

# Rodriguez totals 12 points; Blue Raiders rattle Lipscomb 8-0 in opener

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**NASHVILLE** - Rebecca Rodriguez put on an offensive clinic as Middle Tennessee exploded for one of its highest-scoring outputs in an 8-0 win against Lipscomb in the season opener for both teams Saturday morning.

Rodriguez, a junior forward from Dallas, Texas, was a one-person wrecking crew as she established a new single-game record for points (12), while tying the single-game marks for goals (four) and assists (four) to lead the Blue Raider assault. The eight goals were the fifth most in a single game as Middle Tennessee opened its 10th season of women's soccer in resounding fashion.

"All I can say is I wasn't the only one doing it," Rodriguez said. "My teammates were the ones getting me the ball and creating opportunities. They found me and all I could do was help them out and put it away. It feels really good to start the season like this, especially with 10 new players."

Rodriguez broke the previous mark of eight points in a game, besting a record she previously shared with Laura Miguez, while tying her own record for goals in a game. The four assists also tied Miguez for most in a single game. The four goals give Rodriguez 20 in her career, which is good for fifth all-time, one behind Hailee Walsh's 21 and she now stands fifth all-time with 49 career points, also one behind Walsh for fourth on the all-time list.

"Rebecca has always been good and she is always going to be good," Middle Tennessee coach



Aston Rhoden said. "She's a fantastic player. It's good to see her take such a leadership role as a junior. She set the tone today. Rebecca worked extremely hard in the off-season and she's more fit. I believe that showed today."

The game was called Friday night due to lightening in the area but it was Middle Tennessee, striking early and often Saturday morning. Blue Raider freshman forward Kala Morgan's first career goal gave Middle Tennessee a 1-0 lead in the third minute. Morgan received a beautifully placed pass from Rodriguez, took it around the Lipscomb keeper and stroked it clinically into the net.

It didn't take long for the Blue Raiders to strike for their second goal when Rodriguez calmly slotted a penalty kick to the left of the keeper to stake Middle Tennessee to a 2-0 lead in the fifth minute.

Middle Tennessee extended its lead to 3-0 just before halftime when freshman Ingrid Chistensen threaded a pass to Rodriguez, who broke inside the defender and thundered the ball into the roof of the net, leaving the keeper stranded.

The Blue Raiders completed a dazzling half when newcomer Jordan LeFan finished off a slick passing move involving Katy Rayburn and Rodriguez by side-footing the ball into the back of the net from a tight angle for a 4-0 lead with 32 seconds remaining before intermission. Rodriguez was credited with the assist, giving her six total points in the first 45 minutes.

The second half started in the same fashion as the first when freshman Nenita Burgess slid the ball across to Rodriguez, who skillfully lifted it over the advancing goalkeeper and into the corner of the net for her hat trick to pad the Blue Raider lead to 5-0 in the 50th minute.

Neither the Blue Raiders, nor Rodriguez were finished. A new Middle Tennessee record was established on the team's next score when an opportunistic Rodriguez instinctively poked the ball past the keeper from the edge of the 18-yard box to set a new standard for points with her fourth goal.

Middle Tennessee went on top 7-0 after Rodriguez bamboozled the defense with some trickery on the right side, feeding Kaley Forrest with a cross, who took one touch and volleyed the ball past the beleaguered keeper. The Blue Raiders completed the ambush when Rodriguez again found Forrest, who headed the ball over the keeper to account for the 8-0 final.

While the Blue Raider offense was brilliant the defense would not be outshined as the game was virtually played on Lipscomb's side of the field. Middle Tennessee keeper Danielle Perreault combined with freshman Brittany Buford for the shutout. Perreault started and played 75-plus minutes before giving way to Buford. Starting defenders Katy Rayburn, Sara Wohlhueter, Lauren Fox and Katie Daley were stingy on the backline and midfielders Forrest, Christensen, Claire Ward and Melissa Wellman controlled the game in the middle, allowing Lipscomb only three shots in the game.

"We did a very good job on the back line with the keepers and midfielders," Rhoden said. "We got off to a slow start, but I think we were able to pressure them more and keep them on their own half. I think that helped us tremendously in terms of getting the shutout."

The Blue Raiders will play at the University of Georgia Sunday at noon.

**NOTES:** The Blue Raiders extended their unbeaten streak to 10 straight dating to last season. They are 8-0-2 during the stretch ... Five newcomers started for Middle Tennessee in the season opener against Lipscomb. They were Nenita Burgess, Ingrid Christensen, Katie Daley, Lauren Fox, and Kala Morgan. Additionally, newcomers Jordan LeFan, Caitlin Reeves and Brittany Buford also made their Blue Raider debuts in the season opener ... Senior keeper Danielle Perreault was in goal for Middle Tennessee and made her first start since the 2003 season. Perreault was credited with the shutout and recorded her 12th career win ... Middle Tennessee improved to 4-0 all-time against Lipscomb ... The game was originally scheduled for Friday night but it was delayed and eventually called due to lightening and rescheduled for Saturday morning.

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