

Blue Raiders Slam Gamecocks 6-2

MT led by young players on Friday

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JACKSONVILLE, Ala. -

Middle Tennessee began the 2008 season with a 6-2 win over Jacksonville State as it shut down the Gamecocks through eight innings. The Blue Raiders (1-0) had a number of young players step-up in their first games of the season including freshman Bryce Brentz who hit his first career home run. Brentz ended the game 1 for 4 with one run and one RBI. "Bryce had his first home run. He is a dangerous hitter and will learn as he adjusts to breaking pitches because pitchers will begin to adjust to him," head coach Steve Peterson said. Sophomore Kenneth Roberts received his first career win against the Gamecocks (0-1) as he allowed just three hits in six shutout innings of work. Roberts struck out a career



high four batters and allowed just one walk in the outing. "Kenny Roberts had a quality start his first time out. He pitched six innings and finished strong. He started off a little shaky and was up in the zone but defensively got all the breaks. Once he settled down his breaking ball and change-up became a very good pitch," Peterson said. Sophomore Blake McDade ended the day 2 for 2 with two RBI and scored one run while senior Zach Barrett and sophomore Ervin Myles each went two for four. Middle Tennessee started the game off swinging as McDade singled bringing in junior Nathan Hines from second to put the Blue Raiders up 1-0. Hines singled and then reached second on an out by Barrett. In the second, the Blue Raiders extended their lead by one, 2-0 after beginning the inning with two strikeouts. Junior Taylor Dennis scored after a single by Robertson. Dennis singled to reach first and then advanced to second on a single by Ervin. McDade continued his solid performance as he tripled in the third with no outs to score Barrett from second. McDade then scored on a sacrifice by sophomore Grant Box. Brentz hit the first home run of the season and his career extending the lead over the Gamecocks to five. Senior Doug Birkofer scored on a single by Bishop after stealing second and advancing to third on a bad throw by JSU. Birkofer was a pinch runner for McDade who

had a base on balls to reach first. "I thought we hit very well in situations. We moved the ball well, Box didn't hit that well but he stayed enough on the slider to get a run in from third when the infield was back. Blake had a big day at the plate. I thought we had a good day at the plate. Their bullpen pretty much shut us down," Peterson said. "They have a good pitching staff and their hitters will swing the bat better than they did today. I have to give credit to my pitchers and defense. I thought Drew Robertson did a very good job behind the plate as much as we could with the scouting report staying with the pitcher's strengths." The Gamecocks attempted a late rally scoring two runs in the bottom of the ninth beginning with a single by Spencer Brandes which scored Steven Leach from second base. Then Clay Whittemore scored from third after a single by McCreary. Whittemore reached base after being hit by a pitch from Smalley. Senior Brad Robinson and junior Brett Smalley took the mound in relief for Middle Tennessee. Robinson allowed just one hit in two innings while striking out three. Smalley allowed two runs on four hits with one strike out. "Brad Robinson was not sharp at all but got better. He was at the pitch count we wanted him to be and its not that I didn't want him to go three I am just being very careful," Peterson said. Middle Tennessee will be back in action on Saturday, Feb. 23 at 1 p.m. for game two of its three-game series with Jacksonville State.

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