MT Loses Close One To Vandy 9-8

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The Blue Raiders tripped against Vanderbilt on Tuesday night as the Commodores scored five runs in the last three innings to pull out a 9-8 win over their mid-state rivals. The Blue Raiders (36-12) looked to have things in hand after jumping out to a 3-0 lead in the top of the first inning behind a bases loaded double from former Commodore Kyle Skillman, but Vandy (23-29) would rally in the bottom of the fourth inning. The Commodores got three straight singles with one out to plate a run and a three-run blast from third baseman Ashley Freeman gave the home squad a 4-3 lead at the newly renovated Charles Hawkins Field at McGugin Center. The Blue Raiders would rally to retake the lead in the top of the fourth. Three straight hits loaded the bases and Tjerk Smeets drove in the inning=92s first run with a ground ball to first. Josh Renick then put the exclamation point on the inning with a home run that reached the top of the Memorial Pool behind the left field wall. The Blue Raiders clung to their 7-4 lead and starter Steve Kline left with a chance to pick up his first win after five strong innings of work. However, the Commodores would spoil Kline=92s bid. Vanderbilt plated four runs on four hits in the bottom of the sixth inning to take an 8-7 lead. The home team then added insurance with another run in the bottom of the seventh to make the score 9-7. Brandon Johnson put a scare in the Commodores in the top of the ninth inning with a solo shot over the right field wall, but it proved to not be enough as Vandy held on to win 9-8. Reliever Jason Kuhn took the loss for Middle Tennessee and fell to 4-3 while Chris Maultsby avenged his earlier loss to the Blue Raiders by earning the win out of the bullpen to improve to 5-8. Skillman led the Blue Raider attack with a 3-for-4 night. Renick and Chuck Akers each went 2-for-4 while Marshall Nisbett was 2-for-5. Freeman led the Commodores with a 4-for-4 night. The Blue Raiders will suit up for their final non-conference game on Wednesday night against Tennessee. The first pitch is slated for 7 PM at Reese Smith Field.

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