Blue Raiders fall 5-4 to Florida Atlantic

Vander Lugt strong in loss

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BOCA RATON, Fla. - Lindsey Vander Lugt made her third-straight stellar outing but the Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders (20-26, 9-9) allowed four runs on four errors and saw their late comeback effort fall just short as they lost 5-4 to the Florida Atlantic Owls (32-22, 14-6) in the first game of a series at FAU Softball Stadium on Saturday evening. Vander Lugt (14-17) earned the loss the Blue Raiders. She gave just one earned runs on eight hits, while striking out three and walking one in the complete game. Amber Barton (18-15) picked up the start and the win for the home team. The righty gave up one earned run on seven hits, while striking out five and walking four, in 7.0 innings. The Blue Raiders threatened in the first inning when Ashley Cline hit her team-leading 52nd hit of the season to lead things off before advancing to second base on a Katie Mielke sacrifice bunt. Cline advanced to third base on a Whitney Padgett ground out to third baseman Ashlyn Parmerter. Padgett was career-high 3-for-4 with a run scored to lead the Blue Raiders. The game remained scoreless until the bottom of the 3rd inning when the Owls took advantage of an error by Blue Raider second baseman Cline to go ahead 3-0. Becky Brandies and Jessica Myers singled to put two runner on base, bringing up Melissa Moore. The first baseman hit a hard shot that took a horrible bounce and off the glove of Cline and into centerfield, scoring Brandies. Amanda Barton hit a sacrifice fly to left field before Lauren Crandall hit a RBI single to the left side for the third Owl run of the inning. The Owls added increased their lead to 5-0 in the bottom

of the 5th inning on a Crandall RBI triple to the gap in right field and an attempted pick off by catcher Katie Mielke that went wide of first baseman Justine Cerda. The Blue Raiders rebounded with four runs in the top of the 6th inning to cut the FAU lead to 5-4. Justine Cerda reached on a fielder's choice before Whittney Padgett lined a single that glanced off the off the glove of FAU pitcher Barton. Brittney Banania nailed a RBI shot straight back into the body of the pitcher and raced to first base for the single . The next batter, Cline, reached on an error by the pitcher, scoring Padgett and cutting the lead to 5-2. Banania then scored on an error by catcher Brittany Walker before Cline scored off yet another Owl error, this time by second baseman Amy Bukovich. Middle Tennessee was unable to overcome the one-run deficit and complete the comeback effort in the final inning as they dropped to .500 in Sun Belt Conference play on the season.

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