

Blue Raiders blank Belmont, 2-0, in soccer action

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Middle Tennessee registered its fourth shutout of the season and received goals from Rebecca Rodriguez and Kala Morgan on the way to a 2-0 win against Belmont in front of 276 at Blue Raider Field Friday.

The match was a defensive stalemate for much of the first half but Rodriguez supplied Middle Tennessee (6-3) with the only goal it would need in the 32nd minute. After a neat turn, Rodriguez side-stepped two Belmont challengers and fired a curling, dipping shot over the stranded Bruin keeper, Micaela Crowley, and into the far corner of the net for her ninth goal and 24th points of the season.

"It was good to finally get on the scoreboard and break the tie because Belmont was playing a tough match," Rodriguez said. "Fortunately, our defense was up to the task and we were able to hold them in check until we could get our offense going. This is a big weekend for us with it being the final tune-up for (Sun Belt) Conference play so it is good to start the weekend with a win."

The score remained 1-0 until late in the match and Belmont had a pair of scoring chances thwarted by the Blue Raider defense, but Morgan received a well-timed pass from Jordan LeFan and provided the Blue Raiders with some breathing room in the 87th minute. LeFan found herself in acres of space on the left and her inviting cross kicked out to an unmarked Morgan, who powered a header home from 6 yards out to give the Blue Raiders a 2-0 lead.

Belmont (1-5) managed just five shots in the match and had one corner as the Blue Raiders played staunch defense and controlled the game. Senior keeper Danielle Perreault was in goal for her fourth shutout of the season and recorded her 16th career win for Middle Tennessee. One of the defensive gems of the match turned in by the Blue Raiders occurred in the final 13 minutes of a 1-0 game when freshman Elise Hutter made a great block on Kari Lennon, who was embarking 1-v-1 on the goal. Moments after Hutter's save, Middle Tennessee increased its lead to 2-0 and secured the

win.

"It wasn't a thing of beauty, but I'm glad we played well enough to win," Middle Tennessee Head Coach Aston Rhoden said. "I thought we did some good things and we put ourselves in position to do more but we didn't finish and we didn't capitalize at times. We still have much room for improvement as conference play approaches but we did have some good things on which to build as we prepare for Sunday's match at Alabama A&M."

The Blue Raiders conclude the non-conference portion of their schedule at Alabama A&M Sunday at 1 p.m. Middle Tennessee is 3-1 away from home this season.

NOTES: Rodriguez moved into tie for eighth-place on the single-season goals list at Middle Tennessee and her 24 points are sixth in a single season. Rodriguez also moved into second place on the career points list at Middle Tennessee with 61, passing former teammate Danielle LaDuke's 60. With 25 career goals, Rodriguez moves into third place on the all-time goals list and is one behind LaDuke's 26 and three behind the all-time mark of 28 set by Laura Miguez (2001-04).

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