Soccer back on the field this weekend

Blue Raiders at home Sunday afternoon

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – The Middle Tennessee soccer team returns to game action this weekend after a week off when it plays a pair of in-state opponents, starting with nationally-ranked Tennessee in Knoxville Friday. The Blue Raiders will then play host to UT-Martin at 2 p.m. Sunday in the first home match since defeating Jacksonville State Aug. 21.

“The schedule certainly does not get any easier this weekend, as we face two more quality opponents and we will have to be prepared for both,” head coach Aston Rhoden said. “Both teams are playing outstanding soccer early, and after our slow start, we have to correct our mistakes to give ourselves the best chance in both games.”

Tennessee, off to its best start in four years, entered the rankings this week at No. 23 by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America after upsetting then-No. 18 Texas A&M at home Sunday. The Lady Vols improved to 3-1 after the weekend’s action, in which they hosted the First Tennessee Lady Vol Classic and dropped a 2-1 decision to current No. 6 UCLA Friday.

Caroline Brown has led head coach Angela Kelly’s squad in scoring thus far, tallying four of the team’s seven goals. Brown has netted the game-winning goal each time for Tennessee and has registered one-half of her scores on penalty kicks.

Likewise, UT-Martin owns a 3-1 record entering the weekend. The Skyhawks will play host to Arkansas State Friday afternoon before making the trek to Murfreesboro two days later. UTM is

coming off a 1-0 victory over Lipscomb Sunday, as Hannah McGowen placed a penalty kick attempt into the back of the net.

Phil McNamara is in his second year in charge of the program and has guided the Skyhawks to other early-season wins over Arkansas-Pine Bluff and Georgia State with a setback to Missouri State as the only blemish. Sunday's match in Murfreesboro will mark the first road game of the campaign for UT-Martin.

Middle Tennessee will be looking to turn its young season around after a 1-2 start. The Blue Raiders have alternated their win with the two losses and are entering the weekend after a 4-1 loss at Auburn Friday. Junior defender Allison Stallard notched he lone MT goal, just the second of her career.

Friday's game at Tennessee will be the second of three-straight Friday road Southeastern Conference contests for the Blue Raiders. Middle Tennessee will conclude the stretch next Friday, Sept. 9, at Vanderbilt.

All fraternities and sororities on campus are invited to attend Sunday, as the Blue Raiders will hold their annual Greek Day.

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