Knox Leads Blue Raiders to Win

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Jerry Knox belted two home runs and Knox and Josh Archer both homered in the eighth to give Middle Tennessee some insurance in a 9-5 victory over Vanderbilt Tuesday night before a season-high crowd of 915 at Reese Smith Field.

Knox homered to leadoff the fourth and get the Blue Raiders on the board. Middle Tennessee held a precarious 5-4 lead with two outs in the eighth before Archer belted his ninth homer of the year and Knox followed two batters later with his second round-tripper of the game to provide the Blue Raiders with some much-needed insurance.

Vanderbilt added a solo home run in the ninth for the final margin.

The Blue Raiders got consecutive singles to start the second from Brett Carroll and Knox, but a pair of strikeouts and a foul out ended the threat.

Vandy came back in the next half inning to manufacture a run, starting with a leadoff single from Tony Mansolino. The runner stole second and went to third on a slow roller to the shortstop. Zach Simpson then drove in the run with a single up the middle for a 1-0 Commodore lead.

Again the Blue Raiders put runners in scoring position with less than two outs in the third, as Jeff Beachum had a leadoff double and Nate Jaggers had a 10-pitch at-bat before walking, putting runners on the corners with one out. Archer popped out to short right and Carroll grounded into a fielder's choice to end the inning.

The Commodores scored again in the fourth, as Cesar Nicolas singled to leadoff, went to second on a wild pitch and scored on John Kaye's single up the middle. After another single from Warner Jones put runners on the corners, Kaye scored on a sacrifice fly from Worth Scott for a 3-0 VU advantage.

Jerry Knox got the Blue Raiders on the board in the bottom of the inning, belting a 1-2 pitch well over the wall in rightcenter to cut the deficit to two runs. Shane Kemp followed with a single, went to second on a passed ball and scored on Beachum's two-out bad-hop single off Vandy third baseman Mansolino.

Middle Tennessee took the lead in the fifth when Archer led off with a single, went to second on a passed ball and scored on a single up the middle from Carroll to tie the contest. Carroll could not make up his mind whether to go to second when the ball bounced off Vandy centerfielder Matt Keller, but the sophomore eventually slid around the tag.

Carroll went to third on a balk and scored easily on Kemp's triple to rightcenter. Derek Phillips followed with a double off the centerfield wall, plating Kemp for a 5-3 Blue Raider lead.

Vandy got a run back in the sixth on a rather strange play. Kaye singled to leadoff and Jones followed with a single. Both runners moved up on a passed ball before Scott flied down the leftfield line. Clif Thomas made a diving catch along the line and Kaye tagged and scored. But Jones was doubled off after he thought the ball fell for a hit, keeping the lead at one for the Blue Raiders.

VU's Jones tried mightily to tie the game in the eighth, sending a Chase Swing pitch to the deepest part of the park before Akers hauled it in with his back against the wall in dead center.

Blue Raider starter BJ Church breezed through the first two innings before running into trouble. The freshman gave up three runs on six hits before being taken out in the fourth. Travis Horschel came in to get out of a two-on-and-one-out jam in the fourth, as Phillips threw out Mansolino trying to steal second before Matt McGraner struck out to end the inning.

Horschel (2-2) got the win with 3.1 innings of work, allowing an unearned run on four hits. Chase Swing earned his third save of the season, coming into the game in the game with a runner on and two outs in the seventh, striking out Keller to end the inning. Swing gave up one run, a ninth-inning blast from Mansolino, and struck out three in 2.1 frames.

Vandy starter Jensen Lewis allowed two runs, one earned, in four innings, getting in his side-work as the starter. Lewis is normally the closer for the Commodores and struck out five with one walk.

Jonathan Douillard (0-1) gave up three runs on four hits in just one inning before Matt Bushman tossed the final three innings, allowing three four runs on six hits.

Knox went 4-for-5 with three RBIs, leading the 17-hit attack for the Blue Raiders. Beachum and Carroll added three hits apiece and Archer, Kemp and Phillips all added two hits each. Archer, Carroll, Knox and Kemp all scored twice in the victory.

Mansolino had three hits and two runs in a losing effort for the Commodores, while Kaye and Jones both added two hits.

The Blue Raiders host Southeast Missouri in the second of a seven-game homestand at 3 p.m. Wednesday. Fifteen senior track athletes will be honored prior to the game, which will also be shown locally on MT TV-10.

GAME NOTES

The Blue Raiders used their 30th different lineup in 36 games Tuesday ... Jerry Knox started as the designated hitter for the fifth time this season and second game in a row ... The Blue Raiders did not have an error in the game, only their fifth errorless game of the season ... Chase Swing pitched for the fourth time in seven days in the game, earning his third save this season. In the four games Swing has earned two saves and allowed just two runs in seven innings with six strikeouts.

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