FIU Rips MT 24-8

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Middle Tennessee's bid to even the series with Florida International never really got off the ground on Saturday afternoon as the Golden Panthers punished the Blue Raiders 24-8 to take a 2-0 lead in the three-game series. However, the Blue Raiders (26-27; 8-15) did lead in the game. Middle Tennessee plated two runs in the top of the first inning against FIU starter Carlos Sanchez. Chuck Akers and Marshall Nisbett got things underway with back-to-back singles and a walk to Nate Jaggers loaded the bases. From there, Akers would score on a Justin Sims base hit and Nisbett touched home plate after a passed ball by FIU catcher Tommy Duenas. The lead would not last an entire inning. The Golden Panthers (38-16; 12-11) came to the plate in the bottom of the first inning and banged out two hits and drew three walks against MT starter Steven Kines to chase him from the game without recording an out. When the dust had settled, Florida International had recorded five runs on three hits against both Kines and reliever Chris Mobley After a Chuck Akers homer in the top of the second brought the Blue Raiders back to within two runs, the Golden Panthers began where they left off. FIU plated five runs in the bottom of the second inning on four hits, batting around for the second time in as many innings. Again it was walks that terrorized the Blue Raiders in the inning as Mobley allowed three straight walks with two outs before the barrage began. From there, the Blue Raiders would never be back in the game again. The Golden Panthers would go in order in the third inning, but the big bats got going in the fourth. The Golden Panthers hit three homers in the inning including back-to-back homers from Brad Eldred and Hector Nunez put three more runs on the board to make the score 12-3. The Blue Raiders finally recovered from the shell shock to put three more runs on the board in the top of the sixth. Nisbett delivered the big hit, driving in two runs with a double after Jason Howarth had already scored from third on a wild pitch to bring the Blue Raiders within six runs at 13-6. FIU wasn't done there. The Golden Panthers pummeled the Blue Raiders in the seventh inning, sending 16 batters to the plate and scoring 10 runs before the Blue Raiders could get an out. Again it was a home run barrage that did the damage. Eldred and Nunez went back-to-back for the second time in the game and Eldred later went deep for the second time in the inning - this time with a grand slam - to put a cap on his day with a 4-for-5 performance that included

three homers and eight runs driven in. The explosive inning put the home team in front 23-6. The Blue Raiders would put two more runs on the board with a two-run homer from pinch-hitter Chris Leguenec in the top of the eighth. But the seventh had already sounded the death knell for Middle Tennessee. The Golden Panthers got one more run in the bottom of the eighth behind a solo homer from Solomon Frieder to finish the scoring, giving the Golden Panthers a 24-8 decision. When the box score was finally tallied, the Golden Panthers had banged out 24 runs in putting up 24 runs in the contest. Of those runs, 23 were credited as earned runs by the Blue Raider pitching staff. Akers was an offensive bright spot for Middle Tennessee in the game, going 3-for-4 with a homer in the contest. Nisbett and Sims each accounted for two hits in the game. The series is scheduled to conclude on Sunday afternoon with the first pitch slated for Noon.

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