Church Tosses Shutout in 5-0 Win

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee's BJ Church struck out 11 in tossing a complete-game shutout, and Brett Carroll and Josh Archer both homered to provide all of the offense, as the Blue Raiders defeated Belmont, 5-0, Tuesday night in less than two hours at Reese Smith Field.

Church (2-1), a freshman righthander, had a career-high 11 strikeouts in throwing Middle Tennessee's first shutout and third complete game of the season. Church retired 14 straight batters at one point and allowed just two hits through eight innings before the Bruins put together three straight singles in the ninth.

Belmont got singles from Jason Warpool, Dan Soukup and Brad Dobner in the ninth to load the bases, but Church struck out Wade Walter to end the game. Church's previous long outing came three weeks ago against Memphis when the Hixson, Tenn., native went 7.1 innings, and his previous high in strikeouts also came against Memphis, nine on the road on March 26.

The Blue Raiders did not manage a hit after their five-run third inning, as Belmont starter Alex Renes and reliever John Webster retired 16 straight batters to end the contest. Renes (3-3) suffered the loss, allowing five runs on six hits with three strikeouts in five innings. Webster retired all nine hitters he faced in three innings of work.

The Blue Raiders erupted for five runs in the third on five hits with the aid of a pair of home runs. Jeff Beachum singled with one out and stole second before Chuck Akers doubled down the leftfield line to score Beachum. Akers stole third and scored on a single to left by Nate Jaggers.

Carroll then tied for the team lead in home runs with his 10th round-tripper of the year, a two-run shot just inside the leftfield line. Two batters later Archer retook the home run lead with a solo shot that just cleared the leftfield wall for a 5-0 advantage.

It was all the offense the Blue Raiders would need, as Church took care of the rest in a one-hour, 49-minute contest.

Jaggers had two of Middle Tennessee's six hits.

The Blue Raiders end their seven-game homestand Wednesday with a 7 p.m. tilt against Austin Peay. Middle Tennessee travels to Western Kentucky this weekend for a three-game series starting Friday at 6 p.m.

GAME NOTES

Junior Ryan Darnell made his first start of the season at first base ... Jeff Beachum and Nate Jaggers both singled in the third, extending their hitting streaks to five games.

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