Soccer season ends with tournament heartbreaker

Blue Raiders make second-half push

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – Middle Tennessee mounted a late rally but was still unable to find the back of the net Wednesday night as it dropped a 1-0 decision to Western Kentucky during Sun Belt Tournament quarterfinal action at Dean A. Hayes Track and Soccer Stadium. The Blue Raiders, seeded fifth in the eight-team field, faced the No. 4-seed Lady Toppers for the second-straight game. The Middle Tennessee offense was unable to get much going during the first half, trailing 7-1 on shots at the break. The Lady Toppers, however, were able to use the offensive push to their advantage as they netted the game's first score at 17:29. As the Blue Raider defense attempted to clear the ball out of the 18-yard box area, Chrissy Tchoula intercepted the pass and fed it quickly to Mallory Outerbridge, who blasted home the assist from 30 yards away for her 14th tally of the season past senior goalkeeper Rebecca Cushing. Middle Tennessee (10-9-1) was able to create more offensive looks in the second half than it did during the opening 45 minutes. Senior Shan Jones sent three shots near the net with two sailing just over the crossbar. However, the best Blue Raider chance came with under 11 minutes remaining. Redshirt junior Regina Thomas, an All-Sun Belt Second Team honoree, sprinted with the ball down the left flank. She sent a shot towards the top of the 18-yard box. As it crossed along the line, a Western Kentucky (13-6-1) defender knocked it down with her hand, creating a penalty kick situation. All-Sun Belt Second Team pick, junior Allison Stallard,

lined up from the spot but her attempt low right was turned away by goalkeeper Libby Stout keeping WKU ahead by one. Middle Tennessee added more opportunities late in the contest, pushing forward, but still could not put the ball between the pipes. The Blue Raiders' last chance was a rush in front of the net with Cushing coming all the way up field and attempting the final shot with nine seconds left only to be denied.

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