

Blue Raiders complete weekend sweep with 4-1 win

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Middle Tennessee's soccer team played itself back into the Sun Belt Conference race with an inspired 4-1 win against Louisiana-Lafayette Sunday afternoon at Blue Raider Field to complete a weekend sweep of league opponents. The Blue Raiders (8-4-2, 2-1-2) increased their home win streak to nine games against Sun Belt foes and pulled to within a 1-1/2 games of the top spot in the conference standings with four matches remaining. "This was a great weekend for us. We knew if we were going to have a chance to do well in the conference standings, or even still have a shot to win it, we had to win two games this weekend," said Blue Raider junior midfielder Kaley Forrest, who supplied two goals and added an assist in Sunday's win. "This weekend gives us a lot of confidence and everyone on our team stepped up to contribute." After scoring just



four goals in three Sun Belt matches, Middle Tennessee struck for seven goals during its two weekend home wins with several different players getting into the act. Against Louisiana-Lafayette (3-7-3, 1-4-1), it was Forrest, Ward and Rodriguez providing the goals. The Ragin' Cajuns scored first in the extremely physical match, which saw 26 fouls and three yellow cards called, when Lindsay Webb scored on a penalty kick in the eighth minute. From there, however, it was all Middle Tennessee as the Blue Raiders scored four unanswered goals to secure the victory. Senior Claire Ward evened the score in the 13th minute when she scored on a cross from 7 yards out, with Rachel Holmes and Forrest teaming for the assist. It was Ward's second goal in as many matches and

provided a special moment as it came with her mother, Ellen, in attendance and watching her daughter play a college game for the first time. Ward is from Ayr, Scotland. Forrest gave the Blue Raiders the lead for good with the first of two goals she would score when she rifled a shot past keeper Stephanie Weston off a rebound in the 28th minute. The energetic Forrest continued her outstanding season-long play immediately after the half when junior defender Katy Rayburn provided the assist that led to Forrest's second goal and a 3-1 Blue Raider lead in the 46th minute. Rebecca Rodriguez, who has been among the nation's most prolific scorers all season, got into the act when she scored off a beautifully-played cross from Kala Morgan in the 61st minute. It was Rodriguez' 10th goal of the season, moving her into a tie for sixth on the single-season list. The Dallas, Texas native also continued her assault on the top spot of the Middle Tennessee career goals and points lists. Rodriguez tied former Blue Raider Danielle LaDuke for second on the career goals list with 26, moving to within two of the top spot, held by Laura Miguez. Rodriguez also is second on the career points list with 63. The Blue Raiders also continued their sterling defensive work, allowing just six shots in the match. Middle Tennessee's strong defense allowed just 10 shots during the weekend wins against Louisiana-Lafayette and Florida International. Middle Tennessee returns to the road next weekend, playing at Arkansas-Little Rock on Friday and Arkansas State on Sunday.

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