

# NMSU Pounds Blue Raiders

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**LAS CRUCES, N.M.** - New Mexico State scored five runs in the first two innings and added six unearned runs in the fifth to take control of the game and cruise to a 16-6 victory over Middle Tennessee here at Presley Askew Field Friday night in the Sun Belt Conference opener for both teams. The homestanding Aggies (21-6-1) improved to 19-3 at home this season, taking advantage of four early walks to get an early lead and then adding to the lead with a six-run fifth inning and a four-run eighth. Middle Tennessee made three errors in the game and walked five batters, allowing the Aggies to score

16 runs on 15 hits, including six unearned runs. "You cannot come here and face the best-hitting team in the league and not pitch well," Blue Raider head coach Steve Peterson said. "[Chris] Mobley was ready to pitch, maybe too ready, tonight. He had good stuff but just couldn't find the strike zone. We also did not play good defense for the second game in a row." The Aggies got two runs in the first with the aid of just one hit. Blue Raider starter Chris Mobley had trouble finding the strike zone, walking the first two batters of the game. After a wild pitch, a groundout by Xardiel Cotto scored a run before a bloop double down the rightfield line by Billy Becher plated the second run. The Blue Raiders (14-7) came back to tie the game in the second, putting together four straight hits to push across two runs. Josh Archer started the rally with a two-out, bloop single to rightcenter. Shane Kemp then drilled a ball past the centerfielder, scoring Archer from first as Kemp raced in with a triple. Troy Harp then lined a single over the outstretched Cotto and into centerfield, scoring Kemp and tying the game. Chuck Akers followed with a bouncing single into right, but Harp was gunned down at the plate for the final out of the inning. New Mexico State took the lead for good with three runs in their half of the second, again taking advantage of wildness by the Blue Raider pitching staff. A single and a hit batter preceded two more walks by Mobley, forcing in a run. Becher then singled sharply to right, scoring a pair for a 5-2 NMSU advantage. The Aggies got a single run in the fourth on an RBI double from Dustin Mote, chasing Mobley from the contest. Mobley (4-2) lasted just 3.1 innings, by far his shortest stint of the season. The junior righthander allowed six runs on five hits, walking four and striking out three. NMSU got six unearned runs in the fifth to take control of the contest. After a pair of errors to leadoff, a walk loaded the bases before a two-run single by Joey

Vincent. Mote singled before a three-run homer to center by Cotto, giving the Aggies a 12-2 lead. Middle Tennessee got two runs back in the sixth, taking advantage of two NMSU errors. Eric McNamee led off with a single before Jeff Beachum reached on an error. A walk to Marcus Taylor loaded the bases before a two-out single to right by Archer, scoring a run. Aggie rightfielder Mark Aranda booted the ball, allowing Beachum to score on the play and cutting the NMSU lead to 12-4. The Blue Raiders loaded the bases again in the seventh on a double by McNamee, a single from Beachum and a walk to Brett Carroll. But Taylor struck out swinging against Aggie reliever J.T. Severe, ending the threat. Becher added a solo shot, his 15th homer of the season, to leadoff the eighth. Adrian Ballesteros hit a two-run blast later in the inning. Middle Tennessee scored twice in the ninth, both on sacrifice flies. The first came from Beachum, scoring Michael McKenry. Carroll added the second sac fly of the inning, plating Nate Jagers. McNamee had three of the team's 10 hits, his sixth three-hit game of the season. Archer added a pair of hits. The major blow was the 13 strikeouts for Middle Tennessee. NMSU starter Dustin Cameron (5-1) worked 6.1 innings, giving up four runs, two earned, on six hits with nine strikeouts. Cameron improved his career mark at home to 10-0. The two teams play again Saturday at 2 p.m. CT and conclude the series Sunday at 2 p.m. CT.

#### **GAME NOTES**

Troy Harp extended his hitting streak to five games with a single in the second ... Eric McNamee's single in the sixth puts the junior hitting safely in 17 of the 21 games this season.

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