Blue Raiders drop final game to North Texas

Pick up first Sun Belt series win

April 5, 2009 · David Powell

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee scored first but surrendered the lead in the fifth inning as they fell 3-1 to North Texas at Blue Raider Field on Sunday afternoon. The Blue Raiders (8-25, 3-12 Sun Belt) had already clinched the series over the Mean Green (20-18, 7-7 Sun Belt) with two impressive victories Saturday led by Lindsey Vander Lugt's 11-strikeout feat and Shelby Barrett's combined 5-for-5 offensive performance. Vander Lugt (6-12) allowed three runs on five hits in seven innings in her fourth-straight start for the Blue Raiders. The lefty, just a day removed from setting a new career high for strikeouts, fanned six batters on the afternoon. Ashley Lail (8-7) relieved starter Jennifer Smith just two batters into the game and threw an impressive contest for the Mean Green. The junior gave up just two hits over seven shutout innings and struck out five batters. Kelsey Dortch smashed her second lead-off homerun in nine games to put the Blue Raiders out front in the first inning. The home team loaded the bases later in the inning, but Tobie Joy struck out swinging with two outs to end the frame. Middle Tennessee had an opportunity to widen its lead in the third inning. Caitlin McLure singled to the left side and Martha Davis walked before a Barrett groundout advanced both runners into scoring position. However, Kaycee Popham and Brittney Banania were unable to drive either home. Blue Raider leftfielder McLure was on hand to provide the Blue Raiders with a crucial double play in the top of the fourth frame. After a Mariza Martinez single through the left side, Lisa Johnson smacked a deep ball to left field and into foul territory. McLure caught the ball near the fence and rifled it to Davis at third base to catch a tagging Martinez for the double play. McLure went 1-for-3 with her fifth stolen base of the week for the Blue Raiders. North

Texas scored what proved to be the game-winning three runs in the fifth inning. After both Sarah Jones and Caitlin Grimes reached on a fielder's choice, Kadie Platt was hit by a Vander Lugt pitch to load the bases. Reliever Kellie Head entered the game and hit the first batter she faced, before giving up back-to-back RBI singles to Megan Rupp and Martinez to make it 3-1 in favor of the Mean Green. Middle Tennessee's final chance to even the score came with two outs in the final inning. Dortch produced her second hit of the game, this time with a single up the middle, but the Blue Raiders grounded out to end the contest. Middle Tennessee returns to action for a three-game series at Sun Belt Conference foe Florida International on Friday. Opening pitch at University Park is set for 4 p.m.

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