Blue Raiders enter tournament as No. 5 seed

Middle Tennessee enters with third best record in school history

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee soccer, in the midst of its third-best season in school history, will open Sun Belt Tournament action at Noon Wednesday as the No. 5 seed against No. 4 seed North Texas at the FAU Soccer Complex in Boca Raton, Fla. The Blue Raiders are making their 10th consecutive appearance in the field, advancing to the tournament each year since joining the league in 2000-01.

"Being the conference tournament, every team that is there deserves to be there," head coach Aston Rhoden noted. "North Texas has good history and tradition in being successful at this event. However, I feel our team is in a good place and is prepared well. We have to take each game 90 minutes at a time."

The two teams met recently, Oct. 23, during the regular season with the match ending in a 0-0 double-overtime tie at the Dean A. Hayes Track and Soccer Stadium in Murfreesboro, Tenn. The Mean Green own a 7-4-2 all-time series record against the Blue Raiders, although three of MT's victories have come in the last six meetings.

Middle Tennessee enters the tournament with a 12-5-2 overall record, including a 6-4-1 mark in Sun Belt action in Rhoden's eighth season. Thirteen different Blue Raiders have scored, while 13 have also registered an assist in the well-balanced offensive attack. Sophomore Shan Jones tops the list with 11 goals and 25 points, while classmate Hope Suominen has dished a team-best seven assists.

Another sophomore, goalkeeper Rebecca Cushing, has played the majority of the minutes between the pipes, racking up four solo shutouts, a 1.28 goals-against average and 84 saves in her first season with Middle Tennessee after transferring from SMU.

The Blue Raiders will be looking for their first Sun Belt Tournament triumph since defeating South Alabama 2-0 to open the 2006 event. Should Middle Tennessee advance, it will face the winner of No. 1 FIU and No. 8 UALR in Thursday's semifinal at 3 p.m.

Fans can watch the game live on SBC Extra by logging on to: http://www.sunbeltsports.org/ViewArticle.dbml?DB_OEM_ID=4100&ATCLID=1578425&DB_OEM_ID=4100&DB_LANG=&IN_SUBSCRIBER_CONTENT=&KEY=&DB_OEM_ID=4100&DB_LANG=&IN_SUBSCRIBER_CONTENT=.

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