Williams Goes Route in 10-2 Win

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LAFAYETTE, La. - Junior starting pitcher John Williams scattered seven hits and allowed two runs in going the route, while Chuck Akers and Brett Carroll both homered to lead the offense in a 10-2 victory over host Louisiana-Lafayette Friday night at the Dodge Sun Belt Conference Tournament at M.L. 'Tigue' Moore Field. The win puts the Blue Raiders in the championship game Saturday at 6:30 p.m. against a yet-to-be-determined opponent.

Williams, a lefthander who has struggled for much of the season and tossed just 9.1 innings in his last four outings in the last month, went all nine innings, struggling in just two innings and shutting down the homestanding Ragin' Cajuns.

Lafayette tied the game at two in the third inning and got a single in the fourth. UL did not get another hit until a leadoff single in the ninth, as Williams squashed any rally ideas by the Cajuns after the Blue Raiders struck for four runs in the fourth and sixth innings to take control of the contest.

The Blue Raiders played flawlessly behind Williams, enjoying only their seventh errorless game of the season. Williams struck out four and walked one in picking up his first win since April 5 against Florida International and his second against the Cajuns this season. He also moved to 3-0 in his career against Lafayette, also picking up a win at 'Tigue' Moore Field in 2001.

Akers got the Blue Raider offense started in the first when the junior tripled to rightcenter. Chad Cooper then grounded to third. UL third baseman Dallas Morris threw to the plate, but catcher Ryan Core was unable to hold on, as Akers slid into the glove, giving the Blue Raiders an early 1-0 lead.

Chris LeGuenec singled with one out in the second and went to second on Troy Harp's groundout. Shane Kemp then flared a double down the rightfield line, scoring the run for a 2-0 advantage.

But the Cajuns got back in the game in the third, as Jason Wilson lined a single to right before Ray

Dees blasted a two-run homer over the wall in center, tying the game at two. Morris followed with a double but was thrown out at the plate when Chad Cooper caught Corey Coles' fly ball and fired to the plate, where Harp picked up a short-hop and tagged out the runner, keeping the game tied.

Phillip Hawke singled with two outs in the fourth for the Cajuns and went to second on a wild pitch. Kevin Preau then chopped a single up the middle, beating the throw to first base. Hawke never slowed down at third, but slid into the throw at the plate, as Harp hung tough to keep the game tied at two.

Middle Tennessee broke open the game in the fourth with four runs on three hits. Nate Jaggers was hit to leadoff the inning and Carroll followed with a two-run blast over the wall in center, his 17th of the season.

Harp walked with one out before Shane Kemp lined a ball into rightcenter where Preau ran it down, but the ball hit his glove and popped out, putting runners on second and third with one out. Jeff Beachum then chopped a single over a drawn-in infield, scoring a run. Akers then flied out to left, plating Kemp for a 6-2 advantage.

Lafayette got a walk in the fifth and a hit batsman in the sixth before being retired in order in the seventh and eighth.

The Blue Raiders again got a four-spot in the sixth, helped out by two Cajun errors. Harp reached on an error by UL leftfielder Bryan Sneed. Kemp then struck out but reached on the ball in the dirt, and Harp also moved to third on the play.

Beachum lined a triple into rightcenter, scoring both runners, before Akers drilled a 1-1 fastball over the wall in leftfield for a 10-2 advantage, just the third round-tripper of his career.

Akers went 2-for-3 with two runs scored and three RBIs, while Beachum had two hits and three RBIs. Kemp also had two doubles and two runs scored, while Carroll drove in a pair of runs in the victory, Middle Tennessee's 18th win in the last 25 games dating to mid-April.

Lafayette starter Jeff Martinez (1-1) took the loss, allowing six runs on six hits in 3.1 innings.

The Blue Raiders play at 6:30 p.m. in the championship game of the Sun Belt Tournament against the winner of Friday's late game between Florida International and Western Kentucky. Middle Tennessee is now 6-1 in the SBC Tournament in Lafayette, going undefeated in the bracket before dropping the championship game to South Alabama.

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