

Middle Tennessee secures key 1-0 win at Clemson

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CLEMSON, S.C. - Middle Tennessee has come close against top-notch competition so far this season but with little to show for it in the won-loss column - until Friday night. Holly Grogan scored on an assist from Kaley Forrest in the 32nd minute and the tightfisted Blue Raider defense made it stand as Middle Tennessee stunned Clemson, 1-0, in front of 670 at Historic Riggs Field. The Tigers (4-2-1) entered the match ranked seventh in the Southeast Region and suffered their first home loss in four matches. Middle Tennessee (5-2) equaled the best start in program history with the big road win and finally got over the hump against a team from a power conference (ACC) in soccer circles after playing admirably but suffering a pair of 2-0 losses against nationally-ranked Georgia and



Vanderbilt. "It feels like we just won a Cup Final," freshman defender Katie Daley said. "I think everyone stepped up their game and we worked well together. The communication was there and we put in a full 90 minutes of soccer. No one slacked and this was a team effort in every sense of the word." The tightly contested battle was a draw until Forrest hit a long diagonal ball over the top of the static Clemson defense. Grogan timed her run to perfection and struck a sweet left foot shot across keeper Ashley Phillips, off the far post and into the net for what would prove to be the only score of the match. "Kaley passed a nice ball over the top of the defense and I was able to push it through a couple of defenders and score," Grogan said. "This was by far my biggest goal at Middle Tennessee. This is an unbelievable feeling and it is going to do an amazing amount for our confidence." Middle Tennessee's defense has not allowed more than two goals in a match this season and the unit has surrendered just seven in as many matches to date but the collective effort of the blue-clad defense

was astounding against the Tigers. Middle Tennessee registered its third shutout of the season and senior keeper Danielle Perreault, who had seven saves against Clemson, has been in goal for each of them. Perreault continued her strong season with several key stops to curtail Tiger scoring attempts and keep her team in the lead. "I would definitely say the collective effort of the defense was great," said junior Katy Rayburn, who was named Defensive Player of the Game. "Everybody did their job. We made some adjustments in practice this week and we carried out the plan. Getting this win means a lot because we played well against Georgia and Vanderbilt but we suffered close losses. Now we finally did it. It's a big win for us." Middle Tennessee Head Coach Aston Rhoden said the biggest key to the win was the fact his team finally put together the best 90 minutes it has played all season - and it had to in order to secure victory. "The good thing is the girls stuck to our game plan. They executed it and we got the result we expected," Rhoden said. "It was team defense. Our players worked really hard and this was a very deserving win for them." Clemson coach Todd Bramble agreed with Rhoden's assessment. "This was a good hard-fought match," Bramble said. "We had enough chances, but we could not put our shots away. Middle Tennessee is a well-coached team and I have a lot of respect for their coach, Aston Rhoden. They are well-organized and they played a good game." There is little time for celebration as Middle Tennessee continues its tough trek with a home date against Conference USA foe Memphis at Blue Raider Field Sunday at 2 p.m. The field is located on MTSU Blvd., adjacent to the softball facility. **NOTES:**Middle Tennessee's 5-2 record equals the best start in school history. The Blue Raiders also started 5-2 in 1999 ... The match against Clemson was Middle Tennessee's first against an opponent from the Atlantic Coast Conference ... Danielle Perreault's 34 saves this season give her 129 for her career. She's two stops behind Tory Martin (1996-97) for third on the all-time saves list ... Perreault's 15 career wins in goal are No. 3 on the all-time list ... The Middle Tennessee soccer team will be signing autographs beginning at 2:30 p.m. Saturday in the Greenland Drive Parking Lot during tailgating activities for the football game against Akron ... The Blue Raiders will receive their Sun Belt Conference championship rings during an on-field ceremony after the first quarter of the football game ... Captains Ward and Wohlhueter will be halftime guests on the Blue Raider Radio Network Saturday.

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