Eakes Single Enough for 2-0 Victory

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NEW ORLEANS, La. - An RBI single in the 11th inning by Chase Eakes broke a scoreless tie and Eric McNamee's RBI double provided some insurance in a 2-0 Middle Tennessee victory over New Orleans here Friday night at Maestri Field.

Nate Jaggers led off the 11th with a single to right for the Raiders and went to second on a stolen bases. Eakes, who entered the game in the ninth, lifted what looked like a double down the leftfield line, but the ball was called foul, much to Middle Tennessee head coach Steve Peterson's dismay.

Eakes ripped the next pitch up the middle, though, scoring Jaggers. Jeff Beachum then singled and after the second out, Eric McNamee collected his third hit of the contest, an RBI double to leftcenter scoring Eakes for a 2-0 lead.

Matt Scott (3-1) worked two scoreless innings to get the victory, striking out two of three batters in the final inning. Steve Kline got five outs in relief of Mobley, four on strikeouts, including getting out of a bases-loaded jam in the eighth.

The two teams combined to leave 21 runners on base, though each had few quality scoring chances until the late innings.

Both starters were dominant, as expected, with UNO's Thomas Diamond striking out nine and allowing five hits in seven innings. The righthander walked three and threw 119 pitches, stranding seven Blue Raiders while he was in the game.

Middle Tennessee's Chris Mobley was equally as impressive, striking out 10 in 7.1 innings, his fourth

double-digit strikeout performance of the season and third in Sun Belt play. The junior walked three and gave up five hits before departing with two on and one out in the eighth.

"Two aces locked up and it was a really great ballgame," Peterson said. "Diamond was as good as advertised and Mobley threw one of best games of his career.

"The game came down to the bullpens and our bullpen has been shaky, but Kline stepped up and threw great and Matt Scott was very good. There was just outstanding pitching all night. Both clubs had opportunities to score, but the pitchers continued stepping up in those situations.

Peterson gave a lot of credit to Eakes for hanging tough in a difficult spot, especially after just missing a double.

"For a guy that just barely missed a double to come back and drive a ball up the mikddle for the game-winning hit, that was a great at-bat. We just kept battling and it finally paid off."

UNO (23-22, 9-6 SBC) looked to get a run in the bottom of the eighth, forcing Mobley from the game after a single and an error.

Joe Pietro beat out an infield single to lead off the bottom of the eighth for the Privateers and went to second on a sacrifice bunt from Meyer. A ground ball to third by Kody Valverde was booted, prompting Peterson to go to the bullpen.

With runners on first and second, Kline got a strikeout of Dana Tosoni but both runners stole on the third strike. After falling behind Mike Forbes 2 and 1, Peterson decided to put him on to load the bases.

Kline fell behind 3 and 1 to Jay Yaconetti, but battled back and struck out the UNO third baseman to get out of the inning, far and away the best scoring threat of the night for either team.

In the top of the 10th Beachum led off with a single. Chuck Akers grounder to Yaconetti at third was booted with two outs, allowing the runners to move to second and third with two outs. Derek Phillips was intentionally walked, but pinch-hitter Ryan Darnell flied out after being ahead in the count 3 and 1.

Grant Birely (5-5) suffered the loss, giving up two runs on four hits in 1.2 innings. Ryan Meyer, who also served as the designated hitter in the contest, worked 2.1 scoreless innings before giving way to Birely in the 10th.

McNamee and Beachum each had three hits for the Blue Raiders, while UNO had just seven hits and struck out 16 times in the game.

The Blue Raiders (30-17, 11-8) got two hits in the first and a walk and a single in the second against Diamond, but could do nothing with either scoring opportunity. Middle Tennessee had a base runner in each inning from the fourth through the seventh, but stranded all four against the hard-throwing UNO righthander.

UNO had a pair of singles in the second and got a walk and an error in the third, but Mobley worked out of both jams. The Privateers also left one runner on base in the third, fifth and sixth.

The two teams play again Saturday at 1 p.m., with Middle Tennessee sending senior John Williams (5-3, 3.28) against UNO righthander J.P. Martinez (5-2, 5.33).

GAME NOTES

Righthander Chris Mobley struck out 10 batters in the contest, his fourth double-digit strikeout performance of the year and third in Sun Belt play ... Junior third baseman Brett Carroll left the game after the top of the sixth after being hit in the helmet by a pitch from Diamond ... Because of Carroll's departure, Nate Jaggers came in to play third and Mobley went into the batting order, getting his first career at-bat with a flyout in the eighth ... The 7.1 innings for Mobley was his second longest outing in SBC play this year, behind the eight-plus innings against Arkansas State two weeks ago ... The Blue Raiders last played nine scoreless innings on March 30, 2001, at Louisiana-Lafayette, also a 2-0 victory, this one in 10 innings.

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