Blue Raiders fall 9-4 to No. 18 Louisville

Banania, Davis lead team in tough loss

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. - Brittney Banania went 2-for-2 with her first career triple, but Middle Tennessee twice failed to hold one-run leads as they fell 9-4 to No. 18 Louisville at Ulmer Stadium on Tuesday afternoon. The Blue Raiders were playing out of conference for the first time since falling 4-3 in eight innings to mid-state rival Tennessee Tech on March 24. Kellie Head (1-6) allowed two earned runs on four hits over one inning in the relief appearance. Lindsey Vander Lugt got the start and gave up two runs on six hits before giving way with two out in the third inning. Caty Jutson worked the final 2.1 innings on the mound for the away team. Kristen Wadwell (31-5) gave up one run on three hits after working the final four innings for the Cardinals. Tori Collins worked the opening three innings for the home team, allowing three runs on six hits. Caitlin McLure nailed a one-out single through the left field in the first inning before stealing her team-leading 12th stolen base of the season, but Martha Davis and Natalie Ysais were unable to drive the junior across the plate. The Blue Raiders came up strong defensively in the bottom of the frame to prevent the Cardinals from taking the lead. Melissa Roth led off with a double to short left field, but was thrown out at home plate two batters later after a nice throw by Blue Raider left fielder McLure. Middle Tennessee opened a 1-0 lead after loading the bases in the second inning. Shelby Barrett started things off with a one-out double to center field before two-straight singles by Banania and Kandra Singleton put three on the bags. Tobie Joy nailed her fifth RBI of the season with a single up the middle to push the Blue Raiders out in front. Louisville took a 2-1 advantage in the bottom of the third inning. Vanessa James hit a bunt single and advanced to third base two batters later before back-to-back RBI shots by Kristin Austin and Chelsea Bemis. Middle Tennessee regained the lead in the top of the fourth. Shelby Barrett drew a leadoff

walk before Banania smashed a shot to left center that went under the glove of a diving center fielder Kristi Cunningham and to the wall. Kelsey Dortch made it 2-1 with a RBI single to center field. The Cardinals scored four runs in the bottom of the inning off Brittany York, Roth and Bemis RBIs before adding three more runs in the bottom of the sixth inning to make it 9-3. Davis cut the deficit to 9-4 in the seventh inning with her team-leading fourth homerun of the season, a solo shot over the left field fence. Banania went 2-for-2 with a RBI and walk to lead the Blue Raider offense. Davis finished 2-for-4 for Middle Tennessee. The Blue Raiders return to action on Wednesday for a doubleheader at Eastern Kentucky. Opening pitch is slated for 2 p.m. ET.

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