

May 22, 2009

Blue Raiders defeat FAU 12-7 to stay alive in tourney

Team notches 40th win of season; will rematch with UL-Lafayette at 4 p.m.

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TROY, Ala. - Middle Tennessee defeated Florida Atlantic 12-7 on Friday morning to stay alive in the Sun Belt Championships and pick-up its 40th win of the season.

Seniors [Nathan Hines](#) and [Rawley Bishop](#), junior [Blake McDade](#) and sophomore [Bryce Brentz](#) each had two hits on the day with McDade driving in two runs on the day.

Brentz broke the single-season hits record with his two and now has 101 hits on the season. Former Blue Raider Wayne Kendrick set the hits record at 100 in 2007.

It is the fourth 40 win season by a Middle Tennessee team and the last squad to record the "magic" number was in 2004 when it went 40-22.

The Blue Raiders had 14 hits on the day with five doubles, one triple and one home run. Senior [Zach Dean](#) had a pinch hit home run to pick-up two runs for Middle Tennessee and had the first home run for the team in the Sun Belt Championships.

"We still don't seem to be easy flowing at the plate but hopefully this 40th win and getting a second win in the tournament will take a little bit of the edge off. We didn't swing the bat very well at all in the bottom of the order which was disappointing but I thought Blake swung the bat well and Stuart had a big RBI," head coach Steve Peterson said.

Junior [Stuart Meinhart](#) also had a big hit as he tripled to drive in a run in the eighth and pad the Blue Raider lead.

On the mound, junior [Chad Edwards](#) improved to 8-1 after allowing three runs on seven hits with six strikeouts in six innings of work.

"Chad had back spasms from the second inning on and really had to gut it out. Then we had delays here and there. When we went to the bullpen we just tried to match them up and didn't lose it," Peterson said.

Florida Atlantic was eliminated from the tournament with the loss and ends the 2009 season with a 30-26 record. Mike Albaladejo led the Owls at the plate going 3 for 3 with a double, three RBI and scored a run.

Brentz tied the record for single-season hits with his single to left field in the first inning.

Middle Tennessee got on the board first after Box scored on an error by FAU's third baseman throwing the ball to second. Then Darlington doubled to deep left field driving in another run for the Blue Raiders. Middle Tennessee ended the inning scoring four runs on three hits taking a 4-0 lead in the bottom of the first inning.

FAU closed the gap to one in the top of the third scoring three runs on four hits.

Brentz broke the single-season hits record after beating out a throw by the shortstop to first to notch his 101 hit of the season. McDade doubled to the right field corner with runners at first and second to bring in Brentz from first and extend the Blue Raider lead, 5-3 in the bottom of the third.

The Blue Raiders added two runs in the fourth after singles by both Box and Bishop drove runners in to increase the lead to four runs, 7-3.

Hines singled up the middle and the shortstop fielded it but had a throwing error to the second baseman allowing Burnett to score. The Blue Raiders recorded just one run in the inning but increased the lead to five, 8-3 bottom five.

Dean pinch hit for Box and hit a two-run shot to right field, the first for the Blue Raiders in the tournament, to extend the lead to six, 10-4 in the seventh.

FAU added one run in the eighth after a single by Albaladejo to right field scored a runner from second. Then Hatcher single to left to add another run to the Owl total.



On the mound, junior Chad Edwards improved to 8-1 after allowing three runs on seven hits with six strikeouts in six innings of work. (Troy Photography)

Meinhart tripled in the eighth bringing in Bishop from first, who walked, making it 11-6 in favor of the Blue Raiders. Meinhart then scored on a wild pitch during the next at bat.

To begin the ninth, Ozga hit a solo shot to right field to cut the lead to five.

Middle Tennessee will face UL-Lafayette at 4 p.m. in another elimination game on its side of the bracket. The Blue Raiders would have to defeat UL-Lafayette twice to advance to the championship game on Saturday.

"We have to do whatever it takes. To have an opportunity to play someone who has beaten you four times is nice. It is a wonderful, wonderful thing to have happen and just like FAU had the opportunity with us and we didn't allow it to happen. Hopefully we will be able to make it happen in our favor later today and then play them again tomorrow. We are just trying to survive but I think we have now extended our season on the national level," Peterson said.

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