Blue Raiders Fall in 10 Innings, 7-6

Squad drops back-and-forth game and third straight overall

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JONESBORO, Ark. - Brandon Eller doubled down the rightfield line and the throw back to the infield was dropped and bounced away from Middle Tennessee second baseman Taylor Dennis, allowing Ryan Hudgins to score from first on the play, as host Arkansas State defeated the Blue Raiders, 7-6, in 10 innings Friday night at Tomlinson Stadium. ASU (10-13, 3-4 Sun Belt) won the seesaw affair that had five lead changes and two ties and ended a three-game Middle Tennessee (10-14, 4-3) winning streak in the series. Arkansas State went ahead 2-0 on a two-run homer from Josh Yates in the third inning, but the Blue Raiders scored three times in the fifth, two on a double from Wayne Kendrick. Yates hit his second two-run home run of the contest in the bottom of the fifth to put ASU back ahead, but Middle Tennessee tied the contest in the sixth on a throwing error by Arkansas State. Rawley Bishop then gave the Blue Raiders the lead with his own two-run homer in the seventh, but Hudgins lined his own two-run shot just over the leftfield wall in the bottom of the seventh to tie the contest once again. In the ASU 10th inning, Hudgins walked with one out before Eller lined a double down the rightfield line. Defensive replacement Jubal Duncan did a nice job cutting the ball off and made a good throw back to the infield, but as Dennis ran toward the line to cut the ball off, it hit his glove and bounced away, allowing Hudgins the winning run from third. Blue Raider starter Matt Scott worked 6.2 innings, giving up five runs on seven hits. Scott walked two, struck out three and hit two batters. Josh Anderson allowed the game-tying home run to Hudgins

and tossed 1.1 innings. Brett Reilley (3-1) took the loss, giving up an unearned run in 1.1 innings and walking one. ASU starter Nathan Gates allowed six runs, five earned, on nine hits in eight innings of work, walking three and striking out one. Tim Egart (2-1) picked up the victory, striking out one and giving up one hit in two innings. Dennis and Drew Robertson both had two hits for the Blue Raiders, while Yates was 3-for-5 with three runs scored and four RBIs for Arkansas State. "It was a hard-fought game and Arkansas State really gave us several of our runs," head coach Steve Peterson said. "Matt made two mistakes to Yates and paid for them dearly. But we missed some chances to drive in runners from third with less than two outs and then misplayed a ball at the end and that was the difference." ASU threatened in the first after consecutive singles to leadoff from Tyler Doke and Guy Brown, but Scott retired the next three batters to end the inning. In the second A.J. Prickel walked with one out and moved to second on a groundout from Jordan Kimball. Aaron Ferguson then grounded a ball through the middle and headed for centerfield, but a diving Kendrick stopped the ball before getting up and making the throw across the diamond for the final out of the inning. ASU finally got on the board in the third after Brown was hit with one out. Yates then hit a 1-0 fastball over the wall in leftfield for his seventh home run of the season, giving the home team a 2-0 lead. The Blue Raiders had a chance to get on the board in the fourth after Kendrick reached on an error to leadoff and Adam Warren followed with a single. Bishop's long fly ball to rightcenter allowed Kendrick to move to third, but Blake McDade and Zach Barrett both popped out to end the threat. Middle Tennessee took advantage of its opportunities in the fourth after a leadoff double from Dennis. Robertson laid down a perfect bunt, and neither the pitcher nor third baseman had a play, putting runners on the corners. Matt Ray then fisted a double into short left, plating Dennis. After a foul out, Kendrick ripped a hanging breaking ball into leftcenter, scoring Robertson and Ray for a 3-2 Blue Raiders lead. But the lead was short-lived. Ferguson was hit to leadoff the bottom of the fourth, moved to second on a wild pitch and third on a groundout. With two outs Yates, a.420 hitter this season and on a 19-game hitting streak, took three straight balls before launching a drive over the wall in leftcenter, giving ASU a 4-3 advantage. The Blue Raiders tied the game again in the sixth, taking advantage of an ASU error. Barrett walked with one out and Dennis followed with a single to center. Robertson then bounced to shortstop Kimball, who got the out at second, but Brown's relay throw to first sailed high and over the first baseman's head, allowing Barrett to score on the play and tie the contest at four. Middle Tennessee retook the lead in the seventh after a leadoff infield single from Matt Campbell. The throw to first from Kimball was low and got by the first baseman, allowing Campbell to move to second. Kendrick moved the runner to third with a sacrifice bunt. Warren's nubber in front of the plate did not score the run, but Bishop belted the first pitch over the light standard in leftfield, another hanging breaking ball from Gates. It was Bishop's seventh home run of the year and extended his hitting streak to a dozen games. But again the lead did not last long. Yates singled to center with two outs in the bottom of the seventh, ending Scott's day, with Anderson coming in from the bullpen. The Blue Raider senior threw three straight balls to Hudgins and with the count 3-1, Hudgins lined a ball down the leftfield line that just cleared the wall, his sixth round-tripper of the year, tying the game at six. The Blue Raiders missed a good chance to take back the lead in the ninth when Ray's high pop down the leftfield line was misplayed by Kimball. Ray went to second on the play and moved to third on Campbell's sacrifice bunt, but Egart struck out Kendrick and Warren flied out to end the threat. Freshman McDade battled Egart in the 10th inning, lacing the second pitch over the wall in rightfield but just foul. He fouled off four more pitches before lining out to left in a scoreless inning for Middle Tennessee. Kendrick and Bishop both had two RBIs for the Blue Raiders, while Hudgins scored twice and drove in two runs for ASU. The two teams continue the series Saturday, with righthander Brad Robinson going for the Blue Raiders. The series concludes Sunday at 1 p.m. **GAME NOTES**

Senior Matt Ray returned to the lineup after missing eight games with a separated left shoulder. Ray started in leftfield, the sixth different Blue Raider to start in leftfield this season ... Taylor Dennis extended his hitting streak to four games with a double in the fifth ... Matt Campbell extended his hitting streak to nine games with an infield single in the seventh ... Rawley Bishop extended his hitting streak to 12 games with a home run in the seventh ... Zach Barrett extended his hitting streak to five games with a single in the 10th inning.

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