Bishop belts grand slam, collects five RBIs in 9-8 win

Middle Tennessee salvages series against Southern Illinois

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee pounded out 18 hits, including four extra-base knocks, and rallied from behind to take a 9-8 win against Southern Illinois and salvage a split in the mid-week series Wednesday at Reese Smith Field. The Blue Raiders (8-10) registered 15 or more hits in a game for the fourth time this season and totaled 10 or more base knocks for the 11th time in 18 games and won for the third time in five games heading into a key early-season Sun Belt showdown against Louisiana-Lafayette. Middle Tennessee's 18 hits are the second-most in a game this season and the most allowed by Southern Illinois' pitching staff. The biggest of Middle Tennessee's extra-base hits came off the bat of first baseman Rawley Bishop, who collected the first four-hit game of his career, including a grand slam and career-best five RBI. It was Bishop's fourth-inning grand slam that provided the Blue Raiders their first lead in the series and his team-best sixth circuit clout of the season. That fourth inning proved to be the undoing for the Salukis (12-6) as the Blue Raiders sent nine to the plate and tallied five runs to turn a 5-1 deficit into a 6-5 advantage it would not relinquish. Six Middle Tennessee players led the hit parade with multi-hits, paced by Adam Warren's four-hit day. Warren was 4-for-5 with two RBIs, and a run scored as he extended his hitting streak to seven games with his suddenly sweltering bat. "That was a huge inning, especially for (Bishop)," Peterson said. "They

brought the left-hander in to face him and (Bishop) just parked it. That was the difference in the game. It was a much better showing for us today and that was encouraging. We swung the bats well today and we were a much better fielding team." Not only were Bishop and Warren outstanding as they combined for half of Middle Tennessee's 18 hits, but Wayne Kendrick and Taylor Dennis were also a potent combination at the plate and up the middle, defensively. Dennis, who got the start at second base, was 3-for-5 with three runs scored and a RBI in the No. 2 spot in the order, and Kendrick followed with a 3-for-5 performance in the No. 3 hole. They proved to be the valuable table setters for a hot-hitting Bishop in the clean-up spot. Particularly in the game-turning fourth inning. Justin Humphrey earned his first career start at designated hitter and delivered with a double in the fourth and later scored on Dennis' clutch two-out hit. Dennis' two-out single proved crucial in the fourth because not only did it produce a run, but also extended the inning. With runners at second and third, Kendrick made it hurt worse with a two-out hit to load the bases, and Bishop answered the prayers of Blue Raider faithful with his grand slam on the second offering from Saluki reliever Daniel Wells - a lefty brought in to face the left-handed Bishop in a clutch spot. Bishop's blow was a big pick-me-up for an offense that had left the bases loaded with no runs in three previous innings during the series. Right fielder Blake McDade (2-for-4, 1 run) and catcher Drew Robertson (2-for-4, 1 run) also had multi-hit games for the Blue Raiders. Middle Tennessee extended its lead to 8-5 with a three-run sixth, highlighted by a two-out, two-run single off Warren's bat. Southern Illinois would battle back and cut the deficit to one going to the ninth but sophomore Jordan Alvis slammed the door home and put the finishing touches on the win. Alvis, the fifth of five Middle Tennessee pitchers, threw 1-2/3 innings of one-hit baseball to nail down his first save as a Blue Raider. Brett Reilley (2-0) earned the win with 1-1/3 innings of two-hit, shutout baseball in relief of Tyler Hyde. The Blue Raider relief pitchers were a big part of the team's success as four combined to scatter six hits and limit Southern Illinois to three runs in 5-1/3 innings. Middle Tennessee will open a three-game series against SBC foe Louisiana-Lafayette Friday. First pitch at Reese Smith Field is 6 p.m.

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