

Raiders Open with 6-1 Triumph

Robinson tossed 7.2 shutout innings for third straight win

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MOBILE, Ala. - Brad

Robinson tossed seven-plus shutout innings and Adam Warren drove in three runs, as Middle Tennessee opened with a 6-1 victory over Florida Atlantic Wednesday in the Sun Belt Championships at Stanky Field. Middle Tennessee plays at 4 p.m. Thursday in the winner's bracket against either New Orleans or Western Kentucky. Robinson (8-2) struck out seven in 7.2 innings and did not walk a batter, picking up his third straight victory. The righthander gave up only seven hits in the contest and just three in the first six innings. He retired 15 of 17 batters at one point in the contest and threw just 102 pitches. "Location was the biggest part. The first couple of innings I felt like I could hit a dime," Robinson said. "The main part is keeping the ball down. Everytime I missed up they hit the ball hard. The defense really helped out a lot too." It was a big difference from three weeks ago when Robinson allowed nine runs on eight hits in four innings against the Owls in a 16-1 defeat on May 5. He said that



was a big motivator heading into Wednesday's game. "When you get beat [like the first time this season], that's embarrassing, so you want to do it back to them," Robinson said. Florida Atlantic (35-21) had two-out singles from Daniel Cook and Daniel Bombback in the eighth, ending Robinson's day. Tyler Copeland induced a grounder to short from SBC Player of the Year Robbie Widlansky, but

Matt Ray bobbled the ball, loading the bases. Copeland then induced a grounder off the end of the bat from Mike McKenna to get out of the jam. William Block and Tyler Stevens both doubled in the ninth and Travis Ozga singled, putting runners on the corners for the Owls, but Brett Reilley threw one pitch to end the contest, getting Nick Arata to ground into a 5-4-3 doubleplay. Middle Tennessee (30-26) scored once in the first on a Warren single and plated four runs in the second in the second on four hits, including a two-run single by Warren and a run-scoring double from Rawley Bishop. The Blue Raider defense was also a big part of the victory, with Matt Campbell and Warren both making diving plays in the outfield. The squad also turned three doubleplays and Kendrick leaped high in the air to snare a line drive in the eighth inning. FAU starter Joel Schmal (5-2) struggled through the first three innings before settling down. The lefthander took the loss, giving up six runs, three earned, on 12 hits in 6.1 innings. He walked four and struck out four, tossing 128 pitches in the contest. Head coach Steve Peterson said Robinson was a big difference in the victory and that the Blue Raiders had just enough offense to post the victory. "Brad was big-time. I'm sure there was extra motivation by the way Florida Atlantic really drilled him [in Murfreesboro]," Peterson said. "He didn't pitch well [in that game]. That's alright for him to be motivated like any competitor should be. He threw an outstanding ballgame. "Defensively, except for one play, we played very well. We hit it enough to win this ballgame, a couple of innings. Their pitcher [Schmal] was not sharp, but once he settled in and pitched like he's capable, he ate us up pretty good." The Blue Raiders got off to a good start, scoring once in the first and four more times in the second. In the first Kendrick doubled with one out and scored on Warren's single to left. Middle Tennessee scored four times in the second on five hits. Myles Ervin started the inning with a single and Grant Box followed with a single to right, putting runners on the corners. Campbell grounded out to short, plating Ervin. Campbell was later thrown out trying to steal second. Drew Robertson drew a two-out walk and Ray followed with a single to left. Kendrick's grounder to second was booted by Bomback, loading the bases for Warren, who singled to right, plating two runs. Bishop then doubled just inside the third base bag, scoring Warren for a 5-0 Blue Raider advantage. Middle Tennessee added another run in the third. Ervin and Box both singled to leadoff again and Ervin scored on Campbell's ground ball. The Blue Raiders never really threatened again in the contest. In the seventh Zach Barrett and Ervin both walked, but Chris Eberhart came on to strike out Box and pinch-hitter Blake McDade to end the inning. **GAME NOTES** Wayne Kendrick's double in the first inning gave the senior 20 two-baggers for the season, moving him into a tie for sixth on the single-season list with Gary Myers (1992), Josh Renick (2001) and Brett Carroll (2004) ... Kendrick singled in the fourth inning, giving him 64 singles this year, tied for fourth on the single-season list with Josh Renick (2001) ... Rawley Bishop ran his RBI total for the season to 56 with a run-scoring double in the second inning. That ties him for 10th on the single-season list with Bryan Peck (1999), Clay Snellgrove (1997) and Jaime Walker (1995) ... The Blue Raiders moved to 14-4 in the Sun Belt Championships in the last five years. Middle Tennessee has won five straight opening games in the SBC Tournament over five different opponents.

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