Unearned Run Costs Raiders in Finale, 5-4

Squad erases 3-0 deficit but unable to complete series sweep

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MIAMI, Fla. - Florida International scored an unearned run in the bottom of the eighth, sending Middle Tennessee to a 5-4 loss in the finale of a three-game series Sunday at University Park. The Blue Raiders won the first two games of the series but failed to capitalize on its opportunities on Sunday to complete the sweep. Middle Tennessee (28-24, 15-12 Sun Belt) outhit the Florida International, 11-8, in the contest and put the leadoff batter on base in five consecutive innings in the middle of the game, but scored in only two of the innings. The Golden Panthers (26-26, 12-14) turned a pair of doubleplays and also threw out a pair of potential base stealers. FIU scored a single run in the first and two runs in the third to take an early lead, but the Blue Raiders scored twice in the fourth, one on an error and another on a double from Grant Box. The Golden Panthers plated an unearned run in the fifth, but Middle Tennessee tied the contest with a pair of runs in the seventh on RBI singles by Drew Robertson and Matt Ray. FIU scored another unearned run in the eighth for the game-winner. John Petika singled to left to leadoff and moved to second on Tyler Townsend's sacrifice. Kevin Mirabal then grounded out to third and the Blue Raiders intentionally walked the Sun Belt's leading hitter, James McOwen, setting up the force. Corey Lozano grounded to third, but Zach Barrett got an in-between hop and the ball went right by him into leftfield, allowing Petika to score the game-winning run. Box had a one-out single in the Middle Tennessee ninth, but Myles Ervin struck out and Robertson grounded sharply to short to end the contest. FIU starter Walker Whitley tossed

7.1 innings, giving up three earned runs and 10 hits. The sidearmer did not walk a batter and struck out two. Golden Panther Evan Ellison (2-4) picked up the victory, getting the final five outs. The lefthander allowed one hit and struck out one. Middle Tennessee starter Jordan Alvis worked five innings, giving up three earned runs on six hits. He did not walk a batter and struck out three. Brett Reilley (4-2) suffered the loss, allowing one run and the unearned run in the eighth. Wayne Kendrick, Box and Robertson all had two hits in the contest for the Blue Raiders. The Golden Panthers scored first for the second straight day, this time after a leadoff triple in the first from Chris Dunn. Bryan Pullin's grounder to second plated Dunn for a 1-0 FIU lead. The home team added to its lead with two runs in the third. Manuel Arrojo singled off the leg of Alvis to leadoff, stole second and moved to third on Dunn's groundout. Pullin then grounded sharply to first, where a diving Rawley Bishop made the play and fired home, but the throw to the plate was late. Pullin later scored on a bouncer through the middle from Petika for a 3-0 FIU advantage. The Blue Raiders cut into the deficit with a pair of runs in the fourth, starting with a leadoff single from Kendrick. Bishop was then hit for the 12th time this season, a new single-season record, but Blake McDade flied out to shallow right and Adam Warren bounced into a fielder's choice, putting runners on the corners. Warren stole second and the ball sailed into centerfield when neither of the middle infielders caught the throw, allowing Kendrick to score. Box then doubled into leftcenter, plating Warren and cutting the FIU lead to 3-2. The Golden Panthers plated an unearned run in the fifth. Dunn hit a chopper to Ray to leadoff and the shortstop's throw sailed high and into the dugout, putting Dunn at second. Pullin's groundout moved the runner to third and Dunn scored on a groundout from Raimy Fuentes for a 4-2 FIU advantage. Middle Tennessee tied the contest in the seventh thanks to some help from FIU. Warren beat out an infield single to start the inning and moved to second on a groundout from Box. But Warren was gunned down trying to steal third for the second out of the inning. Ervin then reached on an infield single up the middle and Arrojo's throw got by the first baseman and into the dugout, moving Ervin to second. Robertson followed with an RBI single to left and smartly advanced to second when the throw went to the plate. Ray then singled up the middle off the glove of a diving Arrojo. Robertson scored on the play, tying the game at four. Middle Tennessee plays its final three home games of the season against rival Western Kentucky this week on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Games on Thursday and Friday start at 6 p.m. and Saturday's contest begins at 2 p.m., with Senior Day activities before the contest. **GAME NOTES**

Wayne Kendrick's single in the fourth extended his hitting streak to six games. He added another single in the sixth, giving the senior 86 hits for the season, tying former teammate Eric McNamee (2004) as well as Josh Pride (1999) for seventh on the single-season hits list ... Rawley Bishop was hit for the 12th time this season in the fourth inning, setting a new single-season record by hit by pitches. Bishop passed Josh Renick, who was hit 11 times in 2001. Bishop extended his hitting streak to eight games with a single in the eighth ... Drew Robertson extended his hitting streak to a season-best six games with a single in the fifth ... Matt Ray extended his hitting streak to eight games with a single in the seventh ... Zach Barrett had his 10-game hitting streak snapped after an 0-for-4 effort.

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