Lady Raiders Split DH With FIU

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Lady Raider softball team dropped the first game of a Sun Belt Conference double header, 2-0, to visiting FIU and overcame seven stranded runners in the second game to earn a split with a 6-3 win in game two.

FIU's Mila Nelson held Middle Tennessee (34-19, 7-7) to four singles as the Golden Panthers (40-16, 11-3) took the first game of the series, 2-0.

The Lady Raiders best opportunity to score came in the fifth inning when Steffi Silva singled up the middle with runners on first and second, but FIU centerfielder Lesley Gillen threw a perfect strike to home to gun down Jennifer Polsteen at the plate preserving the shutout.

Jennifer Martinez (14-12) lost her second straight decision allowing eight hits and one earned run with six strikeouts.

In the second game, the Lady Raiders had several chances to get on top. Middle Tennessee stranded seven runners through the three innings.

In the first, the Lady Raiders had runners on second and third and were unable to drive in a run. The next inning saw the Lady Raiders load the bases with no outs but FIU starter Vanessa Preston induced three straight ground balls with the Panthers recording two outs at the plate.

The Lady Raiders finally got on the board for the first time in the bottom of the fourth after being held scoreless for 20 1/3 innings dating back to Samford on Wednesday.

Kip Phillips tripled down the right field line driving in Liz Polfus. Polfus was in the game running for Ashlie Way, who led off the inning with a single up the middle.

FIU's two runs came on three straight two-out hits including back-to-back RBI doubles in the fourth inning. Kelly Nicosia's single in the inning was the first of the game off Middle Tennessee's Stayc Preator.

The Lady Raiders game-winning run came in the bottom of the sixth when Lisa Sherman's ground ball to second base scored Silva, who led off by reaching on an error. Phillips attempting to sacrifice Silva to second was awarded a double when the bunt was popped up in the air, but FIU third basemen Jennifer Owens diving attempt to catch the ball forced the ball to glance into foul territory behind home plate allowing Silva to move over to third.

The Lady Raiders added insurance with a RBI single by Erica Buhl and a two-run double by Kelly Cormier putting the game out reach at 6-2.

Middle Tennessee pounded out 11 hits in the game as Phillips, Sherman, and Buhl recorded two hits while Cormier went 3-for-4 with two RBI.

Preator went the distance for the Lady Raiders winning her 15th game of the season scattering five hits and allowing two earned runs fanning six.

Middle Tennessee and FIU will complete the four-game series with a double header on Saturday beginning at 1:00 p.m.

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