

# Five-Run Ninth Propels ASU Win

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## **MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -**

Middle Tennessee tied the game with two runs in the bottom of the eighth, but visiting Arkansas State scored five runs in the ninth, capped by Chris Rich's grand slam, to take a 9-4 Sun Belt Conference victory over the Blue Raiders in front of 1,116 Friday night at Reese Smith Field.

The Blue Raiders (21-13, 4-6 SBC) were behind the entire game, tying the game at one in the second, then again at two in the sixth. The visiting Indians got two runs in the seventh on Brad Burkhead's second homer of the contest,

but Middle Tennessee scored twice in the eighth to knot the game for the third time.

ASU (18-17, 3-7) erupted for five runs in the ninth on just three hits, taking advantage of a walk, a hit batter and a sacrifice bunt that looked like it was going to roll foul but stayed fair all the way down the third base line. A sacrifice fly from Hudson Smart gave the Indians the lead before Rich's grand slam gave ASU the largest advantage of the game.

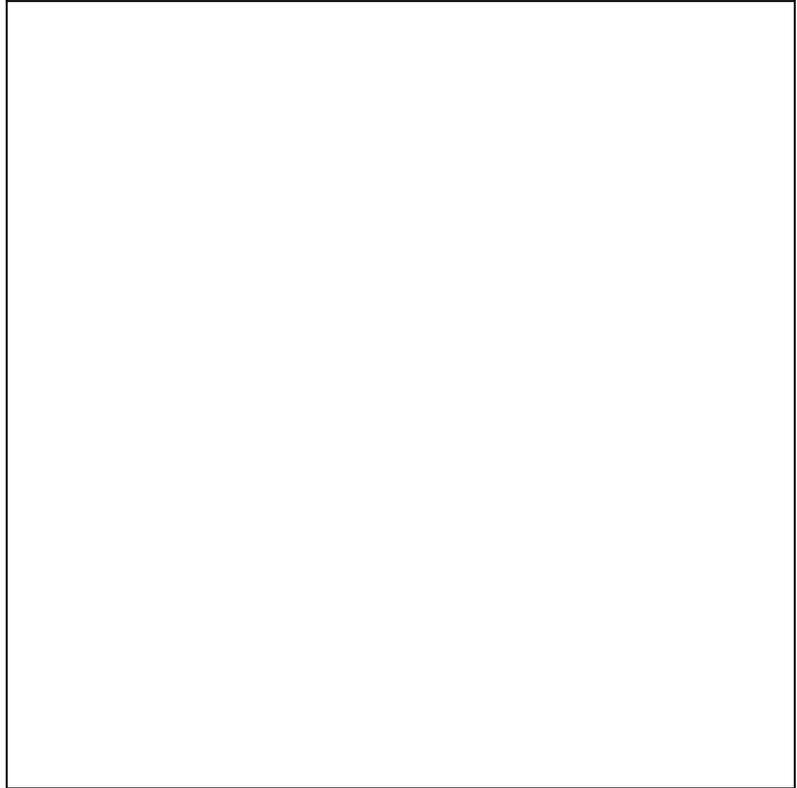
Middle Tennessee starter Chris Mobley (5-3) struck out a career-high 13 in eight-plus innings of work but suffered the loss. Mobley was tagged with seven runs on six hits, walking four and hitting two.

Ryan Hamilton (6-3) got the win with seven innings of relief, entering the contest in the third after starter Doug Walter worked the first two frames. Hamilton gave up three runs on seven hits and struck out nine.

The Indians scored once in the first when Mike Sirianni singled with two outs, went to third on Rich's single and scored on a wild pitch.

Middle Tennessee tied it in the second when Shane Kemp walked, stole second, went to third on a groundout by Nate Jagers and scored on a sacrifice fly to center from Chuck Akers.

Burkhead's solo homer in the fifth, his sixth this season, all in Sun Belt play, gave the Indians a 2-1 advantage. But the Blue Raiders tied the game in the sixth on Brett Carroll's towering blast, his



seventh of the year.

In the ASU seventh, Geoff Desmond drew a leadoff walk and Indians coach Keith Kessinger pinch-hit Adam Roberson with the sole intention of bunting. But Roberson failed at the job, striking out.

But Burkhead put the Indians back ahead with his second blast of the contest, a two-run shot to leftcenter for a 4-2 ASU lead.

Middle Tennessee looked dead in the water until Derek Phillips belted a leadoff homer in the eighth, his second round-tripper of the year and first February 29 at Jacksonville State.

Kemp then doubled with one out and stole third. Jagers lined out to center, deep enough to score Kemp and tie the contest at four.

But trouble was brewing in the ninth, as Mobley walked the leadoff batter and hit the next one to bring Roberson to the plate again in a bunt situation. Again Roberson did not fair well, taking two strikes before laying down a ball that stayed in the dirt down the third base line. Carroll let it roll, hoping the ball would go foul, but it never crossed the white line.

Danny Borne came in to get Burkhead to flyout to short center, but Smart lined out deep enough to right, scoring a run. After an intentional walk, Travis Horschel came on to get the final out of the inning, but Rich blasted a 2-0 pitch over the leftfield wall to put the game away.

Phillips had two hits, the only multiple hit game for the Blue Raiders in an eight-hit attack. Kemp walked, stole a pair of bases and scored twice.

The two teams play game two of the series Saturday at 2 p.m. at Reese Smith Field. Before the game more than 70 former players, coaches, managers and trainers will be honored on Old Timers Day.

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