

USA Drops MT 8-4

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Middle Tennessee had a few chances against South Alabama, but could not overcome the Jags in the late innings, dropping the opening game of this Sun Belt series 8-4. The Blue Raiders (21-17, 3-7) charged out to a 1-0 lead in the top of the first inning behind a Josh Archer sacrifice fly, but the lead was short-lived. The Jags (26-11, 7-1) roared back with a two-run homer from Jansen Rayborn and a solo shot from Josh Touchstone, giving them a 3-1 advantage after the first frame dust had settled. The Blue Raiders clawed back into the game. Middle Tennessee plated a run in the top of the

second behind a one-run double from Jason Howarth and knotted the game at 3-3 when Marshall Nisbett blasted a solo homer over the right field wall. The Jags retook the lead in the bottom of the fifth. Brett Parker led off the inning with a monster homer over the left field wall and Ryan Mulhern capped the scoring with an RBI single, giving the Jags a 5-3 lead. USA would increase the lead in the bottom of the sixth on an RBI single from T.J. Touchstone. Middle Tennessee looked to have a big inning on tap in the top of the eighth. Archer plated Chuck Akers with a two-out single and the Blue Raider worked the bases loaded against USA starter Sam Smith. However, the Blue Raiders could not deliver a hit to break the inning open, and the inning went quietly with the score 6-4. The Jags put the game away in the bottom of the eighth. A costly Middle Tennessee error and some timely hitting from USA brought two runs across and gave the Jags all the insurance they would need. USA starter Sam Smith went the distance for the win to improve to 5-0 while MT's Adam Larson took the loss to fall to 2-3. The Blue Raiders were paced by Josh Archer's 2-for-3 performance while USA got a 3-for-4 night from Josh Touchstone. The clubs will meet again on Saturday with start time scheduled for 1 PM. The Blue Raiders will send starter Steven Kines to the hill to oppose USA's Clark Girardeau, who will be making his first start since straining s rib cage muscle a few weeks ago.

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