

May 16, 2008

Brentz Bomb Lifts Blue Raiders Past Hilltoppers

Freshman's grand slam guides 7-5 win and berth to SBC Tourney

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BOWLING GREEN, Ky. - After two rain delays lasting a total of three hours and 20 minutes the Blue Raiders took a 7-5 win over Western Kentucky in the early morning hours of Friday to earn a spot in the 2008 Sun Belt Conference Tournament.

Freshman Bryce Brentz hit a grand slam in the top of the sixth to break a 2-2 tie and give Middle Tennessee a 6-2 lead. Brentz ended the night 2 for 4 with four RBI.

"Bryce got the big hit. What a hit it was, it was one of those pitches that drives a pitching coach crazy because the pitcher says he didn't mean to throw it. He hit it into the wind and we pulled out for the win," Peterson said.

Middle Tennessee had two runners caught stealing second base and left just three runners on base while posting 11 hits. Junior [Taylor Dennis](#) added assistance at the plate going 3 for 4 with two RBI and a double. Dennis also recorded the last out of the game as he stabbed a line drive, flipped it to freshman Tyler Burnett for the fielder's choice.

With the win, combined with a Florida International loss the Blue Raiders have earned a berth in the Sun Belt Conference tournament set to begin on Wednesday, May 21.

"We got it all done in one night. We won and were informed during one of the rain delays that Florida International lost so Middle Tennessee has earned a spot to represent itself in the conference tournament," head coach Steve Peterson said.

Sophomore [Kenneth Roberts](#) took the win as he allowed two runs on give hits in five innings of work. The Blue Raiders used three pitchers in relief with senior [Langdon Stanley](#) recording his fourth save of the year with his one inning of work.

"Coach Finwood and I talked this morning and decided to do everything we could to get the game in since we had a six o'clock game on Friday," Peterson said. "Kenny had been in this situation against someone earlier this season where we had a rain delay and I sent him back out. We were watching his velocity trying to get a little more out of him. We are in a different situation than Western and I didn't want to get into my bullpen too early."

Before play could begin the two teams sat through a one hour and 46 minute delay waiting for inclement weather to pass. Once play started, Western Kentucky put the first run on the board in the bottom of the second as Wade Gaynor scored from second on a single to left field by Matt Rice. The Hilltoppers took a 1-0 lead notching its first two hits of the game in the inning.

Middle Tennessee came back strong at the plate in its first at-bat after the second rain delay scoring two runs on a double to centerfield by Dennis to take a 2-1 lead in the top of the fifth.

The Hilltoppers answered in the bottom of the inning as Matt Hightower's double to right field tied the game as Scott Kaskie scored from third on the play.

In the bottom of the sixth, J. B. Paxson hit a sacrifice fly to left field with one out and the bases loaded to cut the Blue Raider lead to three as Gaynor scored on the play.

Rice hit a two-run shot to right field in the bottom of the eighth to put the Hilltoppers within one as Middle Tennessee held on 6-5.

The Blue Raiders added an insurance run as Burnett scored from third on a sacrifice fly to right field by sophomore [Zach Hudson](#).

The Blue Raiders will be back in action on Friday, May 16 at 6 p.m. for game two of its three-game series with the Hilltoppers.



Freshman Bryce Brentz hit a grand slam in the top of the sixth to break a 2-2 tie and give Middle Tennessee a 6-2 lead. Brentz now leads the team with 18 home runs.
(Bradley Lambert)