

NMSU Takes Series Clincher, 6-4

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Gavin Monjeras belted a three-run homer in the fourth to give New Mexico State a three-run lead and three Aggie pitchers made it stand up to give NMSU a 6-4 victory and series-clinching win over Middle Tennessee Sunday afternoon at Reese Smith Field.

New Mexico State took a 5-2 lead with the home run from Monjeras, but the Blue Raiders cut it to 5-4 but could get no closer before the Aggies extended the lead in the eighth.

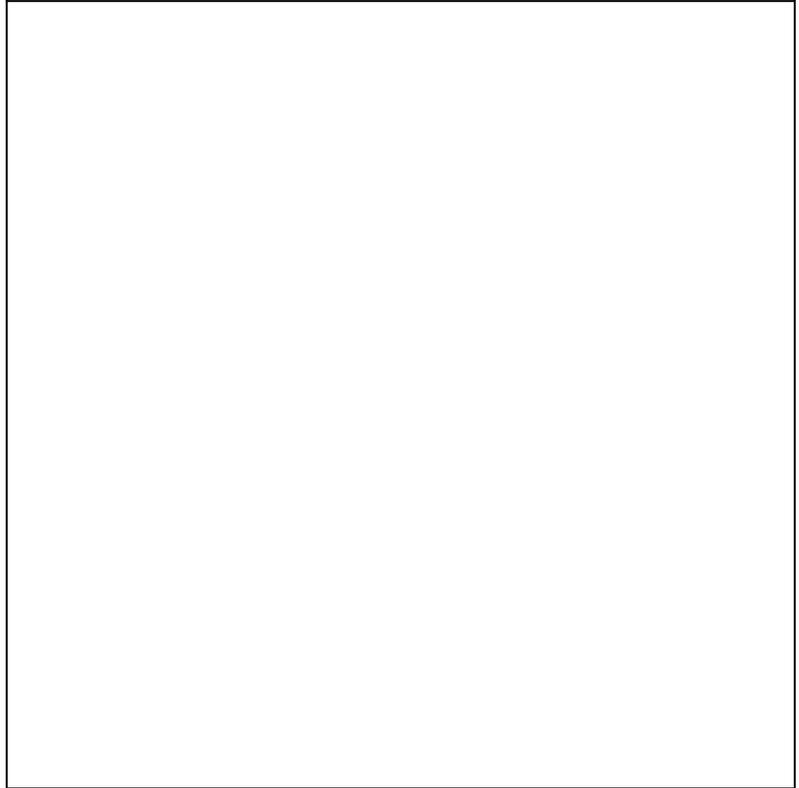
The Aggies got on the board in the third inning, courtesy of a two-base error. Monjeras guided a single into center to leadoff the inning and Chris Ewen walked. Blue Raider starter Jerry Knox then got a strikeout and a popout before Hal Bisnett chopped one in the hole.

Third baseman Brett Carroll made a terrific diving stop, but his throw to first was low and got by the first baseman, going. Monjeras scored far down the rightfield line. Monjeras scored from second and Ewen came all the way around to score from first, giving NMSU a 2-0 lead.

The Blue Raiders came right back in their half of the frame, as Troy Harp led off with a double down the leftfield line. Marcus Taylor and Carroll each drew one-out walks to load the bases, prompting a visit from the Aggie pitching coach, who was chirping at home plate umpire Kenny Janes about the strike zone.

Josh Archer then drew a walk, forcing in a run, before Chris LeGuenec drove a ball to deep rightcenter, plating Taylor with the tying run on the sacrifice fly.

New Mexico State took the lead again in the fourth, as Billy Becher singled to right and Keith Jenkins walked before Monjeras parked a 1-0 fastball over the leftfield wall, giving NMSU a 5-2 advantage.



Middle Tennessee got a solo home run from Taylor to the opposite field to leadoff the fifth, cutting the deficit to two. Carroll and LeGuenec both singled and Jeff Beachum walked later in the inning, loading the bases with two outs. But Chuck Akers grounded out to end the inning and the threat.

The Blue Raiders cut into the lead again in the seventh, as Carroll was hit to leadoff and Archer singled to left, chasing NMSU reliever Dustin Cameron. LeGuenec tried to bunt the runners over against Andrew Garretson, but third baseman Monjeras got the force out at second to put runners on the corners.

Carroll scored when Garretson was called for a balk, making it 5-4 NMSU. Beachum reached on an error by Bisnett, putting runners on the corners with two outs for Akers, who struck out swinging to end the threat.

NMSU expanded the lead in the eighth with a one-out single from Ditter, who stole second and scored on Billy Becher's double down the rightfield line, chasing Travis Horschel from the contest. Horschel did a good job, allowing just the two hits with a strikeout in 3.1 innings.

The Blue Raiders got the tying runs on base in their half of the eighth, as Cooper singled and Taylor walked with one out to bring Carroll to the plate. But the sophomore bounced into a 6-4-3 inning-ending doubleplay, spoiling the opportunity for Middle Tennessee.

Again the Blue Raiders got the tying runs on base in the ninth, as Clif Thomas drew a one-out walk and Kemp doubled to left, putting runners on second and third with one out. Beachum lined out to center, but Thomas did not tag up on the play, leaving the Blue Raiders still two runs down. Akers walked to load the bases, but Harp flew out to right to end the contest.

Middle Tennessee stranded 14 runners in the game, including leaving the bases loaded in the third, fifth and ninth. The Blue Raiders outhit New Mexico State, 9-6, in the contest.

Cameron (4-1) got the win for NMSU, tossing three-plus innings and allowing two runs on four hits with two strikeouts. Garretson got his second save of the year, tossing three innings and allowing just two hits and no runs.

Neither starter fared particularly well. Knox (1-1) allowed five runs, two earned, on four hits in four innings and took the loss. The senior struck out four and walked one. NMSU starter Rory Coppinger gave up two runs on three hits in three innings, walking four with two strikeouts.

The Blue Raiders begin a seven-game road swing with a pair of games at Memphis on Tuesday and Wednesday. Middle Tennessee and the Tigers are set for a 7 p.m. first-pitch on Tuesday at Nat Buring Stadium.

GAME NOTES

Josh Archer returned to the cleanup spot in the order for the first time in seven games for the Blue Raiders. His last start came March 12 against Samford ... Chad Cooper and Brett Carroll both extended their hitting streaks to seven games, a team season-high.

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