

Blue Raiders Complete Sweep, 4-0

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Pitching and defense have always been the staple of teams under head coach Steve Peterson during his 16-plus seasons as Middle Tennessee head coach. His Blue Raiders showed again those two aspects could be the best part of the 2004 club, as junior Steve Kline took a perfect game into the sixth and faced the minimum in 6.1 innings, helping the Blue Raiders to a 4-0 season-opening sweep of IP-Fort Wayne Sunday at Reese Smith Field. Last year's team struggled with consistent pitching and defense, but the squad limited IPFW to just two

runs in three games and made just two errors in the three contests, as the Blue Raiders swept a season-opening series for the first time since a three-game sweep of UNC-Asheville in 2001. Newcomer Eric McNamee again led the offensive attack, going 3-for-4 with a run and an RBI and made the last out with a leaping grab of a line drive. McNamee scored in the first, singled and stole a base in the third, singled again in the fifth and doubled home a run in the sixth. Josh Archer also went 3-for-4 for the winners, driving in the first run of the game. Kline (1-0) followed teammate John Williams' effort from Saturday, when Williams and Swing no-hit the Mastodons. Kline struck out eight in 6.1 innings, allowing just a single to Ryan Steinbach with one out in the sixth. He erased Steinbach with a doubleplay and got the first out of the seventh before being replaced by Travis Horschel. Horschel gave up one hit and got strikeouts for all four outs he recorded, and redshirt freshman Matt Scott made his first career appearance with a scoreless ninth. Middle Tennessee (3-0) got on the board in the first thanks to an error and wild pitch. McNamee reached on an error by IPFW (0-3) first baseman Caleb Smith and went to second on a wild pitch. He scored on Archer's single through the left side for a 1-0 lead. In the second Shane Kemp led off with a double off the base of the wall in centerfield and scored on a single to right from Derek Phillips for a 2-0 Blue Raider advantage. The Blue Raiders struggled to string hits together against IPFW starter Jason Horvath, the staff ace. Middle Tennessee loaded the bases in the fifth on singles from McNamee and Archer and a walk to Marcus Taylor, but Kemp bounced back to the mound to end the threat. In the Middle Tennessee sixth, Jeff Beachum singled down the rightfield line and Troy Harp walked before Horvath was removed with two outs. McNamee laced a double into rightcenter off Casey Rohan,

plating Beachum for a 3-0 edge. Kemp's soft single to leftcenter plated pinch runner David Patterson with the final run of the contest in the seventh. Kemp and Beachum each had a pair of hits in Middle Tennessee's 12-hit attack. The Blue Raiders hit the road for the next eight games, starting with a three-game series at Jacksonville State next weekend. Middle Tennessee returns home March 12-14 versus Southwest Missouri State at Reese Smith Field.

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