

## Blue Raiders' valiant effort comes up short in 2-0 loss at Georgia

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**ATHENS, Ga.** - Middle Tennessee put forth a valiant effort against Georgia here Sunday afternoon, but a three-minute flurry just before the half proved to be the difference in a 2-0 setback in front of a crowd of 756.

The Bulldogs (2-0) were stretched to the limit against a Middle Tennessee team that had played a rare Saturday morning game prior to making the five-plus hour bus trip to Athens the day before taking the field at the sun-bathed Georgia soccer facility.

"Games such as these are supposed to test us early and give us a gauge of where we need to improve," Middle Tennessee coach Aston Rhoden said. "We knew how good Georgia is coming in and I think the people who were here to see this match know how good of a game it was. It was a very, very close game and we hung with a team that I think is going to do very well in the (Southeastern Conference)."

Middle Tennessee's well-drilled defense was up to the task against an attacking Bulldog offense that totaled 20 shots and 12 corner kicks but mustered only two goals against the Blue Raiders' stingy unit and senior keeper Danielle Perreault, in particular. Perreault came away with nine saves in the match, the eighth-most for a Middle



Tennessee keeper in a single game.

"I can't say enough about our defensive effort today," said Perreault, who missed virtually all of the 2004 season with a shoulder injury. "It felt nice to be tested against a team such as Georgia and answer some of the questions I may have still had. The entire defensive unit and midfield was key in giving us a chance to win this game."

Georgia coach Patrick Baker said Middle Tennessee had more than an outside shot.

"We feel fortunate to win this game because Middle Tennessee is a very good team, well-coached and they put a premium on possession," Baker said. "We had some scoring chances but their keeper came up big and she made four fantastic saves there. The second game of the weekend always is tough after playing on Friday. Middle Tennessee ended up having to play their opener Saturday, drive and then play and they probably were not as fast because of that."

The physical and intense battle finally swayed in the favor of the home team just before halftime after the two squads had battled to a scoreless draw through the first 40 minutes of action. Georgia finally broke through with the game's first goal in the 41st minute when Caitlin Dingle took a pass from Sarah Darvill and found the back of the net.

What would prove to be the game-winning goal was contested by the Blue Raiders (1-1), who felt a foul had occurred in the midfield and action should have stopped.

"We really thought there was a foul there and we didn't get the call," Rhoden said. "That turnover caught us flat and Georgia got in a counter-attack and was able to score. That was a big goal."

Given the way the game was being played to that point, the next goal would prove even more substantial because it came just three minutes later and served as the back-breaker with just 1:53 remaining until the break. Kritin Garman was well beyond the 18-yard box when she delivered a shot no one saw coming.

"I really believe no one expected that to be a shot except the person taking it," Rhoden said. "It was a remarkable shot and it was huge just before the half. Those three minutes out of a 90-minute game were the difference but I think it's a lesson for us. I'm very proud of our team and our effort and I think we come away from here feeling good about ourselves although we didn't get the final result we would have liked."

Middle Tennessee will play host to its annual College Classic next weekend. The Blue Raiders will play East Tennessee Friday at 4:30 p.m., and Birmingham-Southern Sunday at 3 p.m.

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