

Vandy Homers Too Much in 6-3 Decision

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Warner Jones, Cesar Nicolas and Worth Scott all homered to lead 24th-ranked Vanderbilt to a 6-3 victory over Middle Tennessee Wednesday night before a record-crowd of 3,020 at Reese Smith Field. Middle Tennessee set a single-game attendance record during "Pack the Park" Night, besting the old mark of 2,733 set in 2001. But the record crowd went home disappointed, as the Commodores scored four consecutive runs to erase a 3-2 Middle Tennessee lead and post the victory. The Blue Raiders (23-14) took a 3-2 lead in the fifth when junior Eric McNamee laced a three-

run homer over the wall in rightfield off VU starter Jeff Sues. But the lead was short-lived, as Scott lifted a fly ball into the wind toward right, getting just enough to clear the wall and tie the score at three. The Commodores (27-10) took the lead for good when Mike Baxter singled to start the seventh before Jones blasted a drive over the wall in centerfield against Blue Raider reliever Shay Horseman. VU added a run in the ninth when Nicolas doubled with two outs, went to third on a wild pitch and scored on an infield single from Tony Mansolino. Horseman (0-2) took the loss, giving up two runs on three hits in one-plus inning. Middle Tennessee starter Steve Kline allowed two runs in four innings, his first start since March 28 at New Mexico State. Stephen Shao (3-0), the second of four Vanderbilt pitchers, got the win with two scoreless innings of work, allowing two hits with two strikeouts. Jeremy Sowers worked a scoreless eighth and Ryan Rote got his ninth save of the year with a scoreless ninth. "The home runs were big and they were very opportunistic taking care of mistakes," Blue Raider head coach Steve Peterson said. "We struck out in situations where they put the ball in play and I thought that was the difference. They have good team speed and that really showed defensively. [Antoan] Richardson ran down two balls that most centerfielders don't even get to." Vanderbilt had one hit against Kline through three innings before Nicolas led off the fourth with a solo homer deep into the football stadium in leftfield. Mansolino then singled, went to second on a sacrifice bunt by Scott and scored on Ryan Klosterman's two-out single to left. The Blue Raiders had just two hits against Sues until the fifth when Marcus Taylor and Chuck Akers both singled before McNamee's third homer of the year with two outs, over the rightfield wall for a 3-2 Middle Tennessee advantage. Scott's one-out homer in the sixth tied the score before the Commodores took the lead.

McNamee, Akers and Derek Phillips all had two hits for the Blue Raiders, while McNamee walked, scored a run and drove in three. "This night was designed for the students with the airline tickets," Peterson added. "I knew that if the weather was good, the students would respond. The fans have always supported us. We put a good product on the field. It doesn't surprise me that on a beautiful night, the fans would respond, but they always have." Middle Tennessee ends a six-game homestand Wednesday with a 7 p.m. contest against Austin Peay.

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