

Archer, Kline Lead Blue Raiders to Win

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JONESBORO, Ark. - Steve Kline worked into the eighth and Josh Archer's three-run homer in the first was all that was needed, as Middle Tennessee defeated Arkansas State, 4-2, Friday night at Tomlinson Field.

Kline faced one batter in the eighth before giving way to Chase Swing, who got the final six outs despite the home team mounting a rally in their final at-bat. Kline (4-2) struck out seven and gave up two runs on six hits. Swing came in and got a doubleplay in the eighth, then worked out of a two-on and one-out jam in the ninth to get his second save of the year.



The Blue Raiders (15-18, 4-6 Sun Belt) started the game quickly, as Jeff Beachum, batting leadoff for the first time this season, singled through the leftside on the first pitch of the game. Chuck Akers followed with a soft single to right, but ASU starter Jody Petty got a lineout from Nate Jagers and a strikeout from Chris LeGuenec and looked like he would get out of the jam. But Archer ripped the first pitch over the wall in leftcenter to give Middle Tennessee an early 3-0 lead.

The homestanding Indians tried to answer in their half of the frame, as leadoff hitter Brad Hayes doubled to leftcenter and went to third on a sacrifice bunt by Neal Chambers. But Brett Carroll made a nice sliding catch in foul territory to retire Matt Rogelstad and George Sterner grounded out to end the inning.

The Blue Raiders looked as though they would escape unharmed again in the second after a leadoff double from Dusty Sexton. A strikeout and a nice play from Carroll on a bunt attempt by Blake Denischuk gave Middle Tennessee two outs, but catcher Zach Shipley lined the first pitch past the mound and into centerfield, plating Sexton and cutting the Blue Raider advantage to 3-1.

Middle Tennessee got the run back in the third, as Akers drew a one-out walk, went to third on a single from Jagers and scored on LeGuenec's single up the middle.

The next four innings were very dull, with each team collecting two hits apiece and neither threatening to score.

The Indians broke through in the seventh, as Denischuk lined a home run off the foul pole in right, making it a two-run game.

The Blue Raiders got a leadoff single from Jagers in the eighth and Carroll singled with two outs to put runners at the corners, but Shane Kemp flied out against ASU reliever Ryan Hamilton to end the threat.

In the ninth Rogelstad singled to leadoff and one out later, Dusty Sexton lined just foul over the rightfield wall, a shot that would have tied the game. Sexton then popped up to short, but Beachum could not get a handle on the high-fly, putting two on with one out.

But Swing got Adam Roberson to foul out before Denischuk popped up to Beachum to end the contest.

Petty (3-3) gave up four runs on nine hits in 7.1 innings, striking out four with one walk. Petty had given up two runs or less in his last six outings before allowing three in the first.

Akers went 2-for-4 with two runs scored to lead the Blue Raiders, while Beachum added two hits in Middle Tennessee's 11-hit attack. Denischuk had two of ASU's seven hits in the game.

The two teams continue action Saturday at 2 p.m. and conclude the three-game series Sunday at 1 p.m.

GAME NOTES

Sophomore Nate Jagers made his first start at second base in exactly a month after missing 14 games with an injury to his right ankle. Jagers played the previous seven games as the designated hitter ... Junior Ryan Darnell made just his second start of the year and first since the first game of a doubleheader against Jacksonville State on February 23. Both of Darnell's starts have been as the designated hitter ... Jeff Beachum started at shortstop for the sixth time this season and first since March 8 at Southwest Missouri State. Beachum also batted leadoff for the first time this season, singling on the first pitch of the game ... Chad Cooper injured his left hand last Friday against Florida International and has not played since. He is, however, on the active roster for the weekend and is available to bunt and pinch-run ... Troy Harp is not on the active roster for the weekend, with freshman Tommy Decker taking his place on the roster. It marks Decker's first appearance on the active roster in conference play this season ... Marcus Taylor did not make the trip after re-injuring his shoulder Sunday against FIU. The freshman will be re-evaluated next week and will most likely be out at least a week and maybe more ... Steve Kline worked into the eighth inning for the second time this season and had his fourth quality start in eight appearances this year.

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