

Bishop leads team to 11-5 win over WKU

Blue Raiders take series; look for sweep and title on Saturday

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Senior Rawley Bishop had three home runs to help lead the Blue Raiders to an 11-5 win over Western Kentucky Friday night. Bishop ended the night 4 for 5 with three home runs, five RBI and scored four runs as he was a force at the plate that the Hilltoppers (37-16, 21-8) could not contain. "I am seeing the ball really well right now and the balls are flying. It has been a long time coming I guess because I have been struggling in that area a little. It is not as hard hitting when you are hitting every five to 10 minutes which is a real credit to our pitching and defense," Bishop said. Bishop also had three assists on the night as the defense turned three double plays after having five in the first game of the series. "Rawley, like any power hitter, hits home runs in bunches. He is playing good defense as well but what a good time to get hot. He has hit for average all season but Bryce and Nathan would



normally clear the bases before he got to the plate," head coach Steve Peterson said. "It was obviously Rawley's night." Middle Tennessee (38-15, 21-8) had 17 hits on the night with sophomores Bryce Brentz and Tyler Burnett and junior Blake McDade all notching three hits on the night. Burnett ended the game a double short of the cycle and scored three runs from the leadoff position. Sophomore Nick Montgomery (4-1) picked up the win after entering the game in the third inning allowing just two hits. Junior Coty Woods picked up his 13th save of the season after working three innings and giving up just two hits. Freshman Justin Guidry also worked in relief giving up just one hit in one inning of work. The three relievers allowed just five hits between them with Woods striking out

three. "Our bullpen is not one that just comes in and blows you away but they have to execute their pitches. I thought Nick came in and did a great job of locating pitches. I told Coty before the game that he could get in the game early and he threw where he could easily be used tomorrow," Peterson said. WKU had 11 hits on the night and led in the game until the fifth inning when the Blue Raiders took the lead and never looked back. Matt Ridings (7-2) took the loss on the mound after allowing six runs on 10 hits. Wade Gaynor led the Hilltoppers at the plate as he went 3 for 5 with a double, home run, two RBI and scored two runs. WKU put runs on the board first as Gaynor hit a two-run shot to left putting them up 2-0. Then a single drove in Cregar from second to add another run in the top of the first. WKU scored three runs on three hits to take a 3-0 lead to begin play. The Blue Raiders quickly answered as Burnett and Bishop hit back-to-back home runs to begin the game. The last time a Middle Tennessee player hit a home run to begin a game was Blake McDade on May 22, 2008 against Florida Atlantic in the Sun Belt Tournament. Bishop and Brentz were the last pair to hit back-to-back home runs as they did it in the sixth inning against ULM on April 18. Trailing 5-2 in the third, Bishop hit another home run to cut the Hilltopper lead to one. It was the first time a Blue Raider had hit home runs in consecutive at bats since Brentz did it against Mississippi Valley State on May 8. Middle Tennessee tied the game at 5 after Brentz scored from second on a bad throw by the second baseman on a ball hit by McDade. The Blue Raiders scored three runs on three hits in the inning. In the fifth inning, McDade tripled to break the tie and put the Blue Raiders up by one, 6-5, as Brentz scored from second on the play. Bishop hit his third home run of the game in the seventh inning to put the Blue Raiders up by two. The last time a Blue Raider hit three home runs in a game was on May 8 against Mississippi Valley State when Brentz accomplished the feat. Then Robertson pulled out a double on a fly ball in no man's land to short left center driving in two runs with the bases loaded. The Blue Raiders scored three runs on four hits to take a 9-5 lead. The Blue Raiders added two runs on three hits to go ahead 11-5 in the eighth. Middle Tennessee will go for the sweep over Western Kentucky on Saturday, May 16 at 1 p.m. in its last regular season game. The Blue Raider seniors will be honored in a pre-game ceremony beginning at 12:30 p.m. prior to the scheduled 1 p.m. start time. "For us and Western to come down to the last day for the title; that is why both teams are playing. Winning the series I think has a lot to do with advancement in the NCAA tournament. It definitely puts us on the bubble and winning the series does a lot to help it." Middle Tennessee can not finish any lower than second in the Sun Belt and with a win on Sunday would clinch the regular season title and the No. 1 seed in the tournament, which begins next week.

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