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Blue Raiders pick up two victories Combine for 22 hits against Winthrop and Purdue

David Powell

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AUBURN, Ala. - These are the types of performances that Middle Tennessee has been waiting for all season. The Blue Raiders used both stellar pitching and hitting to pick up wins over the Winthrop Lady Eagles and Purdue Boilermakers at the War Eagle Classic on Saturday.

Middle Tennessee (2-7) began the day winless on the season and having shown the effects of youth and the inability to have both consistent hitting and pitching on the same days. That is now all in the past.

In the first game, Middle Tennessee used a second consecutive nine-strikeout performance by junior **Lindsey Vander Lugt** to pick up a 2-1 win, their first of the season, against the Winthrop Eagles (3-4).

Vander Lugt (1-4) gave up four hits and none over the final two innings to shut down the Eagles in her second-straight start. The lefty finished the day with twenty strikeouts to just three walks during the tournament.

Both teams combined for just four hits in the first four innings before the Blue Raiders took the lead in the top of the fifth. Tobie Joy started things off with a well-hit single through the right side before advancing to second on a sacrifice bunt by **Caitlin McLure**.

Brittney Banania and Shelby Barrett both walked to load the bases, bring up **Corrie Abel**. The junior smashed a two-RBI single to centerfield to make it 2-0.

Abel went 2-for-4 with two RBI to lead the Blue Raider attack during the game.

Winthrop pulled a run back in the bottom of the inning. Tessa Thomas doubled to the gap in left field to put a runner on and was judged to have beaten out a throw Blue Raider catcher Laurie Anna Cooley during the next at-bat.

Vander Lugt shut down Winthrop in the final inning, striking out the first batter before causing the final two players to ground out and seal the victory.

In the second game, the Blue Raiders used a season-high 17 hits to propel themselves to an 11-4 victory over previously-ranked Purdue (4-4). The mark ranked tied for third all-time in Middle Tennessee history and also ranks as a Boilermaker program record.

Caty Juston (1-3) gave up two earned runs on six hits for her first career win as a Blue Raider. The freshman was stellar through five innings, pitching a shutout and giving up just three hits.

The Blue Raiders opened the scoring in the third inning. McLure got on base due to a throwing error by Boilermaker third baseman Liane Horiuchi and Banania laid down a bunt single to put runners at first and second. Abel walked to load the bases and Davis drew one



Freshman Caty Jutson gave up just three hits in the first five innings to get her first career win as a Blue Raider ()

of her own to put Middle Tennessee on the board.

Juston made it 2-0 with a base-loaded smash through the left side before Cooley forced third run across by reaching on another Purdue error, this time by shortstop Megan Chapman.

The Blue Raiders added another run in the top of the fifth inning when Davis singled up the middle before **Kelsey Dortch** smashed a RBI double off the wall in right center field.

Purdue cut the MT advantage in half in the bottom of the inning off an error by Blue Raider first baseman Kaycee Popham and a single through the right side by Beth Cinadr. McLure and Davis ended the inning with a spectacular defensive play, with the junior fielding a ball off the left field wall and firing to Davis at third base for the tag.

Davis had her third multiple-RBI game in the past four games. The senior finished 3-for-4 with two RBIs and a run scored.

The Blue Raiders made it 6-2 in the top of the sixth inning with a two RBI shot off the wall in center field by freshman Shelby Barrett.

Purdue pulled two runs back in the bottom of the inning off a Christina Trauger RBI double to left center. Relief pitch Vander Lugt struck out the final batter to end the inning.

Vander Lugt finished things off on the mound for the Blue Raiders and continued her strong performance in the invitational, giving up just one hit over 1.2 innings.

Middle Tennessee broke open the game in the final inning. After three straight singles to load the bases, Banania smacked one of her own up the middle to drive home Dortch.

However, the away team was not finished, with Natalie Ysais picking smacking a two RBI double down the line in right field for her first career hit. Davis and Barrett also picked up RBI shots to make it 11-5.

The Blue Raiders round out the War Eagle Invitational against the Austin Peay Lady Govs on Sunday. Opening pitch is set for 9 a.m. at Jane B. Moore Field.

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