Lady Raiders Defeat Western Kentucky; Advance in SBC Tourney

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LAFAYETTE, La. - Crystal Bobo tossed a two-hit shutout as No. 3 seed Middle Tennessee (33-22) defeated No. 4 seed Western Kentucky (35-23) 4-0 Friday at the Sun Belt Tournament at Lady Cajun Park. The Lady Raiders were scheduled to play the winner of New Mexico State and North Texas Friday evening, but heavy rains forced tournament officials to suspend the game until Saturday. New Mexico State was leading North Texas 3-0 in the top of the fourth inning when the game stopped due to inclement weather. Saturday, the tournament will resume at 9 a.m. with the completion of the North Texas and New Mexico State game. Louisiana-Lafayette and Florida International are scheduled to play at 11 a.m. and Middle Tennessee will face the winner of North Texas and New Mexico State at 1 p.m. If the Lady Raiders win, they are facing one more game to reach the championship game, and would have to win two games in the championship bracket to win the title. Bobo recorded her second consecutive shutout in the tournament and threw her 13th complete game of the year. She recorded two walks and struck out five to improve to 17-11. "We rode the strong arm of Crystal Bobo today," said head coach Cindy Connelley. "She has been very strong in the tournament and has really kept us in the game and given us a chance to advance." After sitting down the first six batters of the game, Bobo got into a jam in the top of the third. She began the inning by striking out Western Kentucky's Lindsay Gatti, but walked Natalie Sevco and Renita Pennington and gave up a double to Riley Garcia to load the bases with two outs. Bobo got out of the jam when she forced Bailey Rolfs to hit a ground ball to third base, and Melissa Weiland stepped on the bag for the third out. Middle Tennessee's Katie Tompkins opened the bottom of the third with a bunt single and advanced to second on a Western Kentucky error, allowing Kristina Hieb to reach on a fielder's choice. Player of the Year Cortney Mitchell punched around the first run of the game when Tompkins scored on Mitchell's RBI single for the Lady Raiders first run of the game. The fifth inning proved to be the breakout for Middle

Tennessee as left fielder Brandy Davis started the inning with a single. After advancing to second on a ground ball, Davis moved to third off a single by catcher Leah Grothause. With runners on the corners, Western Kentucky decided to intentionally walk slugger Mitchell to load the bases. It was a costly gamble as freshman Brittany Herald hit a two RBI single that plated Daivs and Grothause. After Mitchell and Herald advanced to third and second on a passed ball, Mitchell added the third run of the inning when she scored on a Western Kentucky miscue. "I think Brittany really broke open the game for us," Connelley said. "She gave us a lift when we needed it." Middle Tennessee peppered just six hits in seven innings, but benefited from three Western Kentucky errors. Herald led the team going 2-for-3 at the plate and two RBI. Mitchell hit her 74th RBI of her career and moved to fourth place in the Lady Raider record books, and needs just seven RBI to break the school record.

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