Blue Raiders open season with loss

Fall 6-3 to Virginia at ECU Invitational

February 7, 2009 · David Powell

Greenville, N.C.- Middle Tennessee (0-1, 0-0) fell behind early and saw their late rally fall short as they opened the season with a 6-3 defeat to the Virginia Cavaliers (1-0, 0-0) at the East Carolina Invitational on Saturday afternoon. The Blue Raiders welcomed five new starters to their lineup from last season and Senior Martha Davis was making her first start at third base in what proved to be a confidence-building game. Lindsey Vander Lugt (0-1) got the start for the Blue Raiders. The junior gave up six earned runs on 11 hits, while striking out four and walking none in the complete game loss. Karla Wilburn (1-0) picked up the win for Virginia. The righty gave up nine hits and two earned runs, while striking out six and walking one, in 7.0 innings. The Cavaliers took the lead in the top of the second inning. Back-to-back singles by Sarah Tacke and Abby Snyder started things off before Lauren McCaskey reached on a fielders choice to load the bases. Designated player Nicole Koren nailed a one-out single through the left side and Casey Steffan hit a two-RBI single to center field to make it 4-0. Virginia extended their lead to 6-0 in the top of the fourth inning through a Koren RBI single before Alison Pitman grounded out to second base two batters later, scoring Koren. Middle Tennessee came close to cutting into their deficit in the bottom of the fifth inning. Catcher Laurie Anna Cooley did well to draw a one-out walk to put a runner on base for the Blue Raiders, but pinch runner Kandra Singleton was called out for leaving early. Freshman Tobie Joy followed it up with a single to the gap in left-center, the first hit of her career. Caitlin McLure struck out looking to end the inning. Middle Tennessee got on the board in the bottom of the sixth inning. Kesley Dortch used her speed to beat out the throw on a bunt single before Banania advanced her to second base with a sacrifice bunt to the pitcher. Abel nailed a hard shot to the third baseman but Dortch was caught in a run down by Cavalier second baseman McCaskey for the

second out of the inning. Davis smacked a single down the left field line for her second hit of the game before Abel scored on a wild pitch from third base to make it 6-1. The Blue Raiders added two more runs in the bottom of the seventh inning. Freshman Kaycee Popham led off with a single to short right field and moved to second on a sacrifice bunt by Cooley. Joy nailed an RBI single to left field before crossing the plate after a Dortch single to left as the come back attempt continued. Joy went 2-for-3 with a RBI and run scoed for Middle Tennessee. Banania singled to center field to put runners on first and third, bringing Abel to the plate with a chance to tie the game. The 2008 All-Sun Belt Second Team selection crushed a 3-2 pitch to deepest part of center field, but the ball fell just short of the outfield fence. The Blue Raiders finish off their first day at the ECU Invitational at 2 p.m. CT against host East Carolina.

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