

# Akers, Phillips Blast Raiders to Title

May 23, 2004 · MT Media Relations

## MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Chuck Akers' three-run homer in the seventh provided insurance, as seniors Akers and Derek Phillips both homered, scored four times and drove in five runs in the game in a 6-3 Middle Tennessee victory over Arkansas-Little Rock, clinching the Sun Belt Conference title for the Blue Raiders with the win and the No. 1 seed at next week's conference tournament. Akers' homer was just his second of the season, as the Murfreesboro native hit one in the first game and the last game of the season. The conference title is the 16th in Middle Tennessee baseball history and second in four years since joining the Sun Belt. Akers walked and scored on a two-run homer by Phillips in the first. Both seniors singled in the third and Akers scored while Phillips was in a



rundown. Akers then belted a three-run homer in the seventh to provide the Blue Raiders some much-needed insurance in what was then a one-run game. Blue Raider starter BJ Church overcame a wild start, registering balls with nine of his first 10 pitches in the contest. But the righthander used a doubleplay to get out of the first unscathed and did not allow a hit until the fourth. The Blue Raiders (37-18, 16-8) took an early lead when Akers drew a one-out walk in the first before Phillips belted his eighth homer of the year down the rightfield line for a 2-0 lead after one inning. In the third Akers and Phillips both singled to leadoff. After a popout, UALR starter Bennett Cromer used the third-to-first move and caught Phillips leaning, but Phillips was able to stay in a rundown long enough for Akers to steal home for a 3-0 advantage. Church cruised along, allowing two hits in the fourth and a walk in the fifth until running into trouble in the sixth. Aaron Haefele doubled with one out before Chris Becker got one into the jet stream toward rightfield, homering to cut the lead to 3-2. After two walks, Church was lifted for Matt Scott, who got out of the jam with a strikeout and a groundout to keep the lead intact. Middle Tennessee skated along with the one-run lead until the seventh when Jeff

Beachum led off with a single and Troy Harp's bunt somehow stayed fair along the first base line. UALR (16-32, 6-18) went to the bullpen and Eric McNamee put down a sacrifice bunt. Akers then belted one over the rightfield wall, his second of the season, for a 6-2 Blue Raider lead. Trojans pinch-hitter Mico Cuen lined a ball over the rightfield wall in the ninth off Steve Kline for the final run of the contest. Church (5-0) picked up the win with 5.1 innings, allowing two runs on four hits with four strikeouts. Cromer (4-6) took the loss, allowing three runs on six hits with nine strikeouts before departing with two runners on in the seventh. The Blue Raiders will take on Arkansas State Wednesday at 12:30 p.m. in the first round of the Dodge Sun Belt Championships at Stanky Field in Mobile, Ala. All games can be heard on WMTS 88.3 FM. **GAME NOTES**

Junior Nate Jagers doubled in the first, extending his hitting streak to 10 games, tying a career-long. Jagers also hit in 10 straight as a freshman in 2002 ... Sophomore pitcher BJ Church allowed a career-high five walks in the contest ... Senior Derek Phillips had three hits in the game, his sixth three-hit game of the year ... Sunday's attendance of 1,123 pushed the record-breaking single-season total to 30,319, an average of 1,046 for the 29 home games.

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*Printed on July 29, 2014*

*Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/3076>*