

Sun Belt play begins this weekend for Middle Tennessee soccer

Blue Raiders hit the road for Denver, North Texas

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. –

With the non-conference schedule behind it, the Middle Tennessee soccer team will open Sun Belt action this weekend with a road trip to traditional league heavyweights Denver and North Texas. The Blue Raiders will start the weekend with an 8 p.m. Central match against the Pioneers in Denver before battling the Mean Green at 1 p.m. Sunday in Denton, Texas.

“We understand the importance of this weekend and know we are facing two very formidable opponents,” head coach Aston Rhoden said. “We have to come out and be prepared for our best matchups of the season to this point. We will have to play a full 90 minutes against both teams.”

Middle Tennessee brings a 3-5 record into the weekend set,

coming off a pair of back-to-back shutout victories over Alabama A&M and Tennessee Tech. The Blue Raiders' senior goalkeeper Rebecca Cushing registered her 13th career shutout against the Golden Eagles, moving into a third-place tie with Danielle Perreault (2002-05) on the school's all-time list.

Redshirt freshman Greta Jochmann netted her first career goal, which also proved to be the game winner, in Friday's triumph against Tennessee Tech. Senior Laura Lamberth also knocked in a goal, just the second of her career.



Denver split its two matches last weekend at home, knocking off Cal State-Bakersfield before dropping a one-goal contest to No. 22 Auburn. The Pioneers moved to 6-2 on the campaign with the decisions.

Middle Tennessee trails in the all-time series, 3-9-1, forcing a tie in the last matchup, the 2010 Sun Belt Tournament championship before advancing past then-No. 15 Denver, 3-2, on penalty kicks. The Blue Raiders and Pioneers were scoreless through 110 minutes before MT prevailed to capture its first Sun Belt Tournament crown and secure the initial NCAA Tournament berth in program history.

North Texas owns a 5-3-1 ledger entering the weekend, which it will open by playing host to Western Kentucky Friday. The Mean Green is the league's top scoring team thus far with 26 goals but 11 came in an Aug. 28 win over Grambling.

North Texas, after starting the year unbeaten in its first six matches, has fallen in its last three, including last weekend tilts to UC Riverside and Cal State Fullerton. The Mean Green has set the tone in the series with Middle Tennessee, claiming an 8-5-2 advantage, although the Blue Raiders earned a 2-1 double overtime triumph in last year's meeting in Murfreesboro.

After this weekend's action, Middle Tennessee will return to the friendly confines of Dean A. Hayes Track and Soccer Stadium for four-straight home matches as it begins the final month before playing to the Sun Belt Tournament, Nov. 2-5.

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