# Carroll, Kline Lead Blue Raiders to Win

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**MURFREESBORO, Tenn.** - Sophomore Brett Carroll hit a two-run homer and drove in three runs and Steve Kline worked 6.2 strong innings, striking out eight to lead Middle Tennessee to a 6-4 victory over New Mexico State at Reese Smith Field in the conference opener for both squads.

The Blue Raiders (9-9, 1-0 SBC) got off to a good start, Kline provided terrific starting pitching and Chase Swing came on to get the final seven outs, tossing hitless baseball to provide the triumph.

Middle Tennessee got a jumpstart in the first, as Chad Cooper led off with a single and Carroll hit a two-run blast over the leftcenter field wall for an early 2-0 lead.

New Mexico State got a run in the second when Beau Blacken drew a leadoff walk and later scored on a two-out single to short leftcenter by Chris Ewen.

But the Blue Raiders got the run back in their half of the second to keep the two-run advantage. Jeff Beachum singled with one out, went to second on a Troy Harp groundout and scored on a single to center by Chuck Akers.

Hal Bisnett hit a 1-1 pitch over the leftcenter field wall in the third to cut the lead to 3-2, but Middle Tennessee again got the run back in their half of the frame, as Shane Kemp had a two-out infield single before Chris LeGuenec doubled down the leftfield line, giving the Blue Raiders a 4-2 lead.

The Aggies (21-6, 0-1) tied the score in the fifth when Alex Borgo led off with an infield single and Brad Ditter hit a 2-0 pitch opposite field over the leftcenter field wall.

Middle Tennessee retook the lead in their half of the fifth when Marcus Taylor was hit by the pitch to leadoff and stole second. Taylor went to third on a wild pitch and Kemp drove in the run with a groundout to third, giving the Blue Raiders a 5-4 advantage.

NMSU came right back in the sixth, though, with Keith Jenkins doubling to leadoff, followed by Ewen reaching and stealing second to put runners at second and third with one out. But Kline toughened up and struck out the next two batters, including Borgo, a .435 hitter, to end the inning and the threat.

The Aggies got a leadoff walk in the seventh before Kline got the next two hitters, both lefthanded out. Blue Raider head coach Steve Peterson then summoned Swing from the bullpen to get the final out of the seventh, inducing Blacken to fly out to right.

The Blue Raiders manufactured another run in the seventh without a hit. Cooper drew a leadoff walk, went to second on a wild pitch, stole third, and scored on a sacrifice fly to left by Carroll for a 6-4 Middle Tennessee edge.

Swing walked the leadoff batter of the eighth before getting the final six outs in order, including four strikeouts, to pick up his first career save.

Kline (3-1) tied his career high for the second straight outing with eight strikeouts, walking four and allowing six hits and four runs.

NMSU starter Jason Williams (3-1) took the loss, giving up five runs on seven hits in 4.1 innings. Andrew Garretson worked 3.2 hitless innings of relief, striking out four.

The Blue Raiders and Aggies play the second of their three-game series Saturday at 2 p.m. at Reese Smith Field, and conclude the series on Sunday at 1 p.m.

**GAME NOTES**

The Blue Raiders won their fourth straight conference opener and third consecutive in the Sun Belt. Middle Tennessee's last loss in a conference opener came to Eastern Illinois in 1999 ... Steve Kline tied his career-high with eight strikeouts for the second straight start ... Kline walked his first batter of the year in the contest Friday night ... Chad Cooper and Brett Carroll both extended their hitting streaks to five games, and Shane Kemp extended his to four games.

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