Blue Raiders drop exhibition contest to Carson Newman, 2-0

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Aston Rhoden wanted to make sure his Blue Raider soccer team was aptly challenged in its only exhibition game of the preseason in order to see where the Middle Tennessee squad stood with less than one week before the 2005 season opener. Carson Newman, which is preseason ranked No. 3 nationally in Division 2, obliged with a solid brand of soccer that resulted in a 2-0 win against the Blue Raiders at the Middle Tennessee practice facility Sunday afternoon. The Blue Raiders never were in sync from an offensive or defensive standpoint, and they generally had difficulty in transition and the airtight defense fans have become accustomed to in recent years was lacking. "I think the big thing for us was that we knew Carson Newman was going to be a good team and they were," Rhoden said. "We were not sound fundamentally and our first touch was generally off. The way we pressured defensively was poor and when we did win the ball our transition was poor. That's not our game. We can't lose the ball and get it right back and expect to play. We did too much of that today." The teams played to a scoreless tie through the first period but Carson Newman scored two goals in the second period and made it stand in the exhibition tilt. The Blue Raiders managed just eight shots and had one corner. Middle Tennessee, which was playing without starters Holly Grogan, Rachel Holmes and veteran reserve Jenna Capitena, started five of its 10 newcomers and all of the first-year players on the roster saw action. "It's the preseason and we have 10 new players and they played like 10 new players," Rhoden said. "We didn't play our style of soccer at all and I think a lot of that comes down to leadership and it comes back to returning players demanding, as well as coaches, that we play the way we believe in and not the way they, as new players, are used to playing. This is what this game is for, to figure out where we are. We have seen so many good things in training and now we have to get that to carry over onto the game field. Some of what we saw today, we saw for the first time." Middle Tennessee will start the season in earnest when it travels to Lipscomb Friday at 7 p.m.

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