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Valiant comeback bid falls just short

Blue Raiders fall, 11-8, at Memphis

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MEMPHIS - Middle Tennessee spotted Memphis an 8-1 lead through three innings and then put forth a riveting rally before falling short in an 11-8 loss at Nat Buring Stadium Wednesday afternoon.

The Blue Raider bats, which produced 16 hits, came to life in the middle innings as Middle Tennessee scored three in the fourth, one in the fifth, two in the sixth, and another in the seventh to mount the sterling comeback that fell just short. Middle Tennessee went down fighting and had the bases loaded with one out in the seventh in a 9-7 game but managed just one run.

While the Blue Raider hitters did their job at the plate, Middle Tennessee's middle relief efforts was also solid as [Tyler Copeland](#), [Josh Anderson](#), [Brett Reilley](#), and [Chad Coley](#) combined to allow just three runs, one earned, and four hits in the fourth through eighth innings.

The top of the Blue Raider order was solid as [Taylor Dennis](#), [Matt Campbell](#), [Wayne Kendrick](#), and [Rawley Bishop](#) each had multi-hit games. Campbell was outstanding at the plate as he extended his hitting streak to a career-best eight games by going 3-for-5 with two RBIs, and two runs scored. Dennis was 3-for-5 with a double, Kendrick was 3-for-4 with a RBI double, and Bishop was 2-for-3 with a run scored, one RBI, and he extended his hitting streak to 10 games. Sophomore catcher [Grant Box](#) also had a multi-hit game, going 2-for-5 with one RBI.

The Blue Raiders (10-13) picked up a run in the top of the first when Campbell reached on a one-out single and later scored on a bases-loaded walk to Zach Barrett. Although the Blue Raiders got one run in the first it could have been an even more productive inning as they had the bases loaded with one out.

Memphis picked up Wednesday where it left off Tuesday, erupting for five first-inning runs on five hits to take a 5-1 lead off Blue Raider starter [Peter Mantzanis](#), who was making his first appearance of the season. Mantzanis pitched one-plus innings and allowed seven hits and six runs, all earned, before being lifted in favor of Jordan Alvis, who inherited runners at first and second with no outs but worked out of the jam without allowing a run.

After Memphis scored two in the bottom of the third to increase its lead to 8-1, Middle Tennessee mounted a rally with a three-spot in the top of the fourth. Campbell's single chased home [Jubal Duncan](#) and [Taylor Dennis](#), who had doubled, with the first two runs of the inning. [Wayne Kendrick](#) followed with a double to score Campbell and cut the Tiger lead to 8-4.

The Tigers added a run in the bottom of the fourth, but Middle Tennessee answered in the top of the fifth when Barrett started the inning with a single and came around to score on Box's hit, cutting the Memphis lead to 9-5.

Kendrick and Bishop started the sixth with a single and double, respectively, and both came around to score, and the Blue Raiders added another in the seventh to pull to within 9-8.


The Tigers got a leadoff double in the bottom of the seventh and sacrificed the runner to third with one out, seeking an insurance run; however, Reilley came in and struck out K.K. Chalmers and Will Peterson to keep it a one-run game.

After playing error-free baseball for seven innings, miscues put a damper on the comeback bid in the bottom of the eighth when Barrett committed consecutive errors to start the frame, enabling the Tigers to put runners on the corners. After [Chad Coley](#) got a strikeout, Memphis got a big run when Moss came home on a wild pitch, extending the lead to 10-8. Barrett's third error of the inning came with two outs and allowed Memphis to pick up its second unearned run of the frame.

[Michael McSweeney](#) started the ninth with a pinch-hit single, but Tiger relief pitcher Matt Yokley pitched around it to earn the save and thwart the Blue Raider comeback attempt.

Middle Tennessee will seek its third consecutive Sun Belt Conference series win when it travels to Jonesboro, Ark., to face Arkansas State this weekend.



Matt Campbell was 3-for-5 with a double and extended his hit streak to eight against Memphis Wednesday. (MT) 

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