Blue Raiders Pick Up Big Win

Move over .500 mark on season

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. - Lindsey Vander Lugt continued her strong freshman season and Shelby Stiner continued her stellar defensive play as the Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders (23-22, 11-6 SBC) stepped outside of Sun Belt Conference play and picked a big win over the Louisville Cardinals (26-17, 7-1 Big East) at Ulmer Stadium in Louisville, Ky. on Wednesday, 6-3. The matchup pitted two of the hottest teams in the country as Middle Tennessee came into the contest riding a three-game winning streak including victories in five of their last six games. The previously ranked Cardinals were riding an eight-game winning streak, including victories over Syracuse and Rutgers. "This was a big win against a big name program. I think our team is playing well at the right time of year. These games prepare you for top level competition," said Middle Tennessee Head Coach Leigh Podlesny. Vander Lugt (16-14) picked up the win for the Blue Raiders, giving up three runs and scattering 13 hits in the complete game. Catherine Bishop (6-7) got the loss for Louisville, giving up two on seven hits, while striking out six and walking three in six innings of action. Kristen Waldwell worked the final inning for the Cardinals, getting roughed up for four runs on four hits. Middle Tennessee got out to an early lead in the 1st inning when Whitney Darlington doubled to left field, driving in Corrie Abel. Abel had led off the game with a single and stole second base to put herself in scoring position. Shelby Stiner then singled up the middle to drive in Darlington and leave the Blue Raiders with a 2-0 lead. "Shelby Stiner played flawless defense. It was probably our best game all year as a team," Podlesny said. Louisville cut the lead to a single run in the 3rd inning when Kristi Cunningham drove Melissa Roth across the plate with a single to the shortstop. The Blue Raider 4th inning proved to be the decider as they scored four runs to put them up 6-1. Justine Cerda picked up two RBI, plating Ashley Cline and pinch hitter Kristine Reed in the process. Martha Davis also picked up two RBI, driving in Cerda and Whitney Darlington and giving Middle Tennessee all the scoring they needed to pick up the victory. The Cardinals attempted to mount a comeback but saw it fall short by scoring only two more runs in the 5th inning, as the Blue

Raiders snapped Louisville's eight-game winning steak. With the win, Blue Raiders move over the .500 mark for the season. They are second in the Sun Belt Conference with 11 wins and just 6 losses. "I want to win 30 games this year and win the [Sun Belt Conference]. We need to play fresh and stay pumped up and aggressive," Podlesny said. The Blue Raiders continue their non-conference road trip when they travel to play mid-state rival Austin Peay in a doubleheader on Thursday. The first game begins at 4 p.m. Podlesny said, "I would like to see us set the tone in tomorrow's doubleheader. We need to keep building momentum for Sun Belt Conference play."

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