

Beachum Sparks 11-7 Win

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Middle Tennessee's Jeff Beachum broke out of a slump with three hits while BJ Church and Steve Kline weathered 13 hits to help the Blue Raiders defeat Western Kentucky, 11-7, on Sunday at Reese Smith Field and win their fourth straight conference series.

The Blue Raiders (29-17, 10-8 SBC) took advantage of five Hilltopper errors in the contest to win their fourth straight Sunday rubber game in Sun Belt play. Church labored through 5.2 innings before giving way to Kline, who went the long way to get his second save in two days, working the final 3.1 innings in scoreless fashion. Beachum, who was mired in a 6-for-28 streak over his last nine games, had two hits on Saturday and three more Sunday against Western Kentucky, driving in a run and scoring twice in Sunday's



victory. The sophomore shortstop made a costly error in the first inning but more than atoned for it the rest of the game, including starting a three-run seventh inning after WKU cut the lead to just one run. Both teams started quickly, scoring 13 runs in the first three innings. Western Kentucky (23-22, 6-9) got two runs in the first, both unearned. Matt Ransdell reached on an error to start the game and scored on Tim Grogan's double just inside the leftfield line. Cary Page then blooped a single into centerfield with two outs, plating Grogan for a 2-0 Hilltopper lead. In the bottom of the inning Eric McNamee drew a leadoff walk, the first of four in the contest, and scored on Brett Carroll's two-out single to center. WKU added a run in the second when Philip Thayer drew a one-out walk and scored on a bloop two-out single to rightfield. The Blue Raiders put six runs on the board in their half of the second on six hits, all singles, and two walks. Shane Kemp drew a leadoff walk, stole second and went to third on an error. Beachum then singled to score Kemp. With two outs McNamee walked again before five consecutive singles from the Blue Raiders, with Chuck Akers, Derek Phillips, Carroll, Nate Jagers and Kemp all reaching. Marcus Taylor then drew a bases-loaded walk to force

in the final run of the frame for a 7-3 Middle Tennessee lead. A pair of short singles to right in the WKU half of the third set up an RBI double from Antone Towns and a run-scoring infield single by Thayer cut the Blue Raider lead to 7-5. Middle Tennessee added a run in its half of the third on a sacrifice fly to left from Phillips. Church settled down and retired eight straight until a one-out error by Carroll allowed Jordan Newton to reach in the sixth for the Hilltoppers. A two-out double by Matt Johnston plated Newton and Tim Grogan's sharp liner through the infield scored Johnston, cutting the lead to 8-7 and chasing BJ Church from the game. In the seventh the Blue Raiders added some much-needed insurance against WKU reliever Kenny Griffin, who did more than an admirable job but ran out of gas after 88 pitches. Beachum doubled to start the inning and moved to third on Troy Harp's bunt. McNamee singled over the head of Grogan at third, scoring Beachum. The final two runs of the inning scored when Towns dropped a two-out fly ball off the bat of Jagers, scoring Akers and Phillips for the 11-7 lead. Kline got doubleplays in the seventh and eighth and worked around a pair of singles in the ninth by the visitors to earn his fifth save of the season and second in two days. The junior lefthander allowed four hits in 3.1 scoreless innings, striking out two. Church (3-0) gave up seven runs, three earned, on nine hits in 5.2 innings and suffered dearly because of two costly errors. The sophomore righthander walked two and struck out one in winning his sixth straight decision dating to last season. WKU starter Curtis Morrison (1-2) allowed seven runs on five hits in 1.2 innings, walking three with one strikeout. Griffin gave up four runs, one earned, on six hits in five-plus innings, his longest relief outing of the year. Phillips and Carroll both went 2-for-4 with two RBIs, with Phillips scoring twice and Carroll once. Middle Tennessee will take the week off for exams and plays again next weekend at New Orleans, beginning Friday at 6:30 p.m. at Privateer Park. **GAME**

NOTES

Junior Eric McNamee walked four times in the contest, tying a career-high. McNamee also walked four times against IP-Fort Wayne on February 20 of this year ... Sophomore BJ Church gave up seven runs in the game, the most in his career, though only three were earned. He also allowed a career-high nine hits.

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