiders holding an 8-2 shot advantage against the Trojans. Just after the second half began, Middle Tennessee (10-3-1, 4-2 Sun Belt) struck first at 46:05 as Regina Thomas redirected a pass inside the six-yard box for her third score this season. Hope Suominen sent a corner kick into the box, which found the foot of teammate Fran Howells. Howells one-touched a pass to Thomas at the right post for the 1-0 lead.

However, UALR would not let the advantage remain on the scoreboard for long. Just three-and-a-half minutes later, at 49:39, Kristen Semko sent a long through ball on the left flank to Christina Veasley. Veasley gathered the ball in-stride and broke free from the Blue Raider defense before beating MT keeper Rebecca Cushing to the far side for the equalizer.

The Trojans used a similar tactic for the game winner. Rachael Maina again found Veasley on a long

through ball, which the forward then turned and placed the ball in a familiar spot to give UALR (5-7-1, 2-2-1 Sun Belt) the 2-1 edge at 83:29.

"This is certainly a disappointing loss, especially at home," Blue Raider head coach Aston Rhoden said. "We cannot play a game in spurts. Today we did that and the desire was not there the full 90 minutes. To their (UALR's) credit, they stayed in the game with us and were able to come out on top with a last-minute goal."

The win is the Trojans' first in the series since 1997 and only the third in 16 all-time meetings.

Veasley led the visitors with three of the team's nine shots, while Jane Picarelli stopped five Blue Raider attempts while playing in the cage.

Suominen paced the Blue Raiders with three of the team's 15 attempts, while five others had two shots apiece. Cushing collected five saves for Middle Tennessee.

The Blue Raiders will return to action when they travel to Louisiana for a pair of matches next weekend, beginning at 4 p.m. Friday against ULM in Monroe, La. Middle Tennessee will then conclude the weekend road trip with a 1 p.m. Sunday contest against Louisiana in Lafayette, La.

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