Blue Raiders drop two at FIU

Conclude series on Saturday afternoon

April 10, 2009 · David Powell

MIAMI - Middle Tennessee managed just one run over two contests as they dropped the opening doubleheader of a three-game series to Florida International on Friday evening. The Blue Raiders won two out of three against North Texas last weekend and found themselves just one win out of the final spot for the conference tournament with nine games left entering the match up against the Golden Panthers. In the first game, Middle Tennessee (8-27, 3-14) managed just two hits as they fell 1-0 to Florida International (23-22, 7-8) in an extra-innings contest. Lindsey Vander Lugt (6-13) allowed one run on 13 hits and struck out nine batters in the complete game. Kasey Barrett (11-9) gave up two hits and fanned 13 in the complete game victory. The Blue Raiders were able to keep Florida International off the board in the first inning despite the Golden Panthers having runner in scoring position for much of the frame. Ashley McClain blooped a one-out single to left field and Jessica Landau walked, but Vander Lugt struck out Jasmine Parra and Seldi Soberon to hold off the home team. Kelsey Dortch reached second base to lead off the next inning after a throwing error by FIU pitcher Barrett before stealing third base two batters later. However, Middle Tennessee was unable to break the deadlock. The Blue Raider defense held firm to deny the Golden Panthers in the fourth inning. Lauren Spiers, McLain and Landau singled to begin the inning, but Middle Tennessee managed to record three straight outs, including two by Tobie Joy, to finish off the frame. Middle Tennessee failed to threaten before Florida International won the game in the bottom of the ninth. Katie Bell and Kim Rodriguez singled before Jenny Welch walked on seven pitches to load the bases and bring up Spiers. The designated player nailed a ball into the right field gap to drive home the winning run. The Blue Raiders left it until the sixth inning to score as they fell 3-1 to the Golden Panthers in the second

game. Caty Jutson (1-9) gave up three runs on eight hits over five innings in the loss Kellie Head threw the final inning in relief for Middle Tennessee. Jennifer Gniadek (9-9) allowed one run, while striking out five and walking six in the complete game victory. Dortch and Caitlin McLure drew walks to lead off the game and both advanced a base with two outs on a passed ball by FIU catcher Welch, but the Blue Raiders were unable to capitalize off the chance as Kaycee Popham struck out looking to end the inning. Florida International opened a 1-0 lead in their half of the frame. The home team loaded the bases with one out and Bell scored on a wild pitch by Blue Raider starter Jutson. The Golden Panthers doubled their advantage in the bottom of the second. Landau singled to left field to start things off and Bell smacked a RBI single down the left field line to make it 2-0. Middle Tennessee's had a prime opportunity to cut into the deficit in the fourth. Martha Davis drew a leadoff walk before advancing to third two batters later off a groundout by Popham. Joy grounded out to end the inning. FIU made it 3-0 when Rodriguez scored off a Welch RBI shot in the bottom of the fifth. The Blue Raiders cut their deficit to 3-1 in the sixth. McLure walked and advanced to third base later in the inning on a stolen base, before scoring on a wild pitch by Gniadek. Florida International added two more runs in the bottom of the fifth off a two-run homerun by Bell. Middle Tennessee concludes its series with the Golden Panthers on Saturday afternoon. Opening pitch is scheduled for 1 p.m. ET.

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