

WKU Hammers Blue Raiders, 15-3

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Western Kentucky scored 12 unanswered runs to break a tie game and took advantage of five Middle Tennessee errors in a 15-3 victory for the visiting Hilltoppers Friday night at Reese Smith Field. Middle Tennessee (27-17, 8-8) made three errors in the first two innings, allowing WKU to take an early 3-0 lead. But the Blue Raiders got a run in the second and Shane Kemp's live drive two-run blast in the fourth, his 10th of the season to tie the contest at three. The Hilltoppers (23-20, 6-7) broke the game open with six runs in the fifth on four hits, two hit batters and two wild pitches. A

hard shot up the middle clipped the hand of Blue Raider starter Chris Mobley, who stuck his throwing hand out to stop the ball. Two batters later Cary Page hit a three-run homer to give WKU an 8-3 lead. WKU added another run in the inning, one more in the sixth, three more in the eighth and the final two runs in the ninth, collecting 13 hits in all to take the first game of the series. Mobley (6-4) allowed a career-high eight runs, six earned, on just four hits, striking out five. But the junior had three wild pitches and hit three batters and was never able to fully recover from the rough start in the first two innings. WKU's Grady Hinchman (4-4), who lost to Mobley in last year's Sun Belt Championships title game, got the better of the matchup this time around, allowing three runs on four hits in seven innings. The lefthander had control problems all night, walking six, but got out of jams with ground balls, including a doubleplay in the second to put the brakes on a bases loaded, no one out situation for the Blue Raiders. The Blue Raiders managed just five hits in all, two from Chase Eakes, and tied a season-high with five errors. The squad had a chance to get back in the game in the second after WKU took a 3-0 lead when Hinchman loaded the bases on three straight walks, throwing 12 balls in 14 pitches to start the inning. But Eakes bounced into a doubleplay, scoring a run but ending a chance for a big inning. The Blue Raiders also left the bases loaded in their half of the fifth after WKU's big inning and stranded 11 runners in the contest. The two teams play again Saturday at 2 p.m. with baseball Senior Day activities prior to the first pitch.

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