

Big Inning Sends Raiders to 9-4 Loss

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MOBILE, Ala. - South Alabama scored six runs in the seventh and plated eight consecutive runs in the contest to erase an early deficit and defeat Middle Tennessee, 9-4, here Saturday afternoon at Stanky Field.

The Jaguars evened the three game series at one and forced a rubber game Sunday at 1 p.m. Middle Tennessee will send sophomore BJ Church (1-0, 4.35 ERA) against USA's Joey Doan (1-5, 6.18).

Middle Tennessee (25-15, 7-7 SBC) jumped out to an early lead and held a 4-1 advantage in the sixth before the Jaguars went on a scoring spree. USA scored twice in the sixth and six times in the seventh to take the lead and get the victory.



Blue Raider reliever Travis Horschel (1-1) took the loss, allowing three runs on one hit and hitting two batters. Starter John Williams deserved better than another no decision, giving up four runs on 11 hits with four strikeouts in six-plus innings.

Jaguar starter P.J. Walters (7-1) tossed his fourth complete game of the year and escaped jams in the second and sixth, limiting damage and keeping his team in the contest. Walters gave up four runs and eight hits, striking out seven.

The Blue Raiders got off to another good start, getting a single run in the second but left the bases loaded in the inning. Senior Derek Phillips led off the frame with a double to rightcenter, extending his hitting streak to a career-high 10 games. Nate Jagers singled over the third baseman's head two batters later, scoring Phillips for a 1-0 lead.

Two hit batters loaded the bases later in the inning, but Eric McNamee popped out to short right for the second straight at-bat to end the threat.

The Jaguars got a two-out walk and a single in the third to put runners on the corners. USA tried to steal a run with a double steal, but the Blue Raiders gunned down the runner at the plate to keep the one-run lead.

South Alabama (18-21, 7-4) finally took advantage of their fourth straight leadoff single in the fourth, though bad baserunning cost the home team at least one run.

Clark Secchiari and Adam Lind both had singles to start the inning, putting runners on the corners. Josh Touchstone grounded sharply to third, where Brett Carroll got Secchiari into a rundown. Jeff Beachum took the throw as Secchiari slid back into the bag at third, tagging out the runner. Beachum turned around and tagged a sliding Lind coming to third for a very strange 3-5-2 doubleplay.

Touchstone did score later in the inning on a bloop single to rightcenter by Justin Hawarah, tying the game at one.

The Blue Raiders came right back to take the lead again in the fifth. Chuck Akers beat out an infield single with two outs, a big play to give Carroll an at-bat in the inning. The junior belted a 1-1 pitch over the wall in leftfield, his second home run of the series and ninth of the year, giving Middle Tennessee a 3-1 advantage.

The Blue Raiders added a run in the sixth but missed a golden chance to open the lead. Marcus Taylor walked and moved to third when Jagers executed the hit-and-run to perfection. Taylor scored on a wild pitch for a 4-1 lead. Middle Tennessee had second and third with one out later in the frame, but two grounders back to the pitcher ended the threat.

"I could really feel things shift after our sixth inning," Blue Raider head coach Steve Peterson said. "We only got one run and didn't execute at the plate.

"John pitched very well but starting leaving some balls up. Travis came in and just didn't have it, and I called the home run pitch. That was just a bad pitch."

USA used a couple of friendly bounces in the bottom of the inning to get back in the game, scoring twice.

Brad Gordon had a leadoff double before Ben Froemming blooped a ball into short center. Akers made a diving catch and thought he caught the ball, arguing with the umpire when the play was called safe.

A wild pitch moved both runners up before a bad-hop single high over the glove of Beachum at short scored both runs to cut the Blue Raider lead to 4-3.

A leadoff double in the seventh from Jansen Rayborn chased Williams from the contest. Travis Horschel came on to get an out before allowing a single and hitting two batters, forcing in the tying run.

Steve Kline came on and went full to the hot-hitting Lind, who blasted a long fly ball off the top of the centerfield wall, a grand slam to give South Alabama an 8-4 lead. Hawarah blasted a solo shot two batters later for a 9-4 advantage.

Jaggers went 3-for-4 with one RBI in the loss, while Phillips had a pair of hits and scored a run. Carroll had hit second straight two-RBI game.

Gordon went 3-for-4 with two runs scored in the leadoff spot for the Jaguars, while Lind, Touchstone and Hawarah all had a pair of hits.

GAME NOTES

Senior John Williams made his 45th career start in the game, third all-time for the Blue Raiders. Williams will tie Dave Richardson (46, 1985-88) for second on the career list in his next start. Williams struck out four in the contest, moving into a tie for third on the all-time list with Richardson with 253 punchouts ... Senior Derek Phillips extended his hitting streak to a career-high 10 games with a leadoff double in the second ... Senior Chuck Akers has hit safely in five straight games after an infield single in the fifth ... Williams allowed 11 hits in the contest, tying the most he has allowed in his career and just the fourth time he has given up double-digit hits in a game. He allowed 11 hits to both Tennessee Tech (3/10/02) and New Mexico State (4/5/02).

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