Peterson Gets No. 500; Akers Lead Attack

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LAFAYETTE, La. - Head coach Steve Peterson won his 500th game at Middle Tennessee, as Chuck Akers had a double, triple and drove in two runs and Chase Swing came on get his 10th save in a 6-5 Blue Raider win over Arkansas-Little Rock Thursday afternoon in second round action of the Dodge Sun Belt Conference Tournament at M.L. 'Tigue' Moore Field.

The Blue Raiders held a 6-2 lead heading into the bottom of the ninth but again found it difficult to finish off the pesky Trojans. Middle Tennessee blew a three-run lead in the ninth in the first of two games at UALR just five days ago.

Travis Horschel tossed three scoreless innings for the Blue Raiders and looked to finish the game and earn a save, but Matt Spatafora's bleeder to left to leadoff was a sign of things to come.

Aaron Haefele's bloop single followed and Santino Dewreede blistered a single into center, loading the bases with no one out. A chopper through the leftside from Rick Guarno scored a run and chased Horschel, as the Blue Raiders turned to Danny Borne.

UALR's Joe Mercer hit the first pitch to shallow leftcenter where Akers made a diving catch for the out. A run scored on the play before Borne walked the bases loaded again. Charlie Anderson was the second out of the frame, striking out looking.

Peterson turned to closer Chase Swing to get the final out, but Swing walked in a run, cutting the Blue Raider lead to one, before getting Josh Ward to fly out and pick up his 10th save of the season. The save ties Swing with George Oleksik for first on the single-season list at Middle Tennessee and also moves him into a tie for second on the career saves list.

Peterson picked up his 500th win as a Blue Raider in 16 seasons after getting his 650th overall against Vanderbilt nine days ago.

The Trojans got off to another quick start against Blue Raider freshman starter BJ Church, who lasted just an inning five days ago in Little Rock. Haefele, Dewreede and Guarno all singled to five UALR a 2-0 lead after a half-inning.

But Church (4-1) settled down and gave up just two more hits and no runs over the next four innings to get the victory, walking two and striking out six.

Middle Tennessee finally got to UALR starter Aaron Carter in the third, as Jeff Beachum singled with two outs to break-up the no-hitter. Akers then tripled down the rightfield line, plating Beachum. Chad Cooper followed with an RBI single up the middle, knotting the game at two.

The Blue Raiders took the lead for good in the fifth when Beachum drew a two-out walk and scored on Akers double to leftcenter.

Horschel entered the game in the sixth and shut down the Trojans, allowing just two hits in three innings before the eventful ninth.

Back-to-back homers in the sixth from Blue Raiders Nate Jaggers and Brett Carroll chased Carter from the game and gave Middle Tennessee a 5-2 lead. Troy Harp, Shane Kemp and Beachum had three straight singles against UALR reliever Travis Trammell for a 6-2 advantage.

Beachum had two hits and scored twice and Akers collected two hits and two RBIs in the victory.

Carter (3-4) took the loss for UALR, allowing five runs on six hits in 5.1 innings.

The Blue Raiders advance to a winner's bracket game at 3:30 p.m. Friday against the winner of Louisiana-Lafayette and Arkansas-Little Rock, a game that will take place at 9:30 a.m. Friday.

GAME NOTES

Jeff Beachum extended his hitting streak to seven games with a single in the third ... Chad Cooper extended his hitting streak to seven games with his single in the third ... Nate Jaggers extended his hitting streak to seven games with his home run in the sixth ... Josh Archer had his nine-game hitting streak snapped after an 0-for-4 effort ... Blue Raider starter BJ Church picked up his first victory against a Sun Belt opponent. He also has a save this season against New Orleans ... Head coach Steve Peterson picked up the 500th victory of his career at Middle Tennessee and 653rd overall as a head coach ... Sophomore closer Chase Swing moved into a tie for first with George Oleksik on the single-season saves list with 10 and also moved into a tie for second with Marty Smith on the career saves list ... Middle Tennessee won for just the sixth time this season when being out-hit, improving to 6-16 overall ... The Blue Raiders moved to 27-1 this season when leading after seven innings.

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