Raiders Fall to SIU, 10-8

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Southern Illinois jumped out to an early lead and added four unearned runs against the bullpen in defeating Middle Tennesse, 10-8, on a cold and blustery Wednesday afternoon at Reese Smith Field.

The visiting Salukis picked up the victory to split the two-game series, the first meeting between the two teams since 1993. Middle Tennessee got two-run home runs from Michael McKenry and Chris LeGuenec in the eighth inning to make it a two-run game, but SIU's Andrew Weber got the final four outs of the game for the win.

Southern Illinois (11-7) leadoff hitter Kevin Koski had two hits and scored three times to spark the Salukis offense, while five other SIU hitters had a pair of hits each. Adam Snyder (1-0) came on in relief to get the win, allowing three runs on three hits in 4.2 innings, but tossed four shutout innings before running into trouble in the eighth.

McKenry, Jeff Beachum and Marcus Taylor all had two hits for the Blue Raiders, while McKenry scored three times.

SIU jumped on Blue Raider starter Jeff Kasser early and often, scoring three times in the first and twice more in the second.

Consecutive singles from Koski and P.J. Finigan started the game, with Koski scoring on a groundout and Chris McCulloch's single through the middle plating Finigan. Nathan Emrick's two-out single to center scored McCulloch for a 3-0 lead.

Tyler Lairson and Koski both singled to start the second, with Lairson scoring on a flair double to center from Matt Brewer. Koski came home on a ground ball to Josh Archer at first, whose throw to the plate was in the dirt, giving the Salukis a 5-0 advantage.

The Blue Raiders (8-6) got two runs back in their half of the second, with Taylor and McKenry both singling and scoring on Beachum's double to rightcenter.

SIU added a run in the third on a sacrifice fly by Koski for a 6-2 lead.

A McKenry walk to start the fourth preceded a Chase Eakes two-run homer, his second in two days and third of the season.

But the Salukis scored two unearned runs in the fifth against reliever Jimmy Kelly. Ryan Enata doubled with one out and scored on a three-base throwing error by third baseman Nate Jaggers. A two-out single from Finigan plated Lairson for an 8-4 SIU lead.

Southern Illinois added two more unearned runs in the eighth, all starting with Archer's second error of the day. Brewer's RBI single plated Koski with his third run of the game, and Brewer later scored when Emrick was hit by the pitch to force in a run.

McKenry's two-run homer just inside the leftfield foul pole cut the deficit to 10-6, and LeGuenec belted another two-run shot later in the frame to make it a two-run game.

SIU right fielder Grant Gerrard kept Middle Tennessee from starting a rally in the ninth, making a diving grab in the right-centerfield gap on a line drive off the bat of Eric McNamee for the first out of the inning.

Kasser (0-2) lasted just two-plus innings to take the loss, allowing six runs on 10 hits. SIU starter Jason Chavez did not do much better, giving up four runs on five hits in three-plus innings, but striking out five.

Middle Tennesse begins a seven-game road swing with a three-game series at Southwest Missouri State on Friday at 3 p.m. All three games may be heard on WMTS 88.3 or at GoBlueRaiders.com.

GAME NOTES

Southern Illinois scored four times in the first inning, breaking a string of 19.2 innings without an earned run allowed by the Blue Raider pitching staff ... Chase Eakes made his first start of the season in leftfield after seven games as the designated hitter ... Todd Martin returned to the lineup as the DH after missing four games because of injury.

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