Blue Raiders drop season opener to Flyers

Jorgenson tallies goal, assist

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – Middle Tennessee struck first but could not contain the high-powered Dayton offense as the Flyers erased the deficit and then pulled ahead convincingly for a 7-2 triumph over the Blue Raiders Friday night in season-opening soccer action in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

The earliest start date in program history seemed to be on the Middle Tennessee (0-1) side early, as the Blue Raiders took less than two minutes to score the season's first goal. Junior Whitney Jorgenson, standing on the other side of the midfield stripe in front of the Dayton bench, sent a long through ball to senior Shan Jones. Jones ran onto the pass in stride and one-touched the ball past a charging Jordin Melchert into the far right corner for a 1-0 Blue Raider lead at 1:45.

The one-goal edge would hold up for over 25 minutes until Colleen Williams netted the equalizer at 27:06. Following a Middle Tennessee foul, Emily Kenyon sent a free kick to the top of the 18-yard box, which found Williams' head and it slipped past goalkeeper Rebecca Cushing.

Just over a minute-and-a-half later, Williams again was on the receiving end of a pass, this time from Juliana Libertin, before she turned and wheeled in a strike from about 20 yards out to put the Flyers ahead for good at 28:42.

Dayton (1-0), ranked No. 30 in the preseason TopDrawerSoccer.com poll, scored once more before the intermission as Haley Keller knocked in a loose ball near the six-yard box at 35:52 to put the

visitors ahead, 3-1.

It looked like the Blue Raiders may mount a comeback, as Jorgenson needed only 10 seconds into the second half to pull her team within one. After the kickoff, a scramble inside the box landed the ball at her feet and she knocked it in at 45:10 for a 3-2 deficit.

However, the Flyers had other plans, as Josie Grant would score the next three goals, during a six-minute span, to thwart any MT plans. Her first goal came at 59:18 when Kenyon sent another free kick towards the box, finding Grant's head from eight yards away and into the cage behind backup goalkeeper Jessica Gilchrist.

Williams then got on the assist side of the ledger when her slip pass to Grant put Dayton up 5-2 at 63:44. Grant then concluded her hat trick with another header, this time on a cross from the right side by Libertin.

The final score came at 66:37 when an own goal slipped past Gilchrist following miscommunication along the Blue Raider backline.

Middle Tennessee will return to action when it plays host to Jacksonville State at 2 p.m. Sunday at Dean A. Hayes Track and Soccer Stadium. The Gamecocks also lost their opener Friday, dropping a 2-0 decision at Mercer.

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