

Robinson Dominant in Opening Victory

Box, Ray, Barrett all record three hits in 7-1 win over Western Kentucky

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Brad Robinson tossed a three-hitter, striking out a career-high 10 batters, and Grant Box had three hits and three RBIs, leading Middle Tennessee to a 7-1 victory over Western Kentucky Thursday night at Reese Smith Field in the first of a three-game series.

Robinson (7-2) had his best start of the year, tossing a career-best eight innings and giving up just a solo homer to WKU's Wade Gaynor to leadoff the seventh. The Middle Tennessee righthander six of the first nine batters of the contest and retired the first 12 hitters before a double from Scotty Colt in the fourth.

Robinson walked one and hit a batter, throwing 108 pitches.

Box, Zach Barrett and Matt Ray all collected three hits in the victory, keeping the Blue Raiders (29-24, 16-12 Sun Belt) in at least a tie for second place in the Sun Belt.

Ray, Barrett and Rawley Bishop all scored twice and Barrett and Adam Warren both drove in a pair of runs. Wayne Kendrick also added two hits.

Box collected three straight singles, driving in runs in the

fourth, fifth and seventh innings. Barrett drove in the game's first run with a single in the first and had an RBI double in the fourth. Western Kentucky starter Bart Carter (6-4) suffered the loss, giving up



three earned runs on nine hits in five innings. He walked three and struck out two. The Blue Raiders scored three unearned runs against the lefthander in the fifth inning when Carter threw 44 pitches before getting out of the frame. The Blue Raiders got on the board with a run in the first after a leadoff double from Ray. He moved to third on a groundout by Myles Ervin but had to stay put when Kendrick reached on an infield single back to the pitcher. After a strikeout, Barrett singled to left, plating Ray. Barrett took off from first with two outs trying to get in a rundown to allow Kendrick to score, but WKU second baseman Matt Payton played it to perfection, tagging Barrett as he slid back into first for the final out of the inning. Warren walked to leadoff the Blue Raider second but was thrown out trying to steal, taking off on first movement against Carter. Ray singled with one out in the third but was picked off by Carter on a snap throw to first. Middle Tennessee added to its lead with a pair of runs in the fourth. Bishop walked to leadoff and came around to score on Barrett's double to leftcenter. A groundout by Warren moved the runner to third and Box's single to center plated Barrett for a 3-0 advantage. The Blue Raiders scored three more times in the fifth, all unearned. Ray started the inning, reaching on a throwing error by WKU shortstop Terrence Dayleg. With two outs Bishop walked and Barrett was hit, loading the bases for Warren, who singled home two runs. Box then singled to center, plating Barrett for a 6-0 Middle Tennessee lead. Gaynor broke up the shutout with a solo homer down the leftfield line to leadoff the seventh, his fourth of the season. But the home team came back with a run in the bottom of the inning. Kendrick singled to right to leadoff, Barrett singled up the middle with one out and Warren was intentionally walked to load the bases. Box then singled to center, scoring one run, but Barrett was gunned down at the plate by WKU centerfield Kaskie. Nick Marrs gave up one hit in the ninth for the Blue Raiders. The same two teams play Friday at 6 p.m. at Reese Smith Field, with the Blue Raiders sending senior Matt Scott (5-4, 4.30 ERA) to the mound. Before the game the Middle Tennessee athletic department will formally dedicate the Lee Victory Wall of Champions honoring the program's conference championships and NCAA Tournament appearances.

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