Blue Raiders Split at Memphis

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MEMPHIS, Tenn. - Freshman BJ Church had nine strikeouts in four-plus innings and Chad Cooper scored both runs in a 2-1 Middle Tennessee second game win and a doubleheader split with Memphis Wednesday at Nat Buring Stadium.

The freshman, making his second start of the season, allowed one run on three hits and struck out a career-high nine, walking two in 4.2 innings to get his first collegiate victory. Church (1-0) worked ahead in the count and had the Tigers all swinging at the slider in the dirt.

In game two, the Blue Raiders got started quickly, as Cooper was hit by the pitch to leadoff the contest. Cooper stole second and went to third on a ground ball. Brett Carroll then plated the run with a sacrifice fly to leftfield for an early 1-0 Blue Raider lead.

Middle Tennessee tried to add to the lead in the second when Shane Kemp singled and Derek Phillips walked before Jeff Beachum singled to left. But Kemp was cut down at the plate by UM's Jordan Hart, who made a good throw to the plate to gun down the runner and keep the contest a one-run game.

Cooper was in the middle of the action again in the third for the Blue Raiders, leading off with a single to left and stealing second, his fourth stolen base of the day. Carroll reached on catcher's interference and Chris LeGuenec's ground ball was booted by Tigers third baseman Kyle Scott, loading the bases. Jerry Knox plated the run with a sacrifice fly to rightfield for a 2-0 Middle Tennessee lead.

The Tigers got on the board with a solo home run from Scott in the fifth deep into the night, cutting the lead in half. An error and two walks later in the frame loaded the bases for the Tigers, chasing Church. Jeff Kasser came on to get Michael Lewis to line out to Beachum at second, ending the threat.

The Tigers got the tying run on base in the seventh when Hart singled to right with two outs, but Travis Horschel got a strikeout of Kevin House to end the contest and give the Blue Raiders a split of the twinbill.

Kasser got two outs and Danny Borne struck out the only hitter he faced before Horschel came on to get the final four outs of the contest for his first save. Memphis starter Michael Novarese (0-4) gave up two runs, one earned, on four hits, striking out a career-high seven in six innings to suffer the loss.

In game one, Middle Tennessee got four runs in the first three innings to stake Blue Raider starter Steven Kines to an early lead.

Cooper led off the game with a single, stole second and third and scored when the throw to third from UM catcher Kurt Welch skipped into leftfield. Carroll and LeGuenec followed with singles and Carroll later scored on a fielder's choice from Kemp.

The Blue Raiders added two more runs in the third, as Carroll singled and scored on a Kemp single to left for a 3-0 lead. Kemp stole second and Beachum made it 4-0 with an RBI single into rightcenter.

But the Tigers got back into the game in the bottom of the third, with Hart belting a solo homer with one out in the inning. Lewis then singled with two outs before Kines hit Josh Payne. Welch then parked a 2-0 pitch over the leftfield wall, tying the contest at four.

Relievers for both teams shut down the offenses, with Daniel de Armas and Chris Mobley throwing eight shutout innings for the two teams before the Tigers got the game-winner in the eighth inning.

Welch singled and Ryan Martin doubled before Scott was intentionally walked to start the eighth for the Tigers. Brent Dlugach then singled to deep center, plating pinch-runner Chad House with the game-winner and a 5-4 UM victory.

Memphis starter Bill Edwards lasted just three innings, allowing four runs and seven hits before being replaced by de Armas, who (2-0) threw five shutout innings, allowing just one hit and striking out three.

Kines faced one batter in the fourth before being replaced by Mobley. Kines gave up four runs on five hits and did not walk or strikeout a batter. Mobley gave up just one hit in three innings with one strikeout before giving way to Chase Swing. Swing (1-2) allowed four hits in taking the loss, tossing one-plus innings.

Cooper had three hits and three runs and stole four bases in the two games, while Carroll went 2-for-4 with two runs in the first game. Kemp went 3-for-7 with two RBIs and one run in the twinbill, and Beachum had a hit in both contests.

The Blue Raiders begin a three-game series at Louisiana-Lafayette Friday at 6:30 p.m. at M.L. 'Tigue' Moore Field. Saturday's contest starts at 2 p.m., with the series finale on Sunday beginning at 1 p.m.

GAME ONE GAME NOTES

Chris LeGuenec his fourth in the lineup for the second time in three games ... Steven Kines' mother, Debbie, sang the national anthem before the game. Kines is from Germantown and has a brother, Corey, who plays for the Tigers ... Chad Cooper extended his hitting streak to eight games with a single in the first ... Chris LeGuenec extended his hitting streak to four games with a single in the first ... Josh Archer extended his hitting streak to five games with a single in the eighth.

GAME TWO GAME NOTES

Jerry Knox made his fourth start of the year at first base ... Shane Kemp made his hitting streak three with a single in the second ... Chad Cooper extended his hitting streak to nine games with a single in the third ... BJ Church made his third start of the year and collected a career-high nine strikeouts ... Brett Carroll had his eight-game hitting streak stopped after going 0-for-2.

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