Middle Tennessee drops league opener to Denver

Blue Raiders outshoot defending champs by four

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee could not capitalize on solid opportunities, resulting in a 1-0 home loss to Denver in the Sun Belt soccer opener for both schools Friday night at Dean A. Hayes Track and Soccer Stadium in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

The Blue Raiders had their chances in the second half, as junior All-Sun Belt honoree Shan Jones and redshirt sophomore Regina Thomas both had breakaways, but neither was able to find the back of the net behind Pioneer goalkeeper Lara Campbell.

Denver (7-2, 1-0 SBC), the winner of the last four league tournament titles, dominated much of the possession through the opening 52 minutes, including scoring the game's only goal at 50:25. Reigning Sun Belt Player of the Week Kristen Hamilton fed Kaitlin Bast for the difference maker.

After the goal, Middle Tennessee (3-7, 0-1 SBC) battled hard for the remaining 38 minutes, including holding a 13-to-4 shot advantage during the second half alone. The Blue Raiders forced Campbell to make six of her seven saves after halftime.

Senior All-Sun Belt selection Vanessa Mueggler, MT's leading scorer on the campaign with five goals, led all players with six shots, accumulating one-third of the Blue Raider total. Jones added five attempts, while Thomas was the only other Middle Tennessee player with more than one, contributing two shots.

Bast and Nicholette DiGiacomo each tallied four shots of the Pioneer total of 14.

The Blue Raiders will look to regroup at 1 p.m. Sunday when they play host to North Texas in the second conference match of the season.

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