MT Soccer drops heartbreaker to FIU in overtime

Blue Raiders conclude successful 2012 season

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MOBILE, Ala. - A goal by Kim Lopez in overtime lifted the FIU Panthers to a 2-1 victory over Middle Tennessee in the Sun Belt Tournament Semifinals on Friday evening.

The two squads played even for 90 minutes of action. MT (14-5-1) had a close scoring opportunity in the final seconds of regulation before an FIU defender cleared the ball. Similar to the regulation scoring play, Lopez scored with a low-line touch to give FIU the win. The Panthers (13-5-2) advance to the Sun Belt Championship to play North Texas.

FIU found the first goal just 50 seconds in when Lopez scored at the near post with an assist from Chelsea Leiva.

Middle Tennessee's Charity Blair was fouled inside the box, giving her an opportunity to equalize the game at the 31st minute. The Chattanooga native hit the lower right side and scored off a penalty kick and collected her fourth goal of the season.

At the half, the Raiders outshot FIU, 11-to-7 and had four corner kicks. The Blue Raiders managed five saves in the first half with three coming from goalkeeper Jessica Gilchrist.

Both squads had nine shot opportunities each in the second half, but the Blue Raiders biggest chance came with 10 seconds left in regulation when Regina Thomas headed a ball near the net. The ball was cleared by an FIU defender sending the game to overtime.

MT had 21 shots for the match, 10 of which were on goal. The Raiders also had 10 corner kicks in the match. Gilchrist fell to 6-3-1, collecting four saves in 95:35.

The Blue Raider Soccer program closed out a 2012 campaign that saw its best season since 2006. MT also had one of the most prolific offenses in the nation, averaging 3.00 goals per game.

The Raiders claimed a share of the Sun Belt Conference regular season title for the first time since 2004. Paige Goeglein was the SBC Offensive Player of the Year and Kate Loye was named the Freshman of the Year. Head Coach Aston Rhoden garnered Coach of the Year honors, while six Blue Raiders earned All-Conference accolades.

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