

Mobley, Middle Tennessee Blank Bears, 4-0

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Chris Mobley said there is a healthy competition among the pitching staff at Middle Tennessee.

The competition is starting to make opposing lineups look rather unhealthy, and Mobley was the latest in a long line of Blue Raider hurlers to toss a gem Friday afternoon.

Mobley, a junior right-hander from Kingsport, Tenn., threw a complete-game, two-hit shutout, as Middle Tennessee blanked Southwest Missouri, 4-0, in the opening game of a three-game series at Reese Smith Field. The Blue Raiders

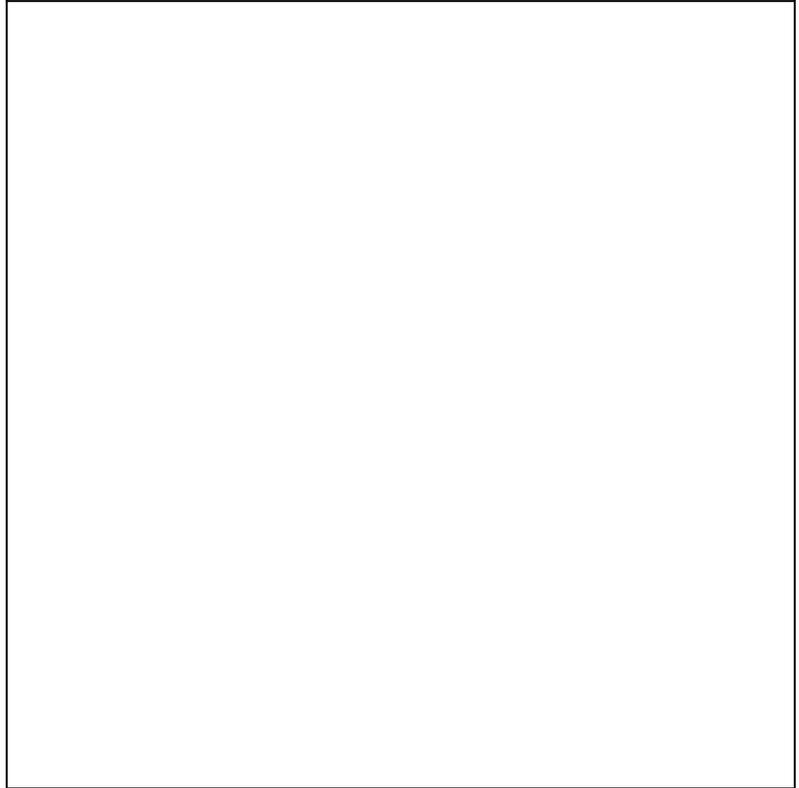
improved to 10-2 with their fifth straight win, the team's longest winning streak since capturing seven in succession in 2001.

While Mobley (3-1) provided the stellar starting pitching, the top of the Blue Raider order continued to pay huge dividends. Junior second-sacker Eric McNamee (2-for-4, run scored) and senior outfielder Shane Kemp (2-for-3, HR, two RBIs) continued their torrid start with two hits each. The top four in the Middle Tennessee order, which also included shortstop Jeff Beachum (1-for-4) and Derek Phillips (2-for-4), combined to go 7-of-15 with three RBI, three runs scored, one home run and two doubles.

"This is a big series for us and my understanding is (Southwest Missouri) swept us last year," said McNamee, a Columbia State transfer who has reached base and scored at least one run in each of Middle Tennessee's first 12 games. "We wanted to start the series off right, and Mobley helped to do that."

The Bears (4-7), College World Series participants in 2003, were overmatched by Mobley.

Mobley established a career high in strikeouts (11) and innings pitched with his complete-game effort. He allowed a leadoff single to Bear left-fielder Kirk McConnell in the first and didn't allow another hit until McConnell collected a two-out single in the ninth. In-between, Mobley was sensational as he dropped his sparkling earned run average to a miniscule 1.04. The team ERA



dipped to 2.12 as Middle Tennessee turned in its third team shutout in 12 games. The Blue Raiders had just one shutout all of last season.

"I think we have a lot of friendly competition on our pitching staff, and that competition is healthy for our staff and for our bullpen," Mobley said. "My arm felt great from the first pitch until the final pitch. Anytime we play defense like we did and set the tone early from an offensive standpoint, you want to get into a rhythm out there so you can let your fielders make plays, and get off the field so your hitters can swing the bats."

Middle Tennessee set the tone early when it struck for a pair of runs in the first and then added single runs in the second and third innings when Troy Harp and Kemp each homered, respectively.

Harp's second-inning blast was his second of the season, while Kemp connected for his team-leading fourth home run in the fifth, a blast to straight-away center field against a fierce wind. Kemp extended his hitting streak to eight games. The Blue Raiders dealt Bears starter Derek Drage (2-1) his first loss of the season.

"(Drage) kept them in the game, but Mobley never let them in the game," Peterson said. "He looked like Pedro Martinez out there. He had great command, and he was changing speeds. Mobley was on, and you were going to have to be very disciplined to hit him."

"Kemp hit that home run to straight-away center field with the win blowing straight in and that shows what type of ability he has. (McNamee) has been solid from right out of the gate, defensively, offensively, he really sets a tempo. He is doing what he is capable of doing."

Blue Raider senior pitcher John Williams (3-0, 0.42) will get the start in the second game of the series at Reese Smith Field Saturday at 2 p.m.

GAME NOTES

Junior pitcher Chris Mobley established career highs in strikeouts (11) and innings pitched (9) with his complete-game win against Southwest Missouri ... Middle Tennessee's pitching staff has combined for three shutouts in the first 12 games. The Blue Raiders had just one shutout all of last season ... The Blue Raiders scored two first-inning runs against the Bears, marking the third straight game in which they have scored two in the first and the ninth time in 12 games that Middle Tennessee has scored first. The team is 8-1 in those games ... Junior second baseman Eric McNamee has reached base in all 12 games, and he has scored in all 12 games. McNamee leads Middle Tennessee in hitting (.457), runs scored (23), hits (21), triples (2) and is fielding 100 percent ... Senior outfielder Shane Kemp has a team-high eight-game hitting streak, and he leads the team in home runs (four) and RBIs (15) ... Middle Tennessee's six-game winning streak is the team's highest since winning seven straight from April 10-20, 2001, and the 10-2 start is the team's best since opening 14-1 in 2001. Starting pitchers have earned the decision in all but two of the team's first 12 games.

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