Big Inning Gives Memphis 10-5 Win

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MEMPHIS, Tenn. - Kurt Welch and Ryan Martin each drove in three runs and Memphis erased an early three-run deficit en route to a 10-5 victory over Middle Tennessee Tuesday night at Nat Buring Stadium.

Middle Tennessee scored three runs in the top of the first, but the homestanding Tigers came back with four runs in their half of the first inning. UM added a run in the fourth, three in the fifth and two more in the sixth. The Blue Raiders got single runs in fifth and ninth, cutting the deficit to 5-4 in the fifth before the Tigers blew the game open.

Blue Raider starter Jeff Kasser (2-1) had his worst outing of the year, giving up five runs on seven hits with two strikeouts in 3.1 innings. Travis Horschel struggled for the second straight outing, allowing five runs on three hits in 2.2 innings, as the Tigers extended the lead in the fifth and never looked back.

UM reliever Brandon Rowan (2-1) picked up the win with 2.2 innings of scoreless relief, striking out one and walking one. Corey Kines got the final two outs after Daniel de Armas ran into trouble in the ninth.

Middle Tennessee's Eric McNamee, Brett Carroll and Derek Phillips all had two hits, with Carroll driving in three runs and Phillips two, and McNamee scoring twice.

"We had a good start with the home run from Brett [Carroll]," Middle Tennessee head coach Steve Peterson said. "Offensively it was good, but defensively it was terrible. We felt like we made four errors in the first inning. And [Jeff] Kasser just did not have it. He was not able to locate and really wasn't the pitcher he was the last two times out."

The Blue Raiders got off to a quick start, scoring three times on three hits in the first.

Chuck Akers singled to center with one out before Phillips laced a double that hit the chalk down the

rightfield line, scoring Akers. Carroll then took a hanging breaking ball and deposited it over the wall in leftcenter, his third homer in four games to give the Blue Raiders an early 3-0 lead.

But the Tigers came back with four runs in their half of the frame, collecting five hits.

Chad House, Bill Moss, Brent Dlugach and Welch all singled to start the game, tying the contest at three. Adam Amar singled later in the inning, got to third on an error and scored on the second wild pitch of the inning for a 4-3 Tiger advantage.

Memphis added a run in the fourth, chasing Blue Raider starter Jeff Kasser in the process. Josh Payne was hit by the pitch to start the inning and Michael Lewis followed with a single. After a bunt put runners on the corners, Horschel got a ground ball from House, but the speedy leadoff hitter beat the relay on the doubleplay, allowing the run to score to give UM a 5-3 lead.

Middle Tennessee cut into the lead in the fifth, with a McNamee single to leadoff. The junior stole on a 2-2 pitch and never stopped when the ball got away from the catcher, moving all the way to third. Phillips drove in the run with his second RBI of the game, a single to right.

Carroll walked and the Tigers went to the bullpen for Rowan, who struck out Nate Jaggers. Shane Kemp singled to right with two outs, but Phillips was gunned down at the plate, ending the inning with the Tigers holding a 5-4 edge.

Horschel was unable to keep the home team in check in the bottom of the fifth, though, walking Dlugach and hitting Welch before Ryan Martin blasted his fourth homer of the year, a three-run shot to give Memphis an 8-4 lead.

A Moss triple and a sacrifice fly from Welch scored a pair of runs for Memphis in the sixth, giving the home team a 10-4 advantage.

Carroll's double down the leftfield line plated McNamee with a run in the ninth, but the Blue Raiders left the bases loaded against UM closer Corey Kines to end the contest.

"The difference was the relief pitching Memphis got and the relief pitching we didn't get," Peterson added. "Once they put three innings up with runs, it made it difficult to come back."

The two teams play again Wednesday at 2 p.m. Middle Tennessee opens a three-game series this weekend at home against Western Kentucky beginning Friday at 7 p.m.

GAME NOTES

Senior Derek Phillips extended his career-long hitting streak to a dozen games with a double in the first ... Sophomore righthander Jeff Kasser worked just 3.1 innings, his shortest stint as a starter this year ... Senior Chuck Akers has hit safely in seven games with his single in the first ... Junior Brett Carroll made his hitting streak five with a two-run homer in the first, his third home run in four games.

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